

in an orphanage. He discovers at age 50 and under Pam's influence that he was the son of a promiscuous and self-destructive middle-class English girl and an itinerant Jewish sea cook. Since his grandmother was a Jewish convert to Christianity who reverted to Judaism after the death of her son in World War I, he figures that he is Jewish. So he eventually leaves Pam and their illegitimate daughter to move to Israel. Pam ultimately decides to leave her bisexual girl friend and follow her lover.

The sickest part of this weird extravaganza is the rearing of children. We learn about the mother of the sailor, who drove her own mother to suicide by her crazy promiscuity, then moved in with Dad for a while to torture him, and finally killed herself. The sailor, as mentioned, deserts his illegitimate daughter. The bisexual at least stays with her kids, but she brings them up in an atmosphere of homosexual promiscuity and open cheating on the British welfare state. The children in *Lord of the Flies* had better supervision.

No Shades of Gray

Roy Wilkins with Tom Mathews: *Standing Fast: The Autobiography of Roy Wilkins*; Viking Press; New York.

Roger Wilkins: *A Man's Life: An Autobiography*; Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Keith Bower

The following story is the typical fare of television's *60 Minutes*. In the Algiers section of New Orleans, two black men were separately shot by police in the middle of the night. They had been suspected of being involved in the death of a New Orleans police officer. Two fel-

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Eternal vigilance is the price of sanity and normalcy. This sanity is capable of producing cathartic visions of human pride and weakness and tragedy, an *Oedipus*, a *Lord of the Flies*. When we cease to strive for the normal and the sane, however, we achieve neither freedom nor self-fulfillment. Our visions are no longer moving tragedies but degrading farces without meaning, without insight, without beauty. Sophocles' and William Golding's lives of probity and sanity preserve the possibility of the normal and the tragic in their worst imaginings of destruction and horror, like the father in *Shadow of a Doubt*. Uncle Charlie and Alan Sillitoe's Pam try to make immorality seem charming and almost normal, a spurious victory over marriage and hometown and normal life. Behind the smiling mask is a horror that is worse than any endured by Oedipus or the children in *Lord of the Flies* because it degrades, it denatures. Any skill that disguises or defends such degradation is not art; it is blasphemy. □

low blacks swore affidavits that the suspects had initiated fire on the investigating officers. Later, both witnesses said their testimony had been extracted by force. A black rookie officer corroborated their retractions, saying that he had remained silent and gone along with the third-degree tactics in order to win the approval of his colleagues. The program went on to imply that when a cop is killed some black will end up paying for it with blood. Now, either there was a brutal transgression of the Fifth Amendment in Louisiana, or there's a whole lot of jivin' goin' on. Either way, the case says something about racism in contemporary America. How far have we come when police can perpetrate racist violence in front of a black officer with an assumption that he won't say anything?

In Roy Wilkins's autobiography there is ample recounting of such injustices; they are real, documented cases. One of them, the hangings of three circus roustabouts by a mob in Duluth, Minnesota, hits close to home. I'm from Minnesota, yet I don't know about racism: I can't imagine men swinging from lamp posts 60-odd years ago. Recently in St. Louis I walked into a liquor store in what I later found out was one of those districts you don't go into late at night. The clerk (a woman) told me to get my "white ass" out quick after I'd been shortchanged two dollars and asked for an audit. I got off lightly, feeling as if I had somehow helped to rectify in part some ageless debt. My perspiration was probably like that of Roy Wilkins when he was detained by crackers near Dundee, Mississippi, or Roger Wilkins when roused by police during the Detroit riots. In so many ways we are all alike.

Both of the Wilkinses have spent time in many of the places I have. The house Roy Wilkins grew up in (on Galtier in St. Paul) was idyllic compared to the "project" I once rented in the Selby-Dale slum. Roger lived for a time on Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis. It is now an Indian ghetto. I lived there as a janitor, slept with my bicycle, and kept three deadbolts on the door. They grew up knowing that there were many things a black could never be, or so they were taught. Roger's father disabused him at a tender age of his notion of being a railroad engineer. Roy remembers that same incident in his autobiography. I never heard there was anything I couldn't be in America. But there is one thing I can't be, and I forget about it until I find myself in places like the St. Louis liquor store. I'll never be a brother.

Both of these men lived about as comfortably as a black can in America. Roy admits it; Roger bewails his fate. There is an embarrassed sense of having lucked out. Roy is from an older generation and prides himself on having made the right decisions and on making the most of his good upbringing. Roger is

tormented by the ease with which he broke into the inner circle of the white elite—parties at Lillian Hellman's and at Leonard Bernstein's digs—and by the distance this put between him and his race. Roger Wilkins's life appears to have been one long ingratiating, integrated soiree, with him as the only integrator. He recounts this nightmare over and over: at the Gridiron Club watching Richard and Spiro play minstrel songs, at a Fourth of July fireworks display in northwest Washington with five thousand white faces, being chosen by the Ford Foundation to integrate the Harmony Club, New York's German Jewish stronghold. Grueling.

Roger's book is the more interesting, and depressing, of the two. Roy's autobiography is worthwhile, especially for anyone interested in how an organization like the N.A.A.C.P. (founded by whites) grew into a national power. As a condensed history of the civil-rights movement in America from 1920-1970 it is valuable. But it doesn't provide much about Roy Wilkins: he is a journalist and his book is straight journalism. Everything is seen in the light of the delicate politics of race; there are few redeeming white folks and scores of bigots. Incidents of unfairness and nastiness are compounded to illustrate the way things really were, from the Ossian Sweet Case to the Scottsboro Nine to the Packard Strike to the Algiers Motel. Thurgood Marshall, Walter White, and W.E.B. DuBois take on heroic proportions, and well they might.

It is odd how little of Martin Luther King appears in either book. That is perhaps because both Roy and Roger Wilkins wisely avoided the front lines. Roy saw Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown as the shades of Marcus Garvey come to Jim Crow the black movement back into separatism. He comments on the generation gap he noticed between himself and the activists, who refused his request that they observe a day of rest to let Luci Baines Johnson be wed in peace, saying:

You have displayed more backbone in defending Luci than you have shown for the millions of black people being brutalized every day in the United States. You have displayed more backbone in defending Luci than you have shown for the colored people of Vietnam being napalmed by Luci's father.

That was the rhetoric of the 60's, and the soldiers of the so-called Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee did not appreciate the compliment being paid them by a wizened general who thought that they could understand the element of decorum and respect he recommended to them. Roy Wilkins knew what the communists wanted out of the black race, and he never forgave them for choosing his people as martyrs for the infernal dialectic. His life had a single purpose: to guarantee that all people be treated alike under the law. It was a noble purpose, and we can thank Roy Wilkins for helping to keep open the middle course between black and white extremism so that this necessary reconstruction could be accomplished.

Roger Wilkins's story is more interesting. Roger Wilkins's single concern, by his own admission, was Roger Wilkins. His book is an apology to his two children for the time he spent away from them building his career, first with the Agency for International Development, then with the Justice Department, then the Community Relations Service, the Ford Foundation, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and finally the *Washington Star*. His life is a conscientious attempt to do things on his own, to get to the point where people no longer call him Roy Wilkins, or mistake

him for Julian Bond. He isn't there yet.

One tiresome aspect of the book, for which he has no apology, is his disastrous sex life. Phil Donahue blames his own divorce on the Roman Catholic Church's deluding him into taking his spouse for granted, as if separations had never occurred in that congregation before. Roger Wilkins blames America for teaching him to lust after white women but settle for a black wife. He does apologize for the mahogany walls in his Ford Foundation office, for the weekend jaunts to Jamaica and Martinique, where he is tortured in spirit and finds it necessary to "get into" his West Indian servants, gain their acceptance, before he can be happy. Taking a white mistress along doesn't help. Roger Wilkins's whole life is a case of "There but for the Grace of God"—only he doesn't believe in God. He does confess to being a Christian in his "marrow" and is obliged to his preacher-grandfather for his vestigial sense of fairness. But when the Jamaican bartender kindly adds his tab to some anonymous white man's bill, it is a triumph of acceptance; I don't think Roger Wilkins accepts the notion that such accounts are also audited by a higher authority.

Roger Wilkins's book is little more than a collection of compliments from important people and an account of his minor, very minor, victories for his race—first black assistant attorney general, first black editorial board member of the *Post*, first high-level black in the Ford Foundation. Every establishment he worked for contains enough racism for him to blow up about. The *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* both felt his lash when he helped blacks sue for equal employment opportunities, even when it meant breaking the protocol on editorial people mixing in newsroom politics and turning on Katherine Graham and all those nice, forgiving, ermined associates.

This autobiography is interesting because Wilkins lets us in on himself; he even loathes himself, which may be in vogue now. He doesn't blame *everything*



on America—he just fails to identify which bad things are his fault and which aren't. He decries the wrecking being done in Washington, but he doesn't indicate that there are plenty of people besides President Reagan who have disbelieved in the "Great Society." He doesn't deal intelligently with the Moynihan hypothesis, but merely attacks that blockbuster with an ad hominem about the Senator's behavior at a long-forgotten cocktail party. It's pretty early for Roger

Wilkins to be writing about his life, unless his self-loathing is so genuine as to put temptations in his mind when he passes open windows.

Perhaps getting equality does mean getting even. But Roy Wilkins would not go for that. The nation has to keep the white reaction in check in order to go forward, and maybe, with delicacy, we can achieve that. These accounts of past infamies should not be dismissed. □

Embarrassment & Hysteria in History

Stuart Creighton Miller: *"Benevolent Assimilation": The American Conquest of the Philippines 1899-1903*; Yale University Press; New Haven, CT.

Stanley I. Kutler: *The American Inquisition: Justice and Injustice in the Cold War*; Hill and Wang; New York.

by Alan J. Levine

It is not much of an exaggeration to say that since the mid-1960's the writing of American history has become largely an exercise in what used to be called muckraking. Volume after volume has poured forth recounting, often exaggerating, even occasionally inventing less palatable aspects of the American past. But, not every ugly episode in American history has been examined. For example, the sufferings inflicted on Loyalists during the Revolution don't draw much attention from American historians. While it is understandable that "reactionaries" are unimportant to the regnant ideologues, there are other surprising gaps in the savaging of American history. Amid all the complaints about alleged American imperialism, this country's one *real* exercise in imperialism, the

annexation of the Philippines, is often ignored. Why? The reason is not difficult to explain: the imperialism of 1898 is not entirely compatible with the left's pet theory, i.e., William Appleman Williams's "Open-Door" thesis. According to Williams, Americans were not interested in territorial possessions but in economic empire to be attained by forcing "Open Door" policies of unrestricted trade and investment throughout the entire world. The fact that some Americans felt it necessary to acquire a small but unmistakable territorial empire does not fit the Williams thesis. The new left, even as they produced their analyses of American foreign relations from the late-19th century to the present, therefore showed only slight interest in the takeover of the Philippines, despite its seeming utility as "The First Vietnam." Thus, in the absence of rhetorical ideologues, what little has been written about the annexation of the Philippines is of fairly high quality. Despite some faults, Stuart Creighton Miller's *"Benevolent Assimilation"* continues this tradition of high standards. It is a detailed and well-written examination of an episode in American history that may cause some discomfiture and that is hard to explain. It is still difficult to account for the rapid spread of the notion that possession of the Philippines was somehow necessary to the United States.

In 1898 business leaders in general

were uninterested in territorial annexation. The United States had little concrete interest in either the Pacific area or in keeping the Philippines. President McKinley was a "reluctant" imperialist. His ignorance of the situation there, which was not atypical, is evidenced in his remark that it was necessary "to educate the Filipinos and uplift and civilize and Christianize them": most Filipinos had been Christians for four centuries. Throughout the struggle to beat the Filipinos into submission, imperialists freely referred to the only Westernized people in the Far East as "barbarians" and "savages." Simultaneously, most Americans—and a majority of the military commanders on the scene—pretended that only a minority of the Filipinos were nationalists.

With the exception of General Arthur MacArthur (father of Douglas) the senior military officers of that war do not come off very well in Miller's book. General Frederick Funston, one of the few popular heroes of the war, was a rascal whose career might have been amusing at a safe distance—out of artillery range, that is. Although some of Miller's references to large-scale massacres are unsubstantiated, the war *was* a cruel one. Villages were burned, prisoners of war were shot, and torture was freely employed.

Genius was not in evidence in this war. Only the Filipinos' pathetic weapons kept American losses fairly low—an enemy whose chief weapon was the bolo cannot be considered a formidable foe. Miller argues, though he admits the evidence is not conclusive, that under MacArthur's predecessor, the U.S. Army was responsible for beginning the war, which civilian leaders in Washington did not want. Miller's animus toward the military occasionally gets out of hand. At one point, he even makes sanitation sound imperialistic: "since the natives did not share the antiseptic obsession of their conquerors, delousing was invariably carried out at gunpoint, as were other sanitary measures." His attempts to suggest that military brutality in this