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The Leslie A. White Papers

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HAN ENTERS THE THIRD WAVE

The slight delay in the normal December mailing date of this number is due to the fact that we have entered a new technological phase, as the result of the editor's purchase of a personal computer. Although there are still some bugs to be worked out in the layout, as well as in the billing and addressing procedures, we expect to have these matters fully in hand for Volume XI. Over the long run, we hope that the new technology may facilitate the preparation of an index to bibliographic materials. Although we will continue to accept material in any easily readable form, in the case of longer articles (Clio's Fancy, Footnotes to the History of Anthropology, Sources for the History of Anthropology, and essay entries under Bibliographica Arcana), submission on Osborne-readable floppy disks would eliminate the need for retyping. Our great thanks to Dan Segal and David Koester who planned and implemented the switchover. Hopefully, their combined computer expertese has got things in such a form that even a programming-illiterate like the editor can manage without assistance.

SOURCES FOR THE HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY

I. The Leslie A. White Papers

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When Leslie A. White retired from the department of anthropology at the University of Michigan 1970, he gave his professional papers to the Bentley Historical Library in Ann Arbor. Upon his death in 1975, further papers were added to the collection by his literary executors: myself and Robert L. Carneiro. I have been through the entire collection with some care. Its rich and extensive assemblage of materials spans the years from 1921 to 1975, with some posthumous items. The collection includes: (a) ten boxes of correspondence; (b) three boxes of research materials concerning Lewis Henry Morgan; (c) three boxes of articles, reviews, research materials and miscellaneous writings by White; (d) a box containing copies of White's published articles and books; and (e) a number of boxes of field notes, correspondence and other materials on Pueblo Indians. At White's request, the Pueblo materials remain closed until 1985. Otherwise, the papers are open for research.

White wrote to and heard from most of the "names" in anthropology during the forties, fifties and sixties. Since he was an anthropologist first and a cultural anthropologist-Pueblo specialist second, the correspondence includes exchanges with

physical anthropologists, archeologists and linguists in addition to cultural anthropologists. The names read like a Who's Who in anthropology during the period. The many American and British correspondents include Sapir, Kroeber, Murdock, Eggan, Beals, Strong, Kidder, Coon, Braidwood, Kennard, Childe, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Schapera, Levi-Strauss, Meggers, Service, Marvin Opler, and Norbeck. There is also correspondence with anthropologists from China, Russia, India and Japan. Although almost all the letters relate to anthropological concerns, there are frequently items of a personal nature (for example, Childe writing to White that he had never belonged to any communist organization). Contrary to the recent suggestion that White's relations with fellow anthropologists were "something less than cordial" (Garbarino 1977:88), the letters suggest strongly that White was respected by, and in turn respected, his colleagues.

The correspondence also includes letters to and from a number of non-anthropological academicians. There is extensive correspondence with Harry Elmer Barnes, the historian, with whom White had a long and intimate friendship. Other notables include Marvin Farber (philosopher), Raymond L. Wilder (mathematician), Robert Millikan (physicist), Charles Beard (historian), R. W. Gerard (physiologist) and James Klee (psychologist). Again, the letters generally focus on anthropological matters but a good many other issues are also discussed.

In addition to anthropologists and other academicians there is correspondence with other "notables" about culturalogical issues including for example, a letter from Leon Trotsky written shortly before he was killed. Arthur S. Vandenberg, H. L. Mencken, Harold Ickes, Thomas Mann, Stuart Chase, Edmund Wilson, Lewis Mumford and Adolph Berle are among the names most would recognize.

The papers on Morgan are extensive, and ought to be consulted by anyone interested in Morgan's contributions to anthropology. White had planned to write a definitive biography, and spent a good many years collecting information to this end. In his papers there are copies of Morgan's correspondence with various persons (including Schoolcraft and Andrew D. White, but, interestingly, not McIlvaine), White's own correspondence with others regarding Morgan, articles on Morgan's life, and bibliographical notecards on Morgan's correspondence. As White's correspondence with Carl Resek shows, he gave full support to the latter's writing of a biography of Morgan (Resek 1960). Although White evidently felt that Resek had done a competent job, there is much still to be written about Morgan from the standpoint of anthropology, for which White's papers would certainly be useful.

Although the contents of the Pueblo papers will not be determined until 1985, they undoubtedly contain much of interest to Pueblo specialists--judging by the care with which White recorded most things, and given the fact that he spent so many years researching Pueblos, and wrote the definitive works on five of the Keresan Pueblos.

Personally, I have found the unpublished manuscripts of White among the most interesting papers in the collection. There is a copy of what is evidently the draft of his original doctoral dissertation (which was rejected by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Chicago), as well as copies of papers he wrote as a student. These suggest a culturalogical point of view at a time when neither he nor his professors knew of such a concept. There are also typescripts of articles written for New Masses under the initials J. S. And there are many and diverse articles that were never published--along with an envelope containing rejections! The rejections are primarily of theoretical articles, not the data pieces. "The Symbol," for example, was rejected at least twice by leading journals, and of course it is one of the most often reprinted articles in cultural anthropology.

The Bentley Library has done an excellent job in organizing the papers so as to make it relatively easy to retrieve material of interest. The correspondence is filed by year, and within years the various letters are alphabetized by the last name of the author, so that it is easy to determine whether or not there are letters of interest to a particular project. In addition, White had the foresight to write the last names of otherwise unidentified persons on the top of the letters; thus one does not have to try to determine who "Bill" or "Fred" or "Betty" is. The library has been most accommodating in answering queries by mail.

Finally, I personally have a rather complete list of the people to whom or from whom there are letters in this collection. In many cases I also have notes on the specific contents of the letters. I have also recorded what there is in terms of materials White used in writing on people such as Elsie Clews Parsons, Norman Humphreys, A. A. Goldenweiser, etc. I would be most happy to share any of this information.

References

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