William W. Johnson collection on B. Traven

Finding aid prepared by Heidi Hutchinson, Processing Archivist.
Special Collections & University Archives
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**Descriptive Summary**

**Title:** William W. Johnson collection on B. Traven  
**Date (inclusive):** 1946-1987, undated  
**Date (bulk):** 1966-1985  
**Collection Number:** MS 244  
**Creator:** Johnson, William Weber, 1909-1992  
**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 primarily in English. Also contains items in 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, Processing Archivist, 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 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's 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

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**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**
  Press clippings regarding B. Traven (includes photocopies) circa 1966-1969

- **Box 1, Folder 2**
  Publications and press clippings regarding B. Traven from Mexican, United States, and British publishers. Includes book reviews, obituaries, an interview with filmmaker Gabriel Figueroa, and an invitation to subscribe to the *B. Traven Newsletter* published by Terrence L. Ponick circa 1969-1976

- **Box 1, Folder 3**
  Article by E.R. Hagemann titled "Huye! A conjectural biography of B. Traven" (photocopy) 1961

- **Box 1, Folder 4**
  Article by Gerd Heidemann titled "Wer ist der Mann, der Traven heisst?" from *Stern* magazine 1967

- **Box 1, Folder 5**
  Article by Stephen Meyer titled "From a journalist's notebook: William Weber Johnson's encounters with the legends of his time" in *Reader (San Diego's Weekly)* (photocopy) 1987

- **Box 1, Folder 6**
  Article by Luis Spota in the Mexican newspaper *Mañana* (photocopy) 1948

- **Box 1, Folder 7**
  Magazine titled *Ramparts* (vol. 6, no. 2-3). Includes articles by Judy Stone titled "The mystery of B. Traven" and "Conversations with B. Traven" (includes photocopies) 1967

- **Box 1, Folder 8**
  Magazine, correspondence, and other material regarding the article titled "Trying to solve the enigma of the Sierra Madre," by William W. Johnson in the *Smithsonian* (vol. 13, no. 12) circa 1982-1983

- **Box 1, Folder 9**
  Drafts, correspondence, and other material regarding an article by William W. Johnson for the *Smithsonian* 1982-1983
Series 1. Publications 1948-1987, undated

Box 1, Folder 10
Magazines, correspondence, and other material regarding B. Traven. Includes issues of the *B. Traven Newsletter* by Terence L. Ponick and an article titled "Hitler's Munich" from *Mankind* (includes photocopies) circa 1966-1976, undated

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

Box 1, Folder 12
Book review by William W. Johnson of *The Night Visitor and Other Stories*, in the *New York Times Book Review* (vol. 71, no. 16, April 17, 1966). Includes correspondence prior to and reader reaction following the publication of the article 1966

Box 1, Folder 13
Reviews of William W. Johnson's books and articles on B. Traven (includes photocopies) 1949-1980, undated

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

Series 2. Correspondence 1946-1986

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
Correspondence between William W. Johnson and Michael L. Baumann circa 1976-1985

Box 2, Folder 2
Correspondence between William W. Johnson and William L. Bischoff regarding Rolf Recknagel (an East German Traven researcher) 1966-1969

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
Correspondence between William W. Johnson and Karl S. Guthke 1985

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
Correspondence and clippings regarding William W. Johnson and B. Traven 1946-1986


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 2

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 Coves 1969 March 4

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