Descriptive Summary

Title: William W. Johnson collection on B. Traven

Date (inclusive): 1946-1987, undated

Date (bulk): 1966-1985

Collection Number: MS 244


Extent: 1.25 linear feet (3 boxes)

Repository: Rivera Library. Special Collections Department.
Riverside, CA 92517-5900

Abstract: The William W. Johnson collection on B. Traven contains publications, correspondence, and other material related to Johnson's research on the author B. Traven, which spanned more than forty years. This collection includes various articles on B. Traven, newspapers from Chiapas, Mexico covering the three-day homage to B. Traven, and Johnson's B. Traven related research notes. Also includes correspondence with Rosa Elena Lujan (B. Traven's wife), Lawrence Hill (B. Traven's United States publisher), and Paul Kohner (B. Traven's agent) as well as a rare certified copy of Traven Torsvan Croves’ will dated March 4, 1969 (in English).

Languages: The collection is in English, German, and Spanish.

Access

This collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

[identification of item], [date if possible]. William W. Johnson collection on B. Traven (MS 244). Special Collections & University Archives, University of California, Riverside.

Acquisition Information

The William W. Johnson collection on B. Traven was acquired in 1986.

Processing History

Processed by Heidi Hutchinson, 2011.

Biographical Note

William Weber Johnson (1909-1992) was a journalist, a professor of journalism at UCLA, and an author of countless articles and a dozen books, the best known of which is Heroic Mexico: the narrative history of a twentieth century revolution (New York: Doubleday, 1968). He served with Time, Inc. from 1941-61 as a writer (New York), war correspondent (European Theater and WWII) and chief of various domestic and foreign bureaus (Mexico and Central America, Argentina and South America, Dallas, Boston and Beverly Hills). Johnson's interest in B. Traven began while Johnson was Time, Inc. bureau chief in Mexico City and continued well after Traven's death. Johnson was personally acquainted with the elderly Hal Croves (as Traven was calling himself in Mexico City) and his wife Rosa Elena Lujan. Johnson had many conversations and a lengthy cordial correspondence with Rosa Elena Lujan, and at one time intended to write the definitive B. Traven biography. This was never fully realized, but his thirty years of collected research and correspondence on B. Traven came to the University of California, Riverside in 1986.

B. Traven was the pseudonym for an internationally famous writer who guarded his identity with jealousy and determination throughout his life, creating one of the greatest literary puzzles of the 20th century. Other names he went by in his lifetime are Traven Torsvan, Hal Croves, and Ret Marut. His twelve novels, the best known of which are The Death Ship and the Treasure of the Sierra Madre, and many short stories have been translated into numerous languages. Films have been made of his the Treasure of the Sierra Madre, White Rose , Macario, The Death Ship , and Rebellion of the Hanged. He died in March 1969 in Mexico City, Mexico.

Collection Scope and Contents

The William W. Johnson collection on B. Traven contains publications, correspondence, and other material related to Johnson's research on the author B. Traven, which spanned more than forty years. This collection includes various articles
on B. Traven, newspapers from Chiapas, Mexico covering the three-day homage to B. Traven, and Johnson's B. Traven related research notes. Also includes correspondence with Rosa Elena Lujan (B. Traven's wife), Lawrence Hill (B. Traven's United States publisher), and Paul Kohner (B. Traven's agent) as well as a rare certified copy of Traven Torsvan Croves' will dated March 4, 1969 (in English).

**Collection Arrangement**

This collection is arranged into three series. The contents of each series are arranged sequentially according to box and folder number. The series arrangement of this collection is as follows:

- **Series 1. Publications, 1948-1987, undated.**
- **Series 2. Correspondence, 1946-1986.**
- **Series 3. Research material, 1966-1986, undated.**

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

**Subjects**

Lujan, Rosa Elena.
Traven, B.

**Genres and Forms of Materials**

Clippings (information artifacts).
Correspondence.
Manuscripts.
Notes.

**Series 1. Publications. 1948-1987, undated.**

**Series Scope and Contents**

This series contains publications, clippings, and other material regarding B. Traven. Includes several articles on B. Traven by E.R. Hagemann, Gerd Heidemann, and William W. Johnson as well as newspapers from Chiapas, Mexico covering the three-day homage to B. Traven.

**Series Arrangement**

This series is arranged sequentially according to box and folder number.

- **Box 1, Folder 1**
- **Box 1, Folder 2**
- **Box 1, Folder 3**
- **Box 1, Folder 4**
  - Article by Gerd Heidemann titled "Wer ist der Mann, der Traven heisst?" from Stern magazine. 1967.
- **Box 1, Folder 5**
- **Box 1, Folder 6**
- **Box 1, Folder 7**
- **Box 1, Folder 8**
- **Box 1, Folder 9**
  - Drafts, correspondence, and other material regarding an article by William W. Johnson for the *Smithsonian*. 1982-1983.
Box 1, Folder 10

Box 1, Folder 11
Newspapers from Chiapas, Mexico covering the three-day homage to B. Traven. 1969.

Box 1, Folder 12

Box 1, Folder 13

Box 1, Folder 14
Publication titled Texas Quarterly (vol. 6, no.1) including the B. Traven story Macario. 1963.

Series Scope and Contents
This series contains William W. Johnson’s correspondence with various individuals regarding B. Traven. Includes correspondence with Rosa Elena Lujan (B. Traven's wife), Lawrence Hill (B. Traven's United States publisher), and Paul Kohner (B. Traven's agent).

Series Arrangement
This series is arranged sequentially according to box and folder number.

Box 2, Folder 1

Box 2, Folder 2

Box 2, Folder 3
Correspondence between William W. Johnson and Peter Briscoe. 1986.

Box 2, Folder 4
Correspondence from Hal Croves (B. Traven) to the editors of Time and LIFE magazines regarding their article on the filming of the Treasure of the Sierra Madre and his role therein. 1948.

Box 2, Folder 5

Box 2, Folder 6
Correspondence between William W. Johnson and Lawrence Hill. 1966-1974

Box 2, Folder 7
Correspondence between William W. Johnson and Paul Kohner. 1946-1983.

Box 2, Folder 8
Correspondence between William W. Johnson and the Sterling Lord Agency regarding a B. Traven biography to be written by Johnson. 1968-1970.

Box 2, Folder 9
Correspondence between William W. Johnson and Rosa Elena Lujan. 1966-1980.

Box 2, Folder 10
Correspondence between William W. Johnson and Rosa Elena Lujan regarding a biography of B. Traven to be written by Johnson. 1969-1970.

Box 2, Folder 11
Correspondence between William W. Johnson and Esperanza Lopez Mateos. 1946.

Box 2, Folder 12
Correspondence between William W. Johnson and Charles Henry Miller. 1966.

Box 2, Folder 13
Correspondence from B. Traven to Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1946.

Box 2, Folder 14
Correspondence and reviews regarding books written by Will Wyatt and Jonah Raskin on B. Traven. Includes comments by Rosa Elena Lujan. 1967-1980.

Box 2, Folder 15
Correspondence between William W. Johnson and various individuals regarding B. Traven. 1966-1985.

Box 2, Folder 16

Series Scope and Contents
This series contains notes, manuscripts, drafts, programs, and other material pertaining to William W. Johnson's research on B. Traven. Includes the will of Traven Torsvan Croves (certified copy in English) as well as research notes on B. Traven and Johnson's trips to Chiapas and Mexico City, Mexico.

Series Arrangement
This series is arranged sequentially according to box and folder number.

Box 3, Folder 1
Application form completed by William W. Johnson for renewal of a Guggenheim Fellowship to undertake a B. Traven biography. 1969.
| Box 3, Folder 3 | Research notes by William W. Johnson on B. Traven for a lecture to the Friends of the UCLA Library. 1969. |
| Box 3, Folder 4 | Synopsis of a proposed biography of B. Traven by William W. Johnson (photocopy). undated. |
| Box 3, Folder 5 | Program from a B. Traven conference held at Pennsylvania State University. 1982. |
| Box 3, Folder 6 | Typescript of *The Great Traven Hunt, or Erica's Dream: A play in three acts* by Robert B. Olafson. 1977. |
| Box 3, Folder 7 | Research notes, book reviews, and correspondence between William W. Johnson and various publishers and scholars. Includes correspondence from Peter Briscoe encouraging Johnson to donate his personal collection to the University of California, Riverside’s Special Collections & Archives. circa 1985-1986, undated |
| Box 3, Folder 8 | Programs, photographs, and other material regarding the three-day homage to B. Traven in Chiapas, Mexico. Includes keepsake with soil from Chiapas, Mexico. 1969. |
| Box 3, Folder 9 | Notes on William W. Johnson’s conversation with Rosa Elena Lujan regarding his projected biography of B. Traven. 1969. |
| Box 3, Folder 10 | Will (certified copy in English) of Traven Torsvan Croves. March 4, 1969 |
| Box 3, Folder 11 | Notebooks kept by William W. Johnson. Includes his trip to Chiapas, Mexico and his conversations with Rosa Elena Lujan in Mexico City, Mexico. 1969. |