



Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

In His Steps: Lyndon Johnson and the Kennedy Mystique. by Paul R. Henggeler
David J. Garrow

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successes were long-term Democratic party goals that were pushed forward by congressional leadership or savvy administration figures (such as Esther Peterson) operating with limited presidential support. Still, caveats aside, Bernstein gives us a rich picture of the Kennedy domestic record.

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PAUL R. HENGGELER. *In His Steps: Lyndon Johnson and the Kennedy Mystique*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee. 1991. Pp. vii, 325. \$27.50.

Paul R. Henggeler's psychologically oriented examination of Lyndon B. Johnson's reactions to the personae and legacies of John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy is a well-researched but not especially provocative book. Anyone familiar with the existing literature on the Kennedy presidency and on Johnson will find few new interpretations here, but this work is a credible scholarly survey of territory that already has been thoroughly examined.

Henggeler offers appropriate and measured criticisms of earlier interpretations of Johnson put forward by Doris Kearns and by Robert Caro, but in the end he plows very little new ground of his own. Demonstrations of Johnson's "erratic mood swings" (p. 57) and "chronic insecurities" (p. 85) are already familiar, as is Henggeler's focus on how President Johnson made good use of John Kennedy's aura while also feeling overshadowed by the legacy he partially inherited. Johnson's highly ambivalent feelings about the Kennedys predated the controversy at the 1960 Democratic National Convention over Johnson's selection as the vice presidential nominee, but Johnson's understandable resentment over Robert Kennedy's opposition to his nomination intensified rather than weakened over time. From 1960 onward—both before and after November 22, 1963—Johnson "divided 'Kennedy' into two distinct entities—the 'good' John and the 'bad' Bobby" (p. 61), denying any differences with the first and perceiving only intense animus from the second. It was a deleterious mind-set, one that Henggeler believes played a major role in Johnson's "self-destruction" (pp. 22, 244).

One expects Henggeler—especially in light of the book's straightforwardly psychological opening chapter—to conclude his study with a clear and explicit discussion of how Johnson's attitudes toward the Kennedy brothers either reflected and/or magnified Johnson's undeniably large and self-damaging insecurities, but no such analysis appears. Henggeler traces the political decline of the Johnson presidency between the summer of 1965 and the spring of 1967 (when Robert Kennedy, as junior Senator from New York, publicly broke with Johnson over the Vietnam War), but his productive mining of documents from both the Kennedy and Johnson presidential libraries

fails to save him from a number of distracting errors. Two of the most striking are "the Office of Employment Opportunity Act" (pp. 117–118) and "the Equal Economic Opportunities Administration" (p. 168).

Henggeler is unabashedly sympathetic to the political predicament in which President Johnson found himself, but his decision not to offer any extended discussion of Johnson's mind-set with regard to the Vietnam conflict leaves a reader wondering whether this book is incomplete rather than necessarily selective in its treatment of Johnson's political decline. Henggeler readily concedes that Johnson, unlike Kennedy, was someone who "inspired little affection when he was alive and little emotion in death" (p. 254), but he regrets that Johnson's "vast achievements were obscured by an unpopular political style" (p. 123) and commiserates at how Johnson "tried to surpass Kennedy in terms of substance when presidential success was becoming, increasingly, a matter determined by image" (p. 122).

Although Henggeler once again never fully or explicitly develops his stance, a reader finishes the book surmising that the author believes Johnson's political failure in the presidency was less the result of disastrous policy choices than of personal circumstances that someone with Johnson's psyche was unable to surmount. "Unlike John of the mythic past and Robert of the mythic future, Johnson was condemned to the present, wedged between two illusions and forced to deal with harsh realities" (p. 250). Had Henggeler developed his interpretations further, his study could have been far more challenging than it is.

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LAURA KALMAN. *Abe Fortas: A Biography*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1990. Pp. xiii, 499. \$29.95.

Laura Kalman's work is the first full biography of Abe Fortas, the supreme court justice. Drawing on previously unavailable personal papers, on numerous archives, and on the recollections of his family, friends, and even his detractors, Kalman painstakingly examines the legal and constitutional controversies of the 1950s and 1960s, when many thought American society was coming unhinged. On another level, Kalman exposes the attacks on liberalism in this nation, particularly the liberalism of the Warren Court.

Fortas was born in Memphis and attended Yale Law School, where he and his brilliance blossomed. It was at Yale that Fortas met his teacher, friend, mentor, and later his colleague on the Court, William O. Douglas. Also while at Yale, Fortas encountered the new "legal realism" school, led by Jerome Frank and Douglas, which advocated the use of the sciences and the social sciences to arrive at "good" decisions rather than reliance on abstract legal principles derived from the study of case law only. Thus, at Yale, Fortas was "provided with a jurisprudence to guide