

undergone profound transformation, but would come to elicit far different readings that no longer held the same weight or relevance. Nevertheless, the shared experience of British subjects viewing the image across time and from varied ethnic, social, and political positions performed a kind of exchange or cultural transmission that formed a vital, if even conflicted, part of individual and collective national identity. In the end, it is precisely within these kinds of contexts that the notion of tradition becomes less stable, more ambiguous and less easily determined, and it is to these kinds of theoretical problems and their material fall-out that the editors of *Questions of Tradition* are pointing us.

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**William J. Peace, *Leslie A. White: Evolution and Revolution in Anthropology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).**

**David H. Price, *Threatening Anthropology: McCarthyism and the FBI's Surveillance of Activist Anthropologists* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).**

Over the past few years the American Anthropological Association (AAA), the main organ uniting US cultural anthropologists, linguists, archaeologists, and physical anthropologists, has been struggling to redefine its position in relation to both an increasingly "culture-conscious" public and new political projects (e.g. multicultural state policies, identity politics, ethnic conflicts, etc.). At the same time, the AAA has had to come to terms with its own past and with the legacies, for better and for worse, of the relationship between US anthropology and US politics at home and overseas. Both William Peace's *Leslie A. White: Evolution and Revolution in Anthropology* and David Price's *Threatening Anthropology: McCarthyism and the FBI's Surveillance of Activist Anthropologists* should be read against the current situation that the AAA, and US and Canadian academics more widely, now face.

Peace's biography of Leslie White (1900-1975), who pioneered a cultural evolutionary approach to anthropology, and was steadfastly marginalized for his theoretical positions, is a welcome contribution to the history of anthropology. White was a strange figure during his own time, almost always at odds with the dominant strain of US cultural anthropology (i.e. Boasian cultural relativism), which he felt was not only ahistorical but also theoretically vacuous. As Peace nicely illustrates, White paid dearly for his theoretical positions, in both his professional and personal lives.

White had a lonely childhood in rural Kansas, and he came of age during World War I, and like many intellectuals of his generation, these *biographical* elements were formative of his later outlook on life. White began his engagement with anthropology during the interwar years, when he studied at the University of Chicago. There, he was caught between fissures within the department, and White's own views on this period have become "part of the folklore of Chicago anthropology" (Peace, 23). Throughout this period, White grew increasingly disenchanted with the American mythos of Capitalism and Democracy, noting after his stint in the Navy during World War I: "I was overwhelmed when the realization that everything is not as it pretends to be, struck me; almost everything seemed to me to be 'out of joint'" (Peace, 9). In the end, it was White who was "out of joint," ending his career and life lonely and embittered, with serious doubts about the ability of the modern nation-state, or humanity, to survive. He retired in 1970, after 40 years of teaching at the University of Michigan (where he helped forge one of the top anthropology departments in North America).

White was an ambitious and prodigious ethnographer, conducting challenging work among the Acoma, a secretive Pueblo Indian group in the US Southwest that was assumed to be impervious to anthropological research. Unfortunately, as Peace notes, he is rarely remembered for this research (except by those who continue to work in the US Southwest); rather, he is known for his theoretical contributions — in particular as one of the main proponents of a cultural evolutionary framework. Yet, by the time his ideas of cultural evolution were finally accepted in the discipline (only to be dismissed soon after by a new turn to relativity and postmodernism), White seemed so inured to fighting that he lacked the necessary finesse or ability to politick. In the end, he remains a marginal figure, a situation that Peace's book will hopefully redress.

When read alongside David Price's account of FBI surveillance of anthropologists during the McCarthy era, Peace's book becomes much more than a biography of a difficult, often forgotten figure. Indeed, together these two books offer a rich and nuanced account of the history of US anthropology, one that might help us understand the position we find ourselves in today. The latter is exactly what Peace and Price are up to, albeit in somewhat different ways, since they both seek to excavate the relation between anthropological theory and practice on the one hand and the wider social and political field on the other.

While there have been numerous other studies of McCarthyism and the academy in the US, both Peace and Price argue for a richer consideration of the relationship between academics, political action, and the socio-political climate of the time. For example, Peace notes that Leslie White was one of a number of US anthropologists who censored their own work in order to avoid more stringent forms of surveillance and persecution. While there did not seem to be

any direct proof that White was a member of the Communist Party (not that such proof was required during this period), a confidential informant in an FBI report noted that White “had Communistic tendencies” (Peace, 159), and the FBI considered opening a formal investigation after White’s name appeared in a background check of another anthropologist. (The FBI did not, however, seem to be aware of White’s earlier writings for the Socialist Labor Party under the pseudonym John Steel.) Peace makes a strong case, however, for reconsidering the reasons why anthropology as a discipline was seen as subversive. In White’s case, his professional problems stemmed from his ardent (and at times mean-spirited) critiques of Boasian anthropology. His public and political problems, though, were the result of his atheism and his writings, public statements, and lectures against organized religion in general and the Catholic Church in particular. White’s cultural evolutionary theories also challenged deeply-held convictions about race in the US (though perhaps less than the cultural relativism of the Boasian school).

Several other anthropologists suffered much more directly from political persecution, and David Price argues convincingly that the discipline as a whole suffered too. His account of FBI surveillance and the discipline’s own auto-censorship is impressive, and it is worth noting the determination which Price has displayed in seeking out the material necessary for this history. He filed over 500 requests under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and an additional 250 appeals in the course of research for his book. If nothing else, he is to be commended for that — and for providing an appendix that will be of great use to others seeking FOIA documents. Yet, there is much more to commend. While much of Price’s book was written before 9/11, he notes how crucial his historical account is to an understanding of our present conditions, under which “American academic freedom and the freedom of political dissent are threatened with an intensity not seen since the McCarthy period” (Price, 352). In this sense, Price’s book is more ambitious and more wide-ranging in its history of, as his title nicely suggests, threats posed *by* and *to* anthropology.

Price approaches his material in a wide-ranging, though systematic manner. Among other things, he takes the AAA to task for the sheer lack of commitment the organisation often demonstrated in advocating on behalf of its members. He also thoroughly exposes many of the FBI’s methods, which range from the somewhat humorous technique of “confidential trash cover” (searching through one’s garbage) to the much more serious interrogation of one’s friends, family, and colleagues. (The latter is oddly reminiscent of ethnographic methods.) Price also offers fascinating case studies of the trials and tribulations of several anthropologists, many of whom were effectively chased out of the discipline, the academy, and at times even the country. Throughout all of this, though, it is his insistence that there was, indeed, something threatening about anthropology that makes his book such a unique contribution.

In an important analytical move, Price rejects the verificationist projects that often drive similar-minded historical research, since he is never too concerned to prove or disprove formal ties between scholars targeted for surveillance and the Communist Party. Such a focus, he argues, reproduces much of the logic of the McCarthy era, in which the mere mention of one's name in relation to any organisation deemed to be subversive was enough to have real lasting consequences. Consider for example one of the more shocking moments in the history of anthropology that Price reveals. At its annual business meeting held in Toronto in December 1948, the AAA discussed the recent dismissal of Robert Morgan from his position of curator at the Ohio State Museum, seemingly for his wife's involvement with progressive organisations. After a heated meeting about the responsibilities of the AAA Executive Board in relation to its members, a well-known and influential anthropologist, George Murdock, wrote a private letter to J. Edgar Hoover detailing what he characterized as an attempted take-over of the organisation by a subset of its members, 15 of whom he named as people he could confidently state were or had been members of the Communist Party (Price reprints the letter in its entirety, 71-5).

One of those mentioned in Murdock's letter was Gene Weltfish (1902-1980), a renowned anthropologist who studied under Franz Boas and taught for almost two decades at Columbia University. Weltfish was one of a set of prominent anthropologists called to testify before several governmental committees in public show trials. While Senator McCarthy and others were very concerned about Weltfish's possible membership in the Communist Party, her testimony reveals that time and again, the main threat posed by anthropology had much less to do with radical politics or Communist Party membership (though that was surely an issue), than with the relationship between anthropological theory and what we might call the structural foundations of US society. As Price argues, "the central reason that Weltfish and the other anthropologists discussed in this text were identified for investigation by the FBI ... is because they were committed activists for racial, economic, gender, and global equality" (Price, 119). Weltfish's story is similar to that of many others, including Kathleen Gough, who suffered from post-McCarthy era restrictions on academic freedom and was eventually fired from her position at Simon Fraser University for her critique of Western imperialism and her involvement in progressive political movements in the US and in Canada (Price, 306-26).

Price ends the book with a bang, perhaps unfairly calling the "dominant American historicist school" (most members of which have been trained or influenced by George Stocking) to task for "its inattentiveness to political economy" (Price, 342). He ends by questioning the persistence of Area Studies programs and their relation to US government funding and strategic interests and insisting that anthropologists "shrug off the negative connotations of radical political associations and reexamine the historic political actions that anthropol-

ogy's collective colonized mind learned not to see" (Price, 342). That is a tall order indeed, but one worth pursuing, as both Price and Peace have done.

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**Robert M. Lichtman and Ronald D. Cohen, *Deadly Farce: Harvey Matusow and the Informer System in the McCarthy Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).**

This is a brilliantly told story of a most unique informer, the figure with the conscience to repudiate his own charges, face down the institutional inquisition now directed toward himself, and try to make up for sins during the rest of his life. On the American scene, perhaps no one but Mrs. Rice, erstwhile anti-communist savant of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU) but later an avid supporter of the farmworkers, carries quite so much weight. Several prominent radicals-become-CIA-pets in the Congress for Cultural Freedom during the 1950s and early 1960s returned to something like radicalism during the Vietnam War — Dwight Macdonald and Mary McCarthy most prominently — but could not or would not deal with the public meanings of their quietly funded success. Harvey Matusow did, and we now know how and why.

The larger scope of this story is the institutional operation of the domestic Cold War, something with more relevance today than at any time during the last 30 years or so. As scholars of the blacklist know so well, no "investigating committee" ever really intended to turn up facts, and every committee knew how slim the likelihood was of any "subversives" presently giving away supposed secrets to America's enemies. The FBI had placed its informers so expertly in myriad organizations that every name, every activity had been tracked before the investigation opened. The point of hearings and further FBI activity was, then, simply to shut down the Left and to warn liberals (along with the general populace) that loyalty would always be in question, and a failure to offer open approval of US global operations could bring the sudden end to a career and assorted rights, perhaps citizenship itself. The authors make the point that the Justice Department was behind it all, more sinister than J. Edgar Hoover's operation because its officials made the key decisions to indict and imprison.

The lesser scope but also inevitable center of the story is the pathetic creature, Harvey Matusow. Born into a middle-class Bronx neighborhood in 1926, he came along too late for the glory days of the Depression struggles. He moved toward the Left in the inauspicious year of 1946, joined the Party the fol-