

South? These considerations aside, Valelly has made ample and judicious use of history. It is a timely and instructive book to read.

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[The lateness of the preceding review is not the fault of the reviewer. The editor regrets the delay.]

LBJ's American Promise: The 1965 Voting Rights Address. By Garth E. Pauley. Library of Presidential Rhetoric. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007. Pp. [x], 180. Paper, \$16.95, ISBN 978-1-58544-581-3; cloth, \$29.95, ISBN 978-1-58544-574-5.)

In this slender volume Garth E. Pauley spotlights the speech that contemporary commentators and historians alike have deemed President Lyndon B. Johnson's "greatest oratorical triumph": his March 15, 1965, special message to Congress announcing White House support for legislation to combat the disenfranchisement of black voters (p. 14). As a historian of presidential rhetoric, Pauley considers the content of the address as significant as its context and devotes the longest chapter to a careful analysis of both the text itself and the president's oral delivery of his message. Flanked by chapters that trace authorship through multiple drafts and various speechwriters and that explore contemporary reactions to the address (here Pauley goes beyond traditional newspaper and periodical sources to make effective use of the correspondence files housed at the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library), this textual analysis forms the heart of the book.

The author's shrewd commentary highlights the speech's deft manipulation of the tropes of national mythology. Johnson, transcending many of his usual oratorical weaknesses, skillfully transformed Selma's ugly images of obstructionism, bigotry, and police brutality into a moment of truth for the nation. As Pauley concludes, "Rather than focusing Americans' attention inward on the immediate historical moment, Johnson focused it outward onto a broader historical landscape, in which current events took on their meaning by how they related to the nation's realization of its commitments to equality and justice" (p. 70). This appeal to the core principles of American civil religion, Pauley argues, enabled the president to effectively link support for equal access to the ballot to the very definition of *American*, thus ensuring a broad, bipartisan base of support for the White House's voting rights proposal.

Locating the struggle for expansion of the franchise within the context of fulfilling "the American promise" sidestepped tedious constitutional arguments and partially muffled accusations that the administration's proposal embodied a hasty reaction to the violence in Selma rather than a coherent strategy to confront voter discrimination across the board. Sustaining this mythic framework, however, necessitated a certain reliance on hazy generalities expressed in passive rather than active voice: protesters "were . . . assaulted" rather than "Alabama state troopers flailed marchers with bullwhips" (p. 1). Johnson's speechwriters' determination to avoid antagonizing

southern moderates sensitive to criticism of the region and getting bogged down in the specifics of a particular time and place smoothly glossed over the question of accountability for the violence on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. To his credit, Pauley equally emphasizes the positive and negative ramifications of the rhetorical strategy employed.

Pauley's assertion that the White House definitely intended to push for new voting rights legislation in 1965 prior to the outbreak of violence in Alabama may raise some eyebrows among historians who view the Selma campaign as the catalyst that forced the administration's hand. Others may find the near-absence of cold war context startling. Closer attention to the political necessity of redeeming the shame of Selma in the court of international opinion would have further strengthened the claims of this useful work.

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In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counter-revolution. By Joseph Crespino. Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America. (Princeton, N.J., and Oxford, Eng.: Princeton University Press, c. 2007. Pp. [xx], 360. \$35.00, ISBN 978-0-691-12209-0.)

Mississippi in the civil rights era invokes images of white supremacy in its most incorrigible and violent form. In 1964 University of Mississippi professor James W. Silver called Mississippi "the closed society," and folk singer Phil Ochs penned a biting anthem, "Here's to the State of Mississippi," that concluded every verse with the declaration, "'Mississippi find yourself another country to be part of'" (pp. 5, 3). Now historian Joseph Crespino has entered the fray with *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution*. In this important and engagingly written book he has examined Mississippi's white population and has discovered more complexity, and much more change over time, than Ochs would have thought possible.

Crespino argues that by the time Silver's *Mississippi: The Closed Society* (New York, 1964) was published, elements of the state's white elite were already making "strategic accommodations" to the demands of the civil rights movement and the federal government (p. 11). He concludes that when Ochs taunted white Mississippians to "find . . . another country to be part of," they did just that, with significant consequences for politics at the national level. It is hardly surprising, Crespino argues, that Republican presidential nominee Ronald Reagan kicked off his 1980 campaign before an adoring white audience in Philadelphia, Mississippi, in Neshoba County, the site of three of the grisliest murders of the civil rights era. "I believe in states' rights," Reagan told his listeners (p. 1). This hackneyed phrase signified something old and familiar but also something new: conservatism's simultaneous embrace of "'George Wallace inclined voters'" and its careful honing of a political message that avoided the increasingly discredited language of segregation and white supremacy (p. 1).

According to Crespino, this change had begun as early as the 1950s, when powerful Mississippians, such as U.S. senator John C. Stennis, responded to