

## **“A Spy in the Enemy’s Country”: *Black Like Me* as Cold War Narrative**

**Nelson Hathcock**

When Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev stepped onto the runway of Andrews Air Force Base in September 1959, his typical audacity was bolstered because, three days before, the Russians had landed a missile on the moon. He handed a dour-faced President Eisenhower a model of Lunik II.<sup>1</sup> Despite the Russian leader’s diplomatic brazenness, his thirteen-day visit—the first ever by a Soviet head of state—continued the thaw in relations that had begun mid-decade. The Soviet Union had embarked on policies of “de-Stalinization” and “peaceful coexistence” with the West almost as soon as the former dictator was cold (1953), while in the United States, the death in May 1959 of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, the primary advocate of brinkmanship, had eased the way for Khrushchev’s tour. However, perceptive analysts of Cold War dynamics, especially those in the intelligence community, had seen as early as 1945 that this conflict would devolve into “a psychological contest” based upon the “manufacturing of consent by ‘peaceful’ methods . . . and the use of propaganda to erode hostile positions.”<sup>2</sup> Eruptions of armed conflict in the ensuing years—haunted by the specter of nuclear escalation—only underscored the importance of the battle for hearts and minds.

The itinerary of the Soviet leader’s visit to the United States is all the more interesting because it foregrounds America’s frailty in the effort to generate international support. From his welcome in Washington, D.C., Khrushchev went to New York and California, and then back to locales in Iowa, Illinois, and Pennsylvania, followed by three days at the presidential retreat at Camp David.

More intriguing than his adventures in Hollywood is what he did *not* see. The nation's capital was as close to the geographic (or political) American South as he was allowed. Even though the welcomes at some cities could only be described as "chilly," one can deduce that administration officials feared the still virulent anti-Communism below the Mason-Dixon and were concerned that the Russian leader's visit might well be met with demonstrations or, even worse, violence. In any case, this arrangement of the tour symbolically presented an America without the South, eliding the inflammatory synecdoche by which geography signified Jim Crow and racial violence—Money, Tuscaloosa, Montgomery, Little Rock. This public relations sleight-of-hand concisely reflects the difficulty the United States faced in representing itself as the exemplar of justice and freedom. Implicit in this truncated American tour was a strategy for overcoming that difficulty—a version of containment that would both expose and control the South's resistance to civil rights for African Americans.

A month after Khrushchev's visit, a white journalist from Texas—John Howard Griffin—employed a combination of drugs, ultraviolet exposure, and vegetable dye to darken his skin and pass for black in the "enemy's country" of the Deep South, the area "erased" from the State Department's map of America. He spent six weeks passing as a black man, looking for work, traveling from New Orleans to Atlanta and points in between. The account of his experiences was a controversial and surprising 1961 bestseller. This essay argues that the United States' advocacy of democracy among emerging postwar nations was intricately involved with its cultural depictions of the South, specifically the former slave states, and that these circumstances are crucial in understanding Griffin's *Black Like Me*. Several contexts suggest new meanings for this text: the dilemma that racism created for U.S. policy in the Cold War; the deradicalization of the American left and its transformation into 1950s and 1960s Cold War liberalism; and the transformation of "containment" foreign policy into a culturally endorsed metaphor of control. Such a reading provides one more example of how 1950s popular culture was a field of ideological conflict and counters the impression of consensus. Unlike Gayle Wald's 1996 analysis of its "enduring popularity,"<sup>3</sup> I re-situate Griffin's text in the world that helped to produce it and explain its impact on Cold War *kulturkampf*.

The timing of *Black Like Me* was critical. It appeared at a propitious historical moment and ultimately aided in defining that moment. The Red Scare of the early fifties generated an outpouring of testimony, confession, and exposés by former Communists, which contributed to altering social attitudes toward the act of informing, and, I will argue briefly, anticipated Griffin as a racial "double-agent." A more important link between these texts and Griffin's is their narrative of disillusionment and revision, a process that Cold War liberals underwent on their way to ideological "higher ground."

Certainly, the broader historical backdrop to the book's success was America's emergence as one of two superpowers on the international stage. As

Thomas Borstelmann observes, "Competing with the Soviet Union in the post-war world meant, by definition, maximizing the amount that other peoples saw of American life."<sup>4</sup> The second-class status of African Americans focused attention upon the Jim Crow South. This development particularly conflicted with America's asserted role as "leader of the Free World," especially to countries breaking the shackles of colonialism. The so-called Third World became the audience for that drama of bipolar competition, and the non-white racial makeup of that audience challenged the United States severely. While legal segregation remained in place, American anti-colonial rhetoric rang false. In this atmosphere, the United States Information Agency (USIA) and the Voice of America (VOA) labored to gain acceptance abroad of the United States and its institutions. The U.S. policy of containment became a broadly disseminated trope of control for dealing with the radical, the transgressive, and the subversive *within* the society. This essay will show how *Black Like Me* promulgated a version of that trope, depicting the Deep South as a site of un-American "Otherness" in order to isolate and diminish its negative ramifications for the U.S. image abroad. However, representing the South as something to be controlled placed Griffin's text in a curious relation to the same federal government for which it was, in effect, performing a cultural mission. Eisenhower's administration had consistently sought to contain racial tensions in the South, rather than to address their causes. *Black Like Me* became an anodyne for the detached President with obvious Southern sympathies, and it went to press as the nation barely chose a barely liberal Democrat for the White House. Again, ripeness *was* all.

The paranoia of the early 1950s laid an important foundation for Griffin's exercise in domestic surveillance. Once America's nuclear monopoly had been broken in 1949, the idea of overt conflict with Russia became a grim nightmare. The Korean stalemate underscored the very real limitations of a "limited conflict." Domestic subversion became the antagonist of choice, while the efforts to root it out constituted an index of frustration, as Stephen Whitfield has suggested.<sup>5</sup> From many quarters the theme sounded that American government, industry, education, and entertainment were rotten with a Communist element, and the only way to resist the "enemy within" was to adopt his tactics of disguise and subterfuge. The figure of the spy, first imaged as menace, was quickly transformed into hero, a process that would culminate in the glamorous apotheosis of James Bond in the 1960s. But that figure was preceded by the informer.

The work of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and other investigative bodies precipitated an outpouring of confessions and exposés by ex-Communists as the cultural prohibition against informing was revised. Americans had long held "rats," "finks," and "stool pigeons" in low regard, with the injunction against "tattling" being culturally reinforced from kindergarten. Now, however, the parade of "friendly witnesses," "informants," and "recovered patriots" who trooped before one

agency after another made informing respectable. This shift of rhetoric and reconstructed esteem sprang from what Victor Navasky has called “The Informer Principle,” which “held not merely that there was nothing wrong with naming names, but that it was the litmus test, the ultimate evidence, the guarantor of patriotism.” He points out as well that “the vulgar popular culture of the day . . . was openly dedicated to refurbishing the image of the anti-Communist informer.”<sup>6</sup> Griffin’s testimony as a racial double-agent fits neatly into the slot prepared by the popular culture of the day—feature films, television and radio, and mass-market memoirs<sup>7</sup>—that created a paradigm of the informant narrative and viewed reformers as patriotic, realistic, and tough.

The course of the typical informant from “true believer” to “recovered patriot” roughly parallels the development of what Thomas Schaub in 1991 called “the liberal narrative,” an account in which

the complex and varied involvement of a heterogeneous group of men and women is subordinated to a Blakean journey from innocence to experience, from the myopia of the utopian to the twenty-twenty vision of the realist. I identify this as a liberal narrative, rather than “radical” or “communist,” because the term “liberalism” adequately encompasses the spectrum of those interested in social reform, and because the word denotes, as many have written, a “habit of mind” rather than a specific creed.<sup>8</sup>

Even though the differences between, for example, Herbert Philbrick (*I Led Three Lives*) and an intellectual like Alfred Kazin are immense, I connect them only because the formative experiences in their respective journeys—idealism, disillusionment and self-estrangement, revision—are shared in kind, though certainly not degree. That many of the ex-Communists like Philbrick, Whitaker Chambers, and Matthew Cvetcic finished their political journeys on the far right is less important than the general process of revising their ideologies to better suit the Cold War environment.

However, the connection between these narratives and Griffin’s account is important for a second reason. *Black Like Me* not only adopts the superficial traits of the informant story—disguise, life among an enemy, transmission of information, and so on; it also dramatizes the liberal’s journey from innocence to experience. In this recounting he presumes to speak both to an America afflicted with the liberal’s dangerous moral myopia and to a world that sees what America does not. A series of statements in Griffin’s first entry of the book (dated October 28, 1959) speaks to the question of the Cold War liberals’ attempt to elevate the power of the subjective:

If a white man became a Negro in the Deep South, what adjustments would he have to make? What is it like to experi-

ence discrimination based on skin color, something over which one has no control? . . .

How else except by becoming a Negro could a white man hope to learn the truth?<sup>9</sup>

This passage is important primarily because Griffin designates the problem site as the "Deep South," where Negroes experience discrimination and where "a white man" can learn about the "adjustments" to be made. That Griffin could just as "easily" have passed in, say, Pennsylvania and encountered similar treatment was seized upon a few years later by Southerner Walker Percy in his novel *The Last Gentleman* (1966) with its scathing caricature of Griffin as Forney Aiken, the "pseudo-Negro." And Malcolm X had insisted on numerous occasions that "Mississippi is anywhere south of the Canadian border."<sup>10</sup> However, Griffin's assertion that the geographic South is the location of America's racial conflict becomes more vital later. The apparent powerlessness inherent in skin color is denied a few lines later by Griffin's literal and rhetorical proposition that he "becom[e] a Negro." Griffin's representation of his skin having no color becomes a canvas on which he can create the illusion of a racial identity. Contemporary scholars of "whiteness," such as Gayle Wald and Eric Lott, are troubled by Griffin's assumptions of entitlement to "the cultural knowledge of others."<sup>11</sup> But the act of passing as an avenue to "the truth" is also congruent with the then-current liberal notion that subjective experience constitutes reality. As Schaub and others have argued, postwar liberal discourse undertook to "shift focus away from purely social and economic sources of historical change and emphasized instead psychological and behavioral categories . . ."<sup>12</sup> These opening statements can be construed as Griffin's declaration of his liberal agenda, but they also begin a composite of Griffin as *poseur*.

Just as HUAC's witnesses might jar American complacency by attesting first-hand to the reality of an internal Communist threat (grossly overstated to further the domestic political containment), Griffin could, as Wald points out, "authenticate the existence of racism and thereby promote a level of white cross-racial understanding that he believed to be unavailable through more conventional modes of inquiry."<sup>13</sup> The problem with this equation is that to many, particularly Southerners, Griffin himself became a part of a threat. From the heyday of the Communist Party USA in the 1920s and 1930s, the link between the party and issues of lynching, discrimination, and civil rights for African Americans had been overt. In the postwar world, that connection proved a serious liability for black activists because it furnished racist Southern white politicians and businessmen with the material for smear campaigns. Griffin's brand of liberalism came dangerously close to the same idealism from which Cold War liberals sought to distance themselves, and that idealism, I would argue, is as integral a part of his disguise as his chemically altered skin.

In the entries concerned with preparations for his journey, Griffin repeatedly (and disingenuously) questions the effects of his masquerade. Speaking

with “three FBI men from the Dallas office” he asks: “Do you suppose they’ll [southern whites] treat me as John Howard Griffin, regardless of my color—or will they treat me as some nameless Negro, even though I am still the same man?” (10). The FBI agents are incredulous, as was probably much of Griffin’s readership, but the idealism of the question reveals a deeper level of the writer’s disguise. Since 1947, when Griffin had returned from a sojourn in France almost totally blind, he had lived on his parents’ farm outside of Mansfield, Texas. In 1956 angry mobs in Mansfield had physically prevented blacks from enrolling in local white schools. It seems implausible that Griffin could have remained isolated enough to maintain this naïveté about race relations in his native Texas. He *poses* as a pre-war liberal—one characterized by “habitual and dangerous innocence”<sup>14</sup>—in order to enact the necessary loss of innocence in the course of his passing, never mind that the individual seeking to corrupt his own innocence is already essentially corrupt. Griffin posits an “American liberal” to be awakened into the experience of racism. On the previous day, Griffin had pitched his idea to George Levitan, the owner of *Sepia*, pointing out that “the South’s racial situation was a blot on the whole country, and especially reflected against us overseas” (8). Had Griffin truly not known the answer to his question about what treatment he would receive, he likely would not have cited the South’s racial situation as harmful to American interests, using Eisenhower’s own words to do so. While a common enough metaphor in references to the effect of the South’s treatment of African Americans, the “blot” had been a part of the President’s appeal to the citizens of Arkansas during the Little Rock controversy in 1957:

If resistance to the Federal Court orders ceases at once, the further presence of Federal troops will be unnecessary and the City of Little Rock will return to its normal habits of peace and order and a blot upon the fair name and high honor of our nation in the world will be removed.<sup>15</sup>

Griffin’s universalizing project (“still the same man”) also runs counter to the political realities—specifically segregation—that the Eisenhower White House had begun both to confront and avoid earlier in the decade. These opening gambits bind Griffin’s narrative to Cold War liberalism and to the external realities that the country faced.

America’s racial politics had furnished its enemies propaganda material during World War II; Germany and Japan both had used the situation to try to sow dissension in the ranks of the segregated American armed forces and to undermine alliances in Africa and Asia. As early as 1946, the U.S. embassy in Moscow predicted that the Soviets would use “this theme” as a weapon.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the earliest stages of the present-day security/intelligence apparatus—the National Security Agency and the Central Intelligence Agency (1947)—were rife

with the necessity of a counter-narrative, a version of American social and political life that could refute the debilitating images of American racial policy fomented in the foreign press, what Senators Alexander Smith and Karl Mundt labeled "a campaign of vilification and misrepresentation."<sup>17</sup> Despite factions within President Truman's (and later President Eisenhower's) council of advisors and State Department who denigrated the efficacy of "psychological warfare," the tally of embarrassing encounters involving foreign, non-white diplomats and horrible crimes against African Americans in the South mounted. In response, the government created agencies charged with explaining and selling American ideals, objectives, and culture to an expanding audience abroad. Mary Dudziak adroitly summarizes this confluence of civil rights and Cold War discourse:

In addressing civil rights reform from 1946 through the mid-1960s, the federal government engaged in a sustained effort to tell a particular story about race and American democracy: a story of progress, a story of the triumph of good over evil, a story of U.S. moral superiority. The lesson of this story was always that American democracy was a form of government that made the achievement of social justice possible, and that democratic change, however slow and gradual, was superior to dictatorial imposition.<sup>18</sup>

This story is both complicated *and* enabled by the existence of the South, a region of the country that had come to be identified with the problems of race. Without saying so explicitly, Dudziak's observations about the narrative of American democracy cast that story within the cultural construct of what I label "Southern containment."

Among scholars of the Cold War and American postwar society, "containment" has accrued a number of meanings. Originating in George Kennan's never-very-popular policy response to Soviet expansionism, the term morphed for scholars into a signifier for strategies of control throughout the political and social spectrum. At its base was American security, and from that purpose emerged a host of variations—legislative, cultural, social—aimed at inhibiting perceived problems. Elaine Tyler May's pioneering examinations of white, middle-class family life gave rise to the concept of "domestic containment," referring to certain elements of Cold War gender and sexual politics.<sup>19</sup> She saw in that foreign policy imperative a metaphor that applied to the cultural and societal constraints of women. Subsequently, a number of historians, sociologists, and cultural critics have effectively charted the binaries of control and liberation in postwar America, expanding their investigations to include issues of race and class.<sup>20</sup> In the interests of national security, so the general argument runs, not only leftists and fellow travelers, but single women, returning WWII

veterans, gays, African Americans and other racial minorities, civil rights activists, and young people needed to be monitored. A similar kind of narrative about the South emerged in the 1940s and 1950s, incorporating the self-exile and recalcitrance of the region and its communities and marked by all the complexities of the America/South relationship.

This containment narrative relies heavily upon the troubled history of that relationship, a period during which, as Larry Griffin and others have written, the region and the nation both literally and symbolically opposed each other.<sup>21</sup> Historian Carl Degler posits an America constructed and reconstructed by contests with an oppositional South;<sup>22</sup> my argument emphasizes that tension within the context of Cold War competition. While Alan Nadel reminds us that the aims of containment narratives were “to unify, codify, and contain,”<sup>23</sup> *Southern* containment exploited division, mystery, and license. By the 1950s the pressing urgency for U.S. interests was to soften that region’s internal opposition in the eyes of the world, or, better, to use it to demonstrate how democracy could indeed function systematically to bind wounds and heal differences. Southern resistance would furnish the dramatic tension in this narrative of how a political philosophy can be depended upon to synthesize racial and ethnic diversity into a common effort while maintaining individual freedoms. As such, this story must be a story of change—change resisted and fought—but change nonetheless, a story transposing myth with reality so that the blows of hatred and prejudice can be countered by the glimmerings of understanding and adjustment. It would have to be a story that acknowledges the worst and promises better. And it would be a story that could not be represented by a single incident or episode, but rather would be a collective text, drawing on mythic types—simplified, generalized, and exaggerated. Not only would organizations like the United States Information Agency or the Voice of America produce such a text, but also they would be a part of it, as would the media and Hollywood, national and state legislative bodies, activists and interest groups on both sides of the conflict.

However, for all its idealistic aims, the containment of the South would have practical, propagandistic functions. The region would embody and enact all the worst impulses of white America; it would become a repository of repression, presenting to the world the image of a nation with its “Achilles heel” figuratively cauterized. From the petty strictures of Jim Crow, such as segregated hunting preserves, to the lynchings and violence that dominated international headlines, the gamut of racial oppression would be depicted as a Southern phenomenon with the South depicted as a locus of un-Americanism. Ultimately, the larger containment effort failed in what John Egerton has termed “the southernization of America,”<sup>24</sup> but that is another story.

By the late 1950s U.S. propaganda efforts had evolved from attempts to portray African American “progress” to a pattern of frank admission that racial oppression existed but that the federal government was working to eradicate it. Of course, the dramatic publicity accompanying debacles such as Little Rock

and the Jimmy Wilson case in Alabama had pretty much dictated that a policy of openness would be the only viable strategy.<sup>25</sup> From what Walter Hixson has pointed to as "the confused and contradictory response of American propaganda" to segregation and the legal maneuverings against it, the Voice of America and the USIA began to edge toward a policy of accentuating the positive. C. D. Jackson, Eisenhower's former psychological warfare advisor, proposed as much to the USIA in 1956:

Entirely aside from the Supreme Court decision on segregation, the acceleration of economic, educational, and social opportunity for the Negro in the past ten years [the decade since the end of World War II] has been absolutely fantastic. It is time we stopped explaining in terms of "this dreadful blot on our scutcheon" and look the whole world in the eye, suggesting that they do at least as well as we have.<sup>26</sup>

As the USIA renewed its emphasis on opportunity, conveyed by its phrase "the people's capitalism," three central themes emerged: denouncing communism, exalting the capitalist system, and promoting democracy.<sup>27</sup> Falling into line with the cold war liberals' rejuvenated sense of American exceptionalism, Griffin's account would contribute to such propaganda, not by overt denunciations of communism but by denying the efficacy—even the necessity—of violent revolt. Capitalism and democracy would be extolled as rational alternatives to rebellion, particularly as such alternatives were available to African Americans. However, the late 1950s had witnessed a certain divisiveness even within the State Department organizations over how far to take the policy of openness. President Eisenhower's idea of containing the South was to restrain both its overtly repressive actions and the treatment of them by the instruments of his own administration. The ongoing disagreement over how far to acknowledge national failures and shortcomings insured another source of controversy in the reception of Griffin's text.<sup>28</sup>

The strategy of containment and isolation in *Black Like Me* inheres in a rhetorical separation of the old Confederacy from the idea of America. The South becomes a foreign polity with intentions and practices at odds with the United States. Blacks in this "country" are a repressed minority, beset by a corrupt power structure that claims to hold their best interests foremost. The dictates of this power structure are maintained by psychological and physical violence so pervasive that every level of the society seems complicit. Democratic political, legal, and economic systems have broken down, to be replaced by hierarchies of power that work exclusively to maintain themselves, a feature common to totalitarian regimes. However, as Griffin's narrative unfolds, even the South is seen to contain pockets of democratic idealism that stand out even more forcefully by contrast.

Griffin's success hinged upon his ability to pass, a tactic that linked him to the ex-Communist witnesses of the fifties whose subterfuge was made paramount by the need for information. Transgressing a racial boundary could be exempt from societal taboos if it served the greater good, not just dissipating what Griffin called an "area of unknowing" (41) between black and white America, but presenting the effort and the findings in the most public way possible and disseminating those findings to the widest audience possible. While Gayle Wald has recently criticized Griffin for deviating from "traditional anthropological inquiry" and for ignoring "the segregation of participation and observation"<sup>29</sup> such inquiry enforces, viewing his actions as those of an informant engaged in espionage eliminates the possibility that participating and observing can be separate.<sup>30</sup> In addition, considering the book's impact as propaganda assumes that Griffin-as-anthropologist is just one more layer of the disguise. Once he has altered his racial identity, participation is assured. These assumptions about the resulting text as cultivator of broad U.S. interests rest entirely upon Griffin's rhetorical positioning of the objects of his investigation.

Griffin's depiction of an encounter in the Greyhound Bus Terminal in New Orleans can be cited to emphasize this positioning. His responses during this episode partake both of established myth about Southerners and of the disruptions to that myth being broadcast as the formerly isolated region is beset by enhanced media coverage. Having just been rebuffed in his attempts to cash a traveler's check ("It was not their refusal . . . [but] the bad manners they displayed."), Griffin depends upon the region's reputation for graciousness, having experienced it consistently as a white man. The woman at the ticket window, little suspecting that she is facing anyone but a black man, drops her mask of Southern hospitality: and levels on Griffin a look, he writes, that "was so exaggeratedly hateful I would have been amused if I had not been so surprised" (53). While Griffin is surprised by the "otherwise attractive face" turned "violently" sour, that transformation probably jolted few of the world's citizens who had followed the Little Rock desegregation crisis. UPI photographer Jack Jenkins had immortalized the Southern-belle-gone-bad with his "First Day at School, Little Rock," in which the face of a white female student is captured in mid-jeer just over the shoulder of one of the black students, Elizabeth Eckford. The photo remains even today a potent signifier of race hatred and stoicism.<sup>31</sup> However, one year before *Black Like Me* appeared, America had embraced yet another version of the myth of Southern hospitality; "The Andy Griffith Show" premiered in October 1960, and its success suggested a white audience that longed for the myth to be restored even as the nightly news undercut it. Griffin himself sounds a little like Sheriff Andy Taylor deeming the woman's behavior "unlady-like," but when he turns to encounter another stare from a middle-aged white man, the rhetoric intensifies:

He sat a few yards away, fixing his eyes on me. Nothing can describe the withering horror of this. You feel lost, sick at

heart before such unmasked hatred, not so much because it threatens you as because it shows humans in such an inhuman light. You see a kind of insanity, something so obscene the very obscenity of it (rather than its threat) terrifies you. (54)

Adopting the second person, Griffin situates his audience within the drama, even as he declares to them that he can't. My point is not that he has adopted a stratagem familiar to any freshman composition class, but that, as rhetoric, it embodies, rather than expresses, confusion. A passage in which "Nothing can describe" is concluded by "withering horror." By focusing on psychology and behavior Griffin reveals that the terms of his discourse will be exclusively subjective, when they serve his purpose. Here, hatred spreads confusion, producing a kind of identity dissolve between writer and reader, with that very confusion an essential part of the argument. In moments such as these in the text, Griffin *is* the cold war liberal posited by Schaub, the one who understands that "literature doesn't merely tell us what reality is like . . . it reminds us of what reality is."<sup>32</sup> The failure in the racist mind to see beyond the surface—the same kind of rank simplicity that Cold War liberals saw in their leftist manifestations of the thirties and forties—is equated with "a kind of insanity," and that insanity is pronounced "obscene." Griffin's liberalism directs us to the ultimate transgression against reality—the hatred that shows the hater "in such an inhuman light." To think as does the Southerner in the bus station demeans both the object and subject of hatred. The "hate stare" (53) can perceive only a world segregated by black and white, absent of nuance. It is blind to the "fateful medley of lights and darks,"<sup>33</sup> Richard Chase's metaphor of complex reality. In a state of diseased social relations, passing enables Griffin's liberal to do more than merely deceive the citizens; he can identify an even more fundamental failure of perception.

The value of seeing clearly, of understanding the power of surfaces to deceive, is emphasized in a later encounter, and the "obscenity" of hatred is revealed as a core of moral corruption. Exposing whites as dissemblers—a Southern "lady" as inhospitable, for example—is insufficient for Griffin's purposes. He must depict a Southern type who disguises that corrupt center, and myths of black sexuality held by Southern whites offer recurrent opportunities for such revelations. While hitchhiking between Mobile and Montgomery, Griffin accepts a ride from a "large, pleasant-faced" man in a light truck. Griffin is initially taken aback by the shotgun propped next to the man's knee, but he is assured by the driver that its purpose is hunting deer (102). This meeting and what it subsequently exposes are grounded by Griffin's description:

I learned he was a married man, fifty-three years old, father of a family now grown and grandfather of two grown children. He was certainly, by the tone of his conversation, an

active civic leader and respected member of his community. I began to hope that I had encountered a decent white. (102)

But the conversation takes a “salacious” turn as the driver begins to question Griffin about his family, particularly his wife. Pushing him to reveal his wife’s sexual history with white men, the driver goes on to boast of his conquest of every black woman he has ever hired for either housework or business, declaring, “If they don’t put out, they don’t get the job” (102). Griffin seizes the moment to point out to the reader the “grotesque hypocrisy” of the constantly reiterated Southern fear of racial mongrelization, but after the white man has taken offense at Griffin’s silence and threatened him comes this passage of corruption visualized:

I forced myself to silence, forced myself to picture this man in his other roles. I saw him as he played with his grandchildren, as he stood up in church with open hymnal in his hand, as he drank a cup of coffee in the morning before dressing and then shaved and talked with his wife pleasantly about nothing, as he visited with friends on the front porch Sunday afternoons. That was the man I had seen when I first got into the truck. The amiable, decent American was in all his features. This was the dark tangent in every man’s belly, the sickness, the coldness, the mercilessness, the lust to cause pain or fear through self-power. Surely not even his wife or closest friends had ever seen him like this. It was a side he would show to no one but his victims, or those who connived with him. (104)

Griffin assumes, I think rightly, that such a picture will be much more frightening than the stereotypical, slaving redneck, so his “vision” is rhetorically inspired, assigning a certain complexity to the sexual predator. By complicating the “dark tangent” with images of an average American, he presents this individual’s malice as even more threatening for being clandestine and conspiratorial and ensures that his “decent” readers will ascribe it to a particular bent in the Southern male personality, some holdover from centuries of slave-owning. At the same time, these challenges to appearance align Griffin’s text with a decade’s worth of fear-mongering in ex-Communist memoirs and force his readership to recognize that distrust is an appropriate response to the South as well.<sup>34</sup> Finally, such an episode—and others might be cited<sup>35</sup>—laces his narrative with an increasingly conservative postwar liberalism. The humanist who seems to narrate the opening entries is being “toughened up,” forced to acknowledge the reality of rampant evil in his encounters with Southern whites.

As Griffin’s liberalism “evolves” in the course of his journey, the complexity of his encounters with perceptions of black sexuality grows. The link be-

tween sexuality and violence in the region had been overt since the heyday of the slave economy, and since Reconstruction the most commonly expressed or assumed rationale for lynching was a crime against white womanhood. The "punishment" meted out to transgressors answered demands of white masculinity. The dynamic here, of course, was one of possession rather than disinterested protection; white males would simply assert their proprietary rights against the claims—mostly imaginary—of black males. Privilege exists on only one side of the color bar, and the exchange with this "family man" makes the point as he attempts to "possess" Griffin's own wife metaphorically by pushing Griffin to admit her previous sexual experiences with whites. Griffin's wife has "had it" from a white man, but he cannot reveal this fact without exposing his own racial identity and pressuring his own puritanical attitudes about the issue. Griffin's understandable but suppressed anger connects him quite genuinely to the state in which African Americans lived their lives, but his political orientation in the "vital center" of the postwar political spectrum demands that rage not motivate action, that reason hold sway. However, this matter of black-white sexual relations introduces inevitably the specter of violence. While Griffin reports the threat of violence from whites almost constantly, he is curiously silent about the threat of retaliation from blacks, and in the South of 1959, this omission says much about Griffin's distance from the people he is imitating and about how he wants his testimony to play to the broader, international readership.<sup>36</sup>

One result of Griffin's liberal subjectivity is that the historical context of his journey as presented is highly selective. From his dreams about the hate stare (114-15) to the condition of sociological study of the African American, Griffin rarely mentions the world beyond the South. This narrowed focus effectively represents the constricted view of a captive in this oppressive state, but it also can be read as a kind of advocacy by elision. In January of 1959 a general strike in Cuba forced military dictator Fulgencio Batista into exile and brought Fidel Castro to power. Missing from Griffin's account is any hint of the relevance of this event for southern blacks even though they were being exhorted by the African-American press to consider direct parallels between it and them. As Julian Mayfield wrote in the April 1959 issue of *Ebony*: "The colored American should take a good look at the Cuban Revolution. . . . The important lesson in the Cuban experience is that social change need not wait on the patient education of white supremacists."<sup>37</sup>

Griffin seems to overlook the rage that might organize or express itself in any way other than black-on-black violence. Although there is sufficient evidence to claim that such "internal" response to frustration was real and widespread, not all blacks were killing each other in juke joint knife fights or adopting "naturally" the non-violent tactics of Reverend Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Griffin even recounts an incident in the "enlightened" city of New Orleans during which he is harassed by a white bully. Only his threat of physical retaliation heads off the confrontation (37-41).

The lesson seems lost on him, but black self-defense had been a headline issue in both the black and white press since May 1959, when Robert Williams, head of a North Carolina chapter of the NAACP, had vowed to “meet violence with violence.” Editors of the *Carolina Times* called his public declaration and the ensuing furor “the biggest civil rights story of [the year].”<sup>38</sup> One possible reason for Griffin’s omission is that he simply did not encounter any African Americans for whom the changeover in Cuba was worth mentioning. But it is also possible that depicting the pure victimhood of the black underclass is integral to the strategy of containment.

Griffin’s positioning of the Southern blacks and whites in his text can be appraised more evocatively in relation to Arthur M. Schlesinger’s *The Vital Center* (1949). Though now considered a period piece, a decade after its publication the historian’s influential paradigm was thought to have located a site of moderation in American politics that wedded the interests of both corporate capitalism and democracy. In Schlesinger’s scheme, the virulent anti-Communism of the Dixiecrats or the segregationist southern wing of the Democratic Party placed them beyond the pale of solid centrist politics. Certainly, by 1959 the South’s red-baiting as a means of tarnishing civil rights activism and policy had been seriously undermined by the call of the middle—the need for rational decision-making and a nationwide sense of the dangers courted by extremists, regardless of political orientation. In his case for the failure of the right in America and the minimal danger of fascism, Schlesinger argues that the social situation in the U.S. “makes the rise of fascism unlikely.”<sup>39</sup> However, he does mention that “[o]nly the South has the tradition of violence to sustain even an appearance of fascism.” This remark comes across as part of Schlesinger’s argument that America is relatively safe from the threat of demagoguery, but as context for Griffin’s containment strategy, it takes on added significance. The arguable question of whether the South is America’s specifically violent region aside, the portrayal in *Black Like Me* of the white South’s propensity toward violence is vital for “outlawing” that region in the eyes of the world. At the same time, Griffin’s white liberal cannot show the world sympathy for black armed resistance in the South; to suggest that change there might be effected by other than lawful, legislative means is to point up the failure of democracy and its rationality.<sup>40</sup>

Terrorism, however, forces the metaphor of containment to its most explicit moment. If Griffin’s tarring of the South seems to require an inordinately large brush, the occasion of Mack Charles Parker’s abduction and lynch murder focuses the text upon a locale that emerges as the heart of Southern intolerance and defiance of federal law: Mississippi. In the spring of 1959 Parker had been jailed on rape charges in the small town of Poplarville, but two days before his trial nine masked men took him from his cell, drove to the Pearl River, shot him twice, and dumped him into the river. A grand jury impaneled in November—while Griffin was in New Orleans—brought forth no indictments. Sebe Dale, a circuit court judge, told the jury that Parker’s death had probably been caused

by Supreme Court decisions.<sup>41</sup> Griffin decides to go to Mississippi when the refusal of the grand jury to take the investigation further makes headlines.

Although the Supreme Court had outlawed segregation on interstate transportation in 1946, the trip into Mississippi serves as one more example of the difference between the law of the United States and the practice of the South. The trope of an "enemy country" figures prominently. Crossing the state line from Louisiana, Griffin feels the palpable change of atmosphere; the fear and edginess of the black passengers noticeably intensifies. Griffin is approached by a man named Bill Williams who, having pegged him as a stranger to the state, introduces him to local mores and taboos. After several suggestions about conduct, particularly around white women, Bill asks the other passengers if he's forgotten anything, and the solidarity of the travelers is further confirmed. Griffin continues:

He asked if I had made arrangements for a place to stay. I told him no. He said the best thing would be for me to contact a certain person who would put me in touch with someone reliable who would find me a decent and safe place. (62)

With the language of an operative infiltrating an enemy state, Griffin uses the bus ride to underscore the idea of difference designated by boundaries. Borders between states become distinctions between social systems and gradations between ways of life for African Americans—bad in Louisiana, worse in Mississippi. In fact, Jim Crow differed from town to town, county to county. After some gratuitous abuse from the bus driver during a rest stop, Griffin

sat in the monochrome gloom of dusk, scarcely believing that in this year of freedom any man could deprive another of anything so basic as the need to quench thirst or use the rest room. There was nothing of the feel of America here. It was rather some strange country suspended in ugliness. Tension hung in the air, a continual threat, even though you could not put your finger on it. (63)

"Nothing of the feel of America here"—the phrase compresses Griffin's outrage within his more substantial political intentions for the text. In order for his book to succeed as a story of the distinctions blurred by passing, other distinctions must be etched even more vividly. Through the additional experience that passing makes possible, Griffin's liberalism becomes more clearly that of Schlesinger, Niebuhr, or Hartz, an advocacy of the "middle" to the exclusion of extremes. In the South, the "feel of America" is defined by its absence.

Just as vital as white propensity for threat and violence is the complementary depiction of the black South as long-suffering, law-abiding, and passive. At one point during his Alabama travels, not long after the encounter with the grand-

father in his truck, Griffin is picked up in the night on a desolate stretch of highway by a young black sawmill worker. The man affirms the value of hard work, asserting that it's the only way out, and Griffin poses a pre-war liberal alternative:

I asked him if he could not get together with some of the others and strike for better wages. He laughed with real amusement.

"Do you know how long we'd last, doing something like that?"

"Well, if you stuck together, they sure couldn't kill you all."

"They could damn sure try," he snorted. "Anyway, how long could I feed my kids? There's only a couple of stores in twenty miles. They'd cut off credit and refuse to sell to us. Without money coming in, none of us could live." (107-8)

Seen from this perspective, the passivity of southern African Americans is nothing if not reasonable. The episode points to the difficulties of collective resistance in the rural isolation of the South and to the resultant difference between capitalist America and this agrarian economy. But it is the family that makes the greatest impression here, both on Griffin and his readers. Griffin's overnight stay with this man (not named), his wife, and their six children puts a black face on the myth of Southern hospitality. Meager sustenance and cramped space are shared without any apparent hesitation, and the high point of the evening's meal is a course of Milky Way bars that Griffin has been carrying. Beset by the thoughts of his own daughter's fifth birthday and the plenitude occasioned by the date, he sees afresh the crime being perpetrated on not just an entire generation, but on the basic foundation of the society. His meditation on the family as target underscores the insidiousness of a segregationist world:

One can scarcely conceive the full horror of it unless one is a parent who takes a close look at his children and then asks himself how he would feel if a group of men should come to his door and tell him they had decided—for reasons of convenience to them—that his children's lives would henceforth be restricted, their world smaller, their educational opportunities less, their future mutilated. (113)

The façade of the white grandfatherly Rotarian that hides a sexual predator also suggests that the white Southern family, centered as it is upon such a patriarchy, is itself a front for corruption. The black family, in its victimized state, exists in perpetual tenuousness. These domestic tensions reverberate with standard mo-

tifs in anti-Communist propaganda—the poisoning of children's minds and the destruction of the family.<sup>42</sup>

Griffin's eventual stint in the showcase of the "New South"—Atlanta—provides his text with the element of hope that the containment narrative requires, but upon his arrival there, his outlook matches that of the weary, oppressed African Americans he has lived among: "I had arrived in Atlanta feeling that the situation for the Negro in the South was utterly hopeless—due to the racists' powerful hold on the purse strings of whites and Negroes alike; and due to the lack of unanimity among Negroes" (136). For all Griffin's experience of reflexive hatred and simmering violence, he has concluded that the core of the problem is economic. Just as the USIA had planned to counter international communism by extolling the virtues of capitalism, Griffin's journey ends where promise abounds through economic reform. By the time he rides into Atlanta, Griffin could confess to considerable accord with Schlesinger's liberalism: "The modern American capitalist . . . has come to share many values with the American liberal: beliefs in personal integrity, political freedom and equality of opportunity."<sup>43</sup> Economic opportunity began to function as propagandistic shorthand for democratic reform; in the South it was the antidote to racial oppression, and in the Third World, it was meant to defuse the revolutionary violence of Communist insurgency.

Like Schlesinger and the post-war liberals before him, Griffin recognizes the absolute necessity of an economy that provides equality of opportunity and reward, even if the structures of political power lag behind. A few years later (1964) Howard Zinn would document his own sojourn in the "enemy's country" with a surprisingly optimistic take on the longevity of segregation. He was convinced that white Southerners would gladly repudiate Jim Crow whenever economic pressure was brought to bear.<sup>44</sup> Griffin's experience of Atlanta, however, is told from the perspective of his adopted racial status and substantiates the propagandistic aims of the text. Not for Griffin the black militants who were already beginning to wrestle with King and others for control of African American loyalties. *His* militants are capitalists—the heroes of an Atlanta reconstructed in the Washingtonian ideal of economic emancipation.

Griffin cites the arrival in Atlanta in the 1930s of two economists, L. D. Milton and J. B. Blayton, who began to put into action their ideas about black self-sufficiency. These men recognized that the black community's dependence upon white-owned banks and other financial sources would simply perpetuate its second-class status. Milton and Blayton preached the doctrine of financial consolidation, and their efforts resulted in the establishment of two banks from which the economic base of black Atlanta arose. Housing, education, and entrepreneurship all improved with the availability of loans, and the average black businessman gained leverage with white money-men. Standards of living crept higher, with, as Zinn would argue at almost the same time, the profit motive proving stronger than the will to segregate.<sup>45</sup>

This narrative of capitalism as weapon against racial oppression seems just the kind of parable that the USIA would disseminate among the developing nations on the move. *Black Like Me* enacts a perfect snare—an international audience relishes what it thinks is one more exposure of American hypocrisy and African American oppression, only to be shown that the United States has the most effective remedy: the capitalist system. Griffin goes on to quote T. M. Alexander, one of the founders of the Southeastern Fidelity Fire Insurance Company, and Alexander's words have a curious ring: "There is no 'big Me' and 'little you.' We must pool all of our resources, material and mental, to gain the respect that will enable all of us to walk the streets with the dignity of American citizens" (139). Black Atlanta's capitalism operates as a communal force; the mass behind the system gives it its power. No better description could be applied to that USIA catch-phrase "People's Capitalism." Implicit is the idea that the isolated mill worker in Alabama will eventually be absorbed into such a protective, empowering mass. However, for all his apotheosizing of capitalism, Griffin points out as well that Atlanta had all the democratic essentials in place: a populace united behind leaders of "high education, long vision and great dynamism"; an enlightened city administration; and a newspaper (the *Atlanta Constitution*) oriented in the tradition of Southern liberalism. No need for either riots or boycotts here.

Although the election of 1960 could be read in part as a national repudiation of Eisenhower's reluctance to deal with the South in any but the most cursory fashion, John F. Kennedy took office primarily as a cold warrior, domestic reform in the area of civil rights placed far down on his list of concerns.<sup>46</sup> Such prioritizing is the result—as argued by Schlesinger, Niebuhr, and others—of a definition of reality that characterizes the world as complex and dark. A democracy built upon a broad coalition of interests both corporate and political provides the most reasonable approach to this environment. Griffin's account, inspired by the most idealistic yearning, begins in a kind of Eisenhower-era simplicity, a world in which problems of race prejudice and violence might be countered by a simple transposition—a walk-a-mile-in-the-other-man's-shoes approach. But by the time he sits down to the task of writing, Griffin has been changed by his experience, and the journey of discovery takes on the contours of that new liberal thought, one that sees the extremism of Southern segregation as both simple-minded *and* debilitating, definitely not politically expedient in the Cold War universe. The book would ultimately create a scapegoat for American reactionary impulses and promote a doctrine of moderate resolve in response.

Wrenched by the surprising success of his book, Griffin's subsequent life was shaped by a potent and uncomfortable irony. As a reluctant spokesperson for the civil rights movement, he was resented by the people he supposedly spoke for and both admired and hated by the whites he spoke to. The movement from racial double agent to public figure paralleled his growing awareness of a

black/white world that was increasingly gray. An additional irony inheres in the durability of the book for its simple idealism—it continues to be promoted as a means for white students to engage in the effort for racial empathy.<sup>47</sup> It was originally, however, formed in a crucible that challenged such idealism and necessitated a containment story to serve a revised liberalism. Returning to *Black Like Me* in this way reminds us, as Mary Dudziak affirms, that "[t]here is something to be gained by setting American history within an international context, by telling American stories with attention to the world's influence upon them and their influence upon the world."<sup>48</sup> Griffin may have begun a story meant to confirm his own deeply felt Christian humanism, but the resulting narrative answered the call for an entirely different kind of containment.

### Notes

I'd like to thank my colleagues Matthew Costello, Judith Hiltner, and Gus Kolich for reading this essay in its various drafts. Their responses and encouragement have been crucial to its satisfactory completion. Thanks, too, to my wife Mary for her patience and confidence.

1. See Stephen J. Whitfield, "The Road to Rapprochement: Khrushchev's 1959 Visit to America" in *The Other Fifties: Interrogating Midcentury American Icons* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1997): 307-32.

2. See Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: the CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The New Press, 1999): 17.

3. Gayle Wald, "'A Most Disagreeable Mirror': Reflections on White Identity in *Black Like Me*" in *Passing and the Fictions of Identity* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1996): 154. Wald's examination of Griffin's book in the context of whiteness studies is one of the most perceptive and useful treatments of the book.

4. See Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2001): 74. Since the mid-eighties a number of scholars have been engaged in a more expansive consideration of the domestic and international civil rights movements. In this effort they have followed the example, from over twenty years before, of Harold Isaacs in *The New World of Negro Americans* (New York: John Day, 1963). Isaacs himself is indebted to the work of W.E.B. Du Bois in depicting the post-war situation confronting African Americans and their awareness of the linkages between their conditions in the U.S. and those of so-called racial minorities in the emergent nation-states of Africa. More recently, the implications for American Cold War foreign policy have been analyzed and argued in important studies that have influenced the current article. In addition to Borstelmann's work, see Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1997); Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2000); Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001); Joseph A. Fry, *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations, 1789-1973* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 2002); Philip Klinkner and Rogers M. Smith, *The Unsteady March: the Rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1999); Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams & the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1999); Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 2004). With varying emphases, all of these works explore the complex interrelations between foreign policy and domestic civil rights, revealing that racial reform in this country was necessary to maintaining any semblance of American authenticity in the ideological struggle between the superpowers. That struggle, in turn, exerted considerable pressure on federal and state governments that African American leaders used to their advantage. As most of these scholars reiterate, the American South becomes the crux of the dilemma for the United States.

5. See Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1996).

6. Victor Navasky, *Naming Names* (New York: Viking, 1980): 16.

7. Some of the best known of these narratives are Elizabeth Bentley's *Out of Bondage: The Story of Elizabeth Bentley* (London: R. Hunt Davis, 1952); Louis Budenz, *Men Without*

*Faces: The Communist Conspiracy in the U. S. A.* (New York: Harper, 1950); Angela Calomiris, *Red Masquerade: Undercover for the F.B.I.* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1950); Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York: Random House, 1952); Hede Massing, *This Deception* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1951); Boris Morros [as told to Charles Samuels], *My Ten Years as a Counterspy* (New York: Dell, 1959); Herbert Philbrick, *I Led Three Lives* (New York: Capitol Hill Press, 1952 / 1972).

8. Thomas Schaub, *American Fiction in the Cold War* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1991): 5.

9. John Howard Griffin, *Black Like Me* (New York; Signet, 1961/1996): 7. Further references are to this edition and will be noted parenthetically in the text.

10. Malcolm X (with Alex Haley), *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove Press, 1965): 417.

11. See Wald, "Disagreeable," 155. See also Eric Lott, "White Like Me: Racial Cross-Dressing and the Construction of American Whiteness" in Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1993) 474-495.

12. See Schaub, *American Fiction*, 17. Also consult Robert J. Corber, *In the Name of National Security: Hitchcock, Homophobia, and the Political Construction of Gender in Postwar America* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1993): 12. Corber argues for Cold War liberals' attempts to "reclaim 'reality' from Popular Front writers" by shifting attention from the material world to the individual's subjective experience of it.

13. See Wald, "Disagreeable," 151-52.

14. See Schaub, *American Fiction*, 11.

15. Qtd. in Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*. See her chapter on the Little Rock integration battle, 133.

16. *Ibid.*, 37.

17. Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997) 10-11.

18. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 13.

19. Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, Revised and Updated Edition (Basic Books, 1999).

20. In addition to May's and Corber's studies, see also Alan Nadel, *Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1995); essays by Joanne Meyerowitz and Jane Sherron De Hart in Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert, eds., *Rethinking Cold War Culture* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001); and Meyerowitz's *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1994).

21. In addition to Larry J. Griffin's "Why Was the South a Problem?" consult also the other essays in Griffin and Don H. Doyle, eds., *The South as an American Problem* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1995). See also Fred Hobson, *Tell About the South: The Southern Rage to Explain* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1983) for a probing examination of the oppositional stance, its roots, and its ramifications.

22. Carl Degler, "Thesis, Antithesis, Synthesis: The South, the North, and the Nation," *Journal of Southern History* 53 (February 1987): 3-18.

23. Nadel, *Containment Culture*, 4.

24. See John Egerton, *The Americanization of Dixie, the Southernization of America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

25. See Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, for an account of the Wilson case, 3-6.

26. Jackson, quoted in Hixson, *Curtain*, 130.

27. See Hixson's study as well as Theodore Sorensen, *The Word War: The Story of American Propaganda* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968); Leo Bogart, *Cool Words, Cold War: A New Look at USIA's Premises for Propaganda*, Revised Edition (Washington DC: The American University Press, 1995).

28. See Hixson, *Curtain*, 143-150, for an account of the American exhibits at the 1958 Brussels Universal and International Exhibition. Eisenhower's lack of sympathy for a particular display entitled "Unfinished Work" led to a publicized blow-up between him and the deputy director of the American pavilion, James Plaut. The President "objected very strongly to the 'finger-pointing' implicit in the setting up by a New Englander [Plaut] of an exhibit critical of the South on the racial problem" (147).

29. Wald, "Disagreeable," 157.

30. See Hugh Rank, "The Rhetorical Effectiveness of *Black Like Me*," *English Journal* 57 (September, 1968): 816. Rank notes the manner in which Griffin's adventure . . . parallels that of the spy, the prisoner-of-war, or the 'innocent prisoner' plotting alone, in secret, against the evil institution . . ." Rank's point, however, is that Griffin is employing a rhetorical device, "an appeal being made to get the reader's empathy toward the individual who is at odds with an oppressive system." I see Griffin's text occupying a cultural function created by different phenomena. While one ramification is certainly reader sympathy, I believe the political forces at

work are more complex than is suggested by Griffin's simply paralleling a model available at the time in the media or fiction.

31. I have attributed this photograph as it can be found in Numan Bartley's *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South During the 1950s* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1999). However, in Pete Daniel's *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950s* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2000) the photograph (not reproduced) is attributed to Will Counts, and Daniel provides the backstory to the picture. Hazel Bryan is the young white woman captured screaming, and Elizabeth Eckford, the stoic black high school student. Daniel reveals that Bryan later apologized to Eckford and that Counts persuaded the two to pose together at the fortieth anniversary of the crisis.

32. Schaub, *American Fiction*, 23. In this passage, Schaub cites Richard Chase and his study of Melville, a passage in which Chase distinguishes modern liberalism (the still-persistent political left) from a liberalism that understands reality as "diverse, paradoxical, and complicated."

33. Schaub quotes this passage from Chase, 23.

34. Such moments of "recognition" are characteristic of the ex-Communist accounts. Elizabeth Bentley, for example, recalls her first encounter: "I only knew I hadn't expected that a Communist would look like Lee—well fed, nicely dressed, well balanced, and healthy. I suddenly became aware that I was staring at her intently, as if she were a strange animal in the zoo, and I flushed with embarrassment" (19).

35. As an instance, see Griffin's encounter with the middle-aged white in Jackson Square in New Orleans. He is fooled by appearances again—"Racists are not the pipe-smoking type, I thought to myself" (46-7). Griffin is ordered, politely, to leave the park, an area in which blacks and whites of the city commonly mingled without incident.

36. Rank notes that in his "Epilogue" Griffin links together his hopes for progress in race relations and his fears of a violent black reactions, but the "Epilogue" that extends the text past the "August 17" journal entry was obviously completed sometime after 1968, in the wake of Martin Luther King's assassination and the subsequent rioting. In 1959-61 that "fear" is, like Griffin's personal anger during his journey, largely withheld.

37. Quoted in Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 222.

38. *Ibid.*, 149. Williams's vow and the controversy surrounding it had actually been pre-  
saged by another event from nearly a decade earlier. Carl Rowan's account of a riot in Columbia, Tennessee, in 1946, comes from his own journey through the Jim Crow South that yielded *South of Freedom* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1952/1980). Five years after the Columbia riot, Rowan visits the town to find that as a result of the disturbance, "Columbia's Negroes had come out ahead" (49). Their willingness to oppose a white lynch mob, while resulting directly in bloodshed and destruction, had the longer term result of respect for the town's blacks. Certainly such a lesson—violent resistance leads to positive results—would have been anathema not only to Griffin's readers, but to the author himself. See Rowan, 38-49. For another account of the confrontation in Columbia, Tennessee, see also John Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1994): 361-65.

39. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1949), 33. Consult also Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (New York: Scribners, 1952) and Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, 1955).

40. It is interesting to note that when Gerda and Carl Lerner adapted Griffin's book for the screen in 1964, a melodramatic rendering with James Whitmore in the starring role, they wrote in the part of a young black militant played by Al Freeman, Jr., who would later play Elijah Muhammed in Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*.

41. See James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York, Oxford, 1996), 412.

42. For a good example of this propaganda, see "Red Nightmare" (1955), a Jack Webb-produced television special.

43. Schlesinger, *The Vital Center*, 29.

44. See Howard Zinn, *The Southern Mystique* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2002).

45. *Ibid.*, 53.

46. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 155.

47. Wald, "Disagreeable," 152.

48. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 252.