

The Ideological Origins of American Studies at Yale

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“It is well in all cases to go on the old CE axiom:
‘Once an agent, always an agent—for someone.’”
Norman Holmes Pearson(?)¹

The following pages review the efforts at Yale in the middle decades of the twentieth century to establish American studies as a subject of academic research and teaching; the efforts of the various deans, provosts, and presidents of Yale to raise funds for the American Studies Program as a component of Yale’s budget (and to increase Yale’s endowment by the same means); and the efforts of all of these, and others, such as William Robertson Coe, William F. Buckley, Jr., and, perhaps, Norman Holmes Pearson, to construct American studies as something beyond the study of American literature and history, as an enterprise that would be, among other things, an instrument for ideological struggle in what some among them termed the American crusade in the cold war, and what others among them saw as virtually a second Civil War. Much is now public that was concealed during the Cold War, enough, perhaps, that we might at least draft new accounts of various aspects of our times, some of which are likely to look quite different once information from the secret world characteristic of the period is factored into other, more well-known, narratives. One such would be the history of American studies from just before the second world war to the 1960s. That is in itself a complex subject. Here, we will choose just one or two aspects of the matter and the highly specific point of view of the Yale University Archives and the papers of Norman Holmes Pearson in the Beinecke Library.² This is a narrow pair of New

Haven apertures.³ Together they give a binocular perspective that may be unfamiliar. That perspective displays American studies at Yale as part of a university bureaucracy; as, at least in part, contiguous with the U.S. intelligence community. It also shows the early years of American studies as embedded in complex ideological struggles typical of the late-1940s and early-1950s.⁴

Over the last twenty years American studies has become self-conscious about its own history. We might trace this to the sense among the generation of scholars influenced by their opposition to the Vietnam War and the growth of cultural studies that the earlier triumphalism was not the sole perspective from which to view their subject.⁵ Very recently the particular view of the matter taken in this essay has been addressed by scholars from many disciplines in *The Cold War and the University* and studies of particular university departments, notably *Creating the Cold War* by Rebecca Lowen, concerning political science at Stanford.⁶ There is still much work to be done along these lines. One would like to see monographs on the highly peculiar situation of international studies at M.I.T., for example, about Columbia and Russian studies, about Harvard's history department and its relationship with the executive branch of the federal government. However, this essay is concerned with American studies at one university, and even at that, only with one academic generation: Yale, and the period from the late-1930s to about 1960. The leadership of American studies at Yale in those years was handed down from Ralph Gabriel, to A. Whitney Griswold, who was the first doctoral product of Yale's History, Arts, and Literature program, which Gabriel headed, to David C. Potter, the first William Roberston Coe Professor of American Studies. Potter, in particular, is identifiable as part of a national academic narrative of American studies, contributing one of those synthetic works *Freedom and its Limitations in American Life* that seem to particularly mark it, and eventually leaving Yale for Stanford, as if to illustrate in his own career the westward impulse of his discipline. In this scholarly genealogy, there is not much of a place for Norman Holmes Pearson. He would appear in such a narrative in comparatively marginal roles, as a student of Gabriel, as a teacher, immensely popular for his survey classes, and as a good academic citizen, serving on many departmental committees. Pearson became, not the institutional authority in the field, the Coe Professor, but that useful functionary, the head of American Studies. Griswold, similarly became better known as an academic bureaucrat than a scholar; finally, as President of Yale. And yet, both Pearson and Griswold played material roles in the establishment and shape of American studies, and Pearson, specifically, may have played a much greater role than apparent.

Norman Holmes Pearson's biographer, Robin Winks, of the Yale history department, who has made good use of Pearson's papers and personal effects in the Beinecke Library, has established the basic facts of his life and career.⁷ Pearson was born in 1909 into a family that owned a chain of department stores in New England, attended Phillips Academy, graduated from Yale in 1932,

received an Oxford B.A. in 1934, studied briefly in Berlin and taught at the University of Colorado. He edited *The Novels of Hawthorne* (1937); and *The Oxford Anthology of American Literature* (with William Rose Benet, 1938). He received his Ph.D. in 1941 from Yale, with a dissertation on Hawthorne, was made an instructor in 1941, an assistant professor in 1946, in due course tenured and made a full professor. He received two Guggenheim fellowships, both for an edition of Hawthorne's letters, which was still incomplete at his death. His publications, in addition to those listed above, included an anthology edited with W. H. Auden, and various papers and prefaces. Pearson had virtually an alternative, if not primary, academic specialty: that of the professor well-known-in-literary-circles, someone making himself useful to poets, in particular, to the point that, for example, he eventually came to hold the copyrights on the later books of Hilda Doolittle (H.D.). Pearson began these activities during the 1930s, while still a student, and continued them to the end of his life, working on anthologies, socializing with everyone from the Sitwells to Gertrude Stein, writing introductions and letters of introduction, finding publishers, arranging lectures and readings. It is a recognizable quasi-academic role, facilitated, perhaps, by the prestige of Yale, by Pearson's personal and family connections, by the intensity of his interest in the poetry of his generation and that immediately proceeding.⁸

By the early 1940s Pearson, although still an instructor, was well on his way to a respectable career, delivering papers to the Modern Language Association and the English Institute, publishing here and there, conducting a wide correspondence with colleagues at other universities, which is notable for the trouble he took for others, writing to Colorado and Iowa, for example, recommending Auden for a teaching position.⁹ He was a frequent recommender (and recommendee). He was sufficiently involved with the academic life of Yale to help in an effort in the period of the run-up to the Second World War to maintain funding for the teaching of the liberal arts there. It was also at this time that he married a woman with a background similar to his own, who had two young daughters from an earlier marriage. Then, in 1942, Pearson returned to England. In *The Days of Mars, A Memoir*¹⁰ by H.D.'s companion, Bryher, we catch a glimpse of Pearson in wartime London:

What I called the "Lowndes Group" [after her residence at 49 Lowndes Square, SW1] had begun to form round H.D., before I arrived from Switzerland. Besides Hilda, her daughter Perdita and myself, there was Norman Pearson directly he arrived from America in April 1943, the Sitwells, the Hendersons, the Dobsons, Robert Herring, George Plank, Mr. Baylis, Philip Frere and Mrs. Ash. . . . What we should have done without Norman Pearson I do not know. Hilda had met him in New York but my friendship with him began only after

he landed in England in 1943. He rescued Perdita from a dreary job in the country to do far more interesting work in London and, after its liberation, in Paris, and kept up our spirits during that final difficult year when we were too exhausted to care whether or not we survived until the peace. (ix-x)

The “dreary job in the country” involved working with the Ultra codebreakers at Bletchley Park. As another example of Pearson’s helpfulness, Bryher lists an occasion when in 1944 “Norman Pearson returned towards the end of January, after an absence in Spain and Portugal, bearing two bananas, two oranges and a pineapple” (117). We might recall the great banana orgy scene near the beginning of *Gravity’s Rainbow*, the shortages, and the comparative wealth of the Americans in London, in order to properly appreciate those bananas and that pineapple, which Bryher describes as ceremoniously divided among the elect of the Lowndes Group, and consumed with religious gratitude. The atmosphere of wartime London is also recalled by such ephemera as this O.S.S. notice from the Pearson Papers:

OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES, February 25, 1943,
London Information:

Every traveler as soon as he reaches London should go to No. 3 Grosvenor Square and apply for a membership card to the No. 3 Grosvenor Square Club. There are no fees to belong to this club. The atmosphere is very congenial, the bar good, and the food—considering the local situation—pretty fair and the prices reasonable.¹¹

The “local situation” was one of severe rationing and nightly bombing. There is nothing in *The Days of Mars* to indicate the nature of the more interesting work that Perdita, H.D.’s daughter, became engaged in through Pearson, nor why he was touring Spain and Portugal in 1944. We must turn to Robin Winks to learn that Perdita was Pearson’s own secretary, and then that of his assistant, James Angleton, in the London Counter-Espionage Office, X-2, of the Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.), an office of which Pearson was eventually chief.

The organization for which Pearson worked, O.S.S., is well-known to those who are interested in such matters. It was what might be called a start-up spy agency, supplementing the military intelligence branches, on the one hand, and the FBI, on the other. Its founder, William J. Donovan, was a Wall Street lawyer. The head of its Zurich office was another lawyer, Allen Dulles. The last of its veterans active in the business was yet another Wall Street lawyer, William Casey. It was a lawyerly, Wall Streetish, WASPish and Irish outfit, on the operations side, something of a branch of the Harvard and Yale humanities

divisions, on the analytical side. Morale was good in the O.S.S. They were fighting in a just war, against a clearly defined enemy. They had comic theme songs:

PAEN, POZZUOLI

(To be sung to the tune of "Solomon Levy")

We are the boys and girls who work for O.S.S., alas!
You wonder what we do? Well you can—Oh, well, let it pass.
Our right hands even never know just what our left hands do,
But we know what always happens—all but who in hell pays
who. . .

The present simply bores us stiff; the future is our goal!
and 'though we never play an ace we've several in the hole!
We soften up the hardest facts (roll flat, then whitewash some),
*And with our cocky cutters stamp the shape of things to come.*¹²

There are three copies of this among Pearson's papers. This may be an indication of authorship. On the other hand, he may simply have liked it.

In the early days of the second world war counterespionage was considered a British specialty. Pearson and his fellow O.S.S. officers were their students, at first, and if eventually acknowledged as equal partners, the dowry the O.S.S. brought to the partnership was the typical World War II American gift of superior resources.¹³ The great cross-indexed catalogues of names central to their joint intelligence work was designed by the British, as an instrument of Empire, then perfected by O.S.S., which, like the Getty Museum, purchased unusual collections wherever they could be found, thus accumulating files, it seemed, on nearly everyone who had ever come to the notice of any intelligence service. "The Branch Chief [Pearson himself] was able to announce in September 1945 that X-2 had received a total of more than 80,000 documents and reports and 10,000 cables, yielding a card file of some 400,000 entries . . . Nothing like it in scope had ever before been available."¹⁴ One sees here the scholar and the intelligence agent arriving at an equally satisfactory accounting of documents, reports, card files. Pearson sat as the U.S. representative on the Twenty Committee, the name of which was usually indicated in roman numerals, so as to be seen as a "double-cross." This committee was concerned with what was perhaps the second most significant of the British intelligence triumphs of the war, the first being the Ultra secret itself. It involved the "turning," imprisonment, or killing, of every German spy introduced into Britain—an astonishing achievement. The result was British control over all the intelligence information flowing to Germany from espionage in Britain, with the eventual pay-off of a deception operation that diverted crucial German forces at Normandy. Pearson wrote the introduction to its chief's book

on the subject, after, characteristically, helping to find Sir John C. Masterman an American publisher.¹⁵

We can consult his expense account reports for the tour of Spain and Portugal mentioned by Bryher, which Pearson undertook to inspect his branch counter-espionage offices in Lisbon and Madrid and to attend a counterespionage conference, and not simply to buy fruit for poets. The reports take a standard form: "Account is rendered for inspection of Lisbon X-2 station as of 7 March and 16-17 March 1945. All three nights were spent at the Imperio Hotel. Gifts: Angostura bitters; 2 alarm clocks; 12 pairs stockings; 2 lbs chocolate for members of British I. S. in London . . ." ¹⁶ These reports list hotel bills, flowers for his hostesses, a new uniform for Prince Umberto of Italy, "for services rendered," and, back in London, a few pounds here and there, about once a month, for drinks with Mr. "Philbee," and dinners and drinks with other British colleagues and friends. Philby was Pearson's opposite number in the British intelligence service, head, that is, of counterintelligence (that British specialty). These matters only later became embarrassing, because it was Philby, of course, and his four Cambridge friends, who nearly matched the feat of the Double Cross Committee, keeping Stalin, Beria, and Molotov up to date on the secrets of their western allies, or enemies, from the late 1930s to the early 1950s.

Towards the end of the war O.S.S. became more independent of the British, so that in Italy, say, it operated with its own dependencies, such as the Vatican intelligence service, and what would become the Mossad. By 1945, Pearson was the *patrone* of O.S.S. counter-espionage in Europe, an immensely powerful figure. His pocket diaries and letters show that he nevertheless kept up his literary contacts. Perdita, in a letter to H. D. and Bryher, gives a lively account of a visit to newly liberated Paris, showing Pearson in his friend-of-the-poets role:

30th April [Paris, 1945]

Darlings,

. . . N. will no doubt tell you all about the Stein interlude. Everything was so exactly the same; it was like being reincarnated; reincarnated backwards, coming to life in one's former life, you know what I mean. There it all was—the Picassos on the wall, the poodle on the floor, the basket-chair that squeaked, the same eager youths hanging onto each word she uttered. Norman was wonderful. He sat on the sofa & carried on a duologue that didn't sound a bit real; it had so obviously been written up, and carefully rehearsed, & presented as a heart-to-heart fireside chat between the finest minds of the age. Lighting just right too. We, the children, sat around not daring to breathe. Then Miss Toklas appeared & the dog barked &

Norman got off the sofa & we all smoked cigarettes & everything became more generally chatty. . . .¹⁷

And one retired intelligence official remembers being taken by Pearson to tea with the Sitwells, a terrifying experience for a young soldier/poet.¹⁸

All in all Pearson had a good war. He had joined the Office of Strategic Services early, serving in London throughout the war, rising eventually to the rank of colonel, decorated by his own government with the Medal of Freedom on 6 September 1945, "for exceptionally meritorious achievement, which aided the United States in the prosecution of the war against the enemy in continental Europe during the period 15 September 1944 to 8 May 1945,"¹⁹ and by Norway and France. The last few months of 1945 and most of the next year were times of turmoil for the U.S. intelligence services, and Pearson seems to have bobbed about in that turbulence, apparently undecided as to the direction of his career. There are papers in the Pearson files, some written in London in 1945, some in Washington that year and the next, that discuss changes in the arrangements for the U.S. intelligence services and may point to the initial area of Pearson's ambitions. Our chronological markers here are Truman's decision to terminate O.S.S. effective 1 October 1945 and the establishment of a National Intelligence Authority, with a Director of Central Intelligence, on January 22, 1946. For a few months it seemed that the O.S.S. might be resolved into its components, and each of these placed in a separate agency: the card catalogues and their analysts in the State Department's Research and Intelligence division, the remainder parceled out among the military services and the F.B.I. An April 1946 memorandum among Pearson's papers describes the position of "Special Assistant for Research and Intelligence," to be "Chairman of an Advisory Committee on Intelligence," reporting to the secretary of state.²⁰ It is not inconceivable that Pearson would have liked such a position. There are, as a matter of fact, indications that he was offered that position, or a similar senior job in the State Department. But just when the Central Intelligence Group was gathering the severed limbs of O.S.S.,²¹ Pearson "retir[ed] from Government service" towards the end of May 1946,²² having accepted a position at Yale (after flirting with Minnesota, shortly before flirting with Rochester).

In March 1946 Pearson's name had appeared in personnel correspondence between the chair of the English department and the provost: "the State Department has offered [NHP] \$8,000 to continue with them." Pearson, Professor Robert French noted, had suggested that \$4,300 would "make it quite certain" that he would return to Yale.²³ Eight thousand dollars was quite a good salary in 1946, two-thirds that of an officer of flag rank in the military. The position that Pearson had found in the State Department was, no doubt, if not the advisor to the secretary, quite an elevated one. It seemed reasonable to Professor French that he should give up this position for an untenured job in New Haven at half the salary—this after spending the preceding years alternating between deciding on the fate

of nations and having tea with the Sitwells. Donovan, his ultimate chief, and Dulles, his colleague, were both virtually forced out of secret government work, for a time, and both went off to make money on Wall Street. But Pearson, who did not seem to have been forced out, evidently preferred to return to Yale, either because the future of civilian intelligence work in Washington appeared uncertain, or because he had tired of the bureaucratic wrangling in Washington, or because of family interests, or because of many of these reasons, and others, possibly concealed. There are parallels, of course. An outrageous one, inverted, as it were, is that of Anthony Blunt, who also left the counterespionage trade for academe at this time. Or so it seemed.

That, then, is Pearson when he returns to Yale: a married man with a family, a friend of the inner circle of English modernist poets, a war hero with a fairly high rank and the experience of controlling spies all over Western Europe, a student of American literature, an editor of anthologies. Almost immediately on arrival back at New Haven he was promoted to the rank of assistant professor of English at a salary of \$4,600 and given administrative responsibilities for a new program, which was described in a university press release on April 23, 1946: "The purposes of the new [American studies] program are not narrowly nationalistic, but are adapted for American students who desire to study the civilization of our country as a whole with the aim of more effective service in national life," quoting President Charles Seymour.²⁴ Pearson seems to have been as popular with his colleagues at Yale as he had been with the poets and spies of London.²⁵ His salary, including a stipend for area studies work,²⁶ although not reaching that perhaps offered him by the Department of State, was the top salary for an assistant professor of English; the next highest paid, Louis Martz, received \$4,100. It appears to have been part of a pattern for Pearson's remuneration over the next few years that he would be the best paid member of the English Department of his rank.²⁷

Pearson was not responsible for the introduction of the new American studies program, and, of course, it had not been conceived in terms of the Cold War then beginning. It was an initiative of the History, Art, and Literature committee, with roots in the scholarly pursuits of the pre-war period. Among the presidential papers of Presidents Seymour and Griswold we can find a document sent by Pearson's old teacher, Professor Ralph Gabriel, the committee's chairman, to President Seymour, in January 1946 proposing: "an interdepartmental organization be created to be known as 'The American Studies Group' the purpose of which will be to train at the undergraduate and graduate level selected students whose primary purpose is to achieve a broad understanding of American civilization—its origins, evolution and present world relationships."²⁸ The proposal was approved by President Seymour a week later.²⁹

Later that spring, the Yale School of American studies for Foreign Students was established. This was a summer school program supported by the traditional Yale community in New Haven: alumni, ministers, and others in a configuration

familiar in New Haven from the nineteenth century. The American Studies Group endorsed this program in a memorandum to President Seymour, stating that:

- 1) It would make a major contribution to the mutual understanding among the peoples of the world so necessary for the securing of the peace.
- 2) It would provide for foreign students to study, in close contact with American life, the institutions and principles of American democracy, a subject of worldwide interest.³⁰

The phrasing here is significant. The first point was not a matter of scholarship, but of foreign policy; the second open to various interpretations. It is difficult, looking back at these papers, to divide them neatly into those pertaining to the value-free scholarly aims of the American Studies Group for its graduate and undergraduate students, those pertaining to the value-laden aims of a program for foreign students. Professor Gabriel may have begun his program for what we have called “intrinsic” reasons, but times had changed. Scholarship had become a possible instrument of state. The “Prospectus” of the summer school program, as endorsed by the American Studies Group, read as follows:

1. Purpose: The development of the leadership of the United States in the cooperation of the world's peoples for peace is necessarily accompanied by an extension of American cultural influence. Among the world's peoples there is an increasing desire for a deeper understanding of American democracy, especially its ideals and methods, and of the many “know-hows” which contribute to the American standard of living. The fact that the United States Government pursues an international policy which finds not in the domination of other peoples but in the common advancement of all peoples the best service to the American national interest brings other peoples to welcome rather than fear American cultural influence. Indeed this influence is regarded by many peoples as the one foreign factor they can admit which will support their own attempts to modernize their ways of life without threatening to disrupt them.

In view of these circumstances Yale University believes that it has a special duty to perform not only for the American people but also for common humanity in providing access to an understanding of American life and culture that will serve the interests of both. It proposes, therefore, to establish a School of American studies for foreign scholars, professional persons, leaders, and students that will offer instruction in specially

planned courses in the development and current aspects of American life.³¹

“The development of the leadership of the United States in the cooperation of the world’s peoples for peace is necessarily accompanied by an extension of American cultural influence.” Such thoughts would soon lead to the Congress of Cultural Freedom’s multifarious, CIA-funded, activities. The summer program in American studies can now be seen in a context which Pearson’s former colleagues were helping to form. For example, late in 1947, when there was a crisis in Italy: “. . . the National Security Council on November 14, 1947, . . . decided to open a counter-attack upon Soviet propaganda”³² Under National Security Council order NSC 4-a the O.S.S.’s successor organization, the CIA, was assigned “responsibility for covert political warfare.”³³ That responsibility was shared between the government and those circles that had been crucial in the formation of the O.S.S.

When Jim Angleton got word out that Communists in Italy were buying up all the newsprint in the country toward the end of 1947, and Forrestal panicked because there seemed no loose cash anywhere around the government with which to blanket radio time or bribe the traditional middlemen, Allen [Dulles] pitched in without a qualm. A collection plate circulated among the Morris chairs of the Links and Brook clubs, and within days one of Angleton’s Special Procedures people in Rome was turning over millions of lire in a satchel to a well-dressed intermediary inside the Hotel Hassler.³⁴

The rationale for activities of this type came the following spring in “a paper whose author was not named. Its erudition and style were Kennan’s. It called for the inauguration of organized political warfare upon the ‘logical application of Clausewitz’s doctrine in time of peace.’ ‘We have been handicapped,’ it said, ‘by a popular attachment to the concept of a basic difference between peace and war.’”³⁵

This “popular attachment” would be severely eroded over the next generation. The secret war against Germany, fought by Pearson in London, Angleton in Rome, Dulles in Zurich, had become the secret war against Communism, or Soviet imperialism, fought just as much by Dulles, now a lawyer, “among the Morris chairs of the Links and Brooks clubs,” as by Pearson’s protégé Angleton, still in uniform. It was to be fought also in New Haven, where, at that moment, it seemed a natural outgrowth of Gabriel’s life’s work, joining the study of American literature with that of American history (although perhaps not to Gabriel). The alliance of scholarly interest in American studies with political warfare had a compelling intrinsic logic; it seemed natural enough. Once studied, the virtues of America as a civilization were to be seen as a powerful influence

on the thought and action of the student. Pearson was active in the summer school program, and strongly identified with it. He may have found it a natural accompaniment to his other work, a good place to meet young men from foreign countries who might later, after, perhaps, becoming influential in their home countries, remember Yale fondly, and look with favor on favors that might be asked of them, if not by Yale, by an agency of the U.S. government.³⁶

We will return to a consideration of the School of American Studies toward the end of this paper, in the context of the role of the Central Intelligence Agency in these matters. For the moment, however, we will follow another path. Still pursuing the original agenda of the Gabriel committee, Yale had undertaken a survey of programs of American studies for American students at U.S. universities in the fall of 1946.³⁷ This was the first step in a fundraising campaign. At the end of April 1947 on the basis of this survey, Dean William C. DeVane sent a letter to the Ford Foundation, requesting \$25,000 per year.³⁸ DeVane reported that:

During the past year a committee of Yale University has made a systematic inspection of all of the larger, and most of the smaller, institutions in the United States offering programs in American studies. The results were generally most disappointing No institution had worked out in its regular program satisfactory arrangements at the undergraduate and graduate levels for knitting together and synthesizing the elements of American studies into a comprehensive view of the nation as it has become through its history and as it is to-day.³⁹

DeVane suggested that Yale could fulfill this need. The \$25,000 per year requested from Ford would have been for a small program, with partial funding for an administrator, whom it was assumed would be Pearson, and some funds for lectures and clerical staff. The project was to be delayed a year for Pearson's expected absence on the first of his Guggenheim fellowships to edit Hawthorne.⁴⁰ This delay was seen as an advantage, as it gave Gabriel and his group more time for fundraising. The Ford Foundation, however, joined the other major foundations in declining to provide the requested funds for this scholarly enterprise. The foundations' officers also dined at literally exclusive clubs like Brooks and Links. Gabriel's appeal was, at the moment, not quite, or not quite yet, germane.

Nonetheless, the new Yale American studies program was launched and immediately proved popular among undergraduates. Early in the fall term, 1948, Gabriel reported to the provost that: "In the election of intensive majors last spring American studies was second only to English in the number selecting it."⁴¹ Fundraising goals were raised beyond the previous \$25,000 per year. To some extent this appears to have been because the university discovered that American studies could be made to pay.

If I should chance to forget—President Seymour might be interested to know that in speaking to alumni groups the subject arousing the most favorable interest is possible extension of American studies in which boys will obtain a basic understanding of our American culture, etc., etc. Usually gets spontaneous applause and much favorable comment in discussion. A real out and out venture in this direction would bring immense publicity and greatly favorable public opinion—and money. (Office of University Development, H. W. Haggard to C. F. Stoddard, January 16, 1949)⁴²

Haggard had found what development officers seek, an instrument for fundraising. This had two levels: favorable publicity, that could be turned into donations, and money in its own right. (A factor here is that although funds raised for a specific program might be tied to that program, such donations favorably affect the fortunes of the university as a whole in various ways.) This is the context in which President Seymour received a note on the need for American studies in 1949, perhaps from DeVane, that was not about the program's intrinsic academic logic, nor, directly about fundraising. It was about the Cold War. The note observes that: "None of us can afford to minimize the Communist threat to America . . . We ought to utilize all the resources that we can mobilize to teach our students the facts of Communism and the implications of Russian ideology and foreign policy," he wrote. ". . . [T]he Communist threat must . . . be met vigorously and in a positive sense. The most direct means of confronting it is through a fundamental understanding of American principles."⁴³

As the documents reflect a shift from Gabriel's desire to design a scholarly successor to the History, Arts, and Literature program, to something more worldly and far-reaching, the fundraising rationale also shifts. Dean DeVane put it this way in a letter to President Seymour:

No one who has lived or travelled extensively in our country or even flown from New York to San Francisco can fail to appreciate the magnificence and variety of the land. The imaginative mind inevitably thinks of the superb English stock which first settled and consolidated our Eastern seaboard . . . It is a fortifying experience to relive in the mind in so short a time our astonishing history. One comes to a new appreciation of what we are and what we have done, and one is better prepared to face the dangers and hoarse disputes of our own time. And one is also lured on to study in detail each of the phases of our development. From such a study we will gain strength, both individually and as a nation, and it will be that kind of inner strength which we need so badly in our time to

face the changing, and in part, hostile world This is an argument, growing out of an experience, for the establishment of a strong program of American Studies at Yale, which in many respects is our most native university. . . . In the international scene it is clear that our government has not been too effective in blazoning to Europe and Asia, *as a weapon in the "cold war" the merits of our way of thinking and living in America*. . . . Until we put more vigor and conviction into our own cause here at home, it is not likely that we shall be able to convince the wavering peoples of the world that we have something infinitely better than Communism to offer them What we need now is organization and a budget—a leader to organize and control the program and a group of men largely free from other departmental duties to devote themselves single-mindedly to teaching and research in American Studies they would prepare Yale men for intelligent leadership in their businesses and communities, and in their country. Such a program at Yale would, moreover, serve as a model for the organization and conduct of programs in American Studies in the colleges and universities of the country, and would train the teachers and scholars to staff their programs in the future It is clear that with an annual income of \$35,000.00 devoted to these studies we could provide a model for the country. This would be the income on a capital sum of \$1,000,000.00.⁴⁴ (Emphasis added.)

We find in the fall of 1949 a letter from the provost mentioning an “estimate of funds needed” for the American studies program now thought of as an endowment of \$2 million, which the provost thought might be obtained from a Mr. Coe.⁴⁵ At this point we enter into a rather dramatic story of how Yale attempted to add some \$4 million to its endowment, at a time when that was a considerable sum, without losing its academic soul. The actors are, on the one side, William Robertson Coe, Edward Gallaher, and the professional fund-raising staff of the university; on the other side, the academic administrative staff of the university, eventually including President Griswold. The field of conflict was the terms of donation for what became the Coe Professorship in American studies, whether those terms should be restrictive of the academic freedom of the professor and his program.

Coe, born in England, in 1869, had immigrated to the United States when he was fifteen years old. He made a fortune in the insurance business, which was his field of expertise (he was author of the well-known *General Average in the United States*); as he became richer, he branched out into other areas, including railroads and the oil industry.⁴⁶ His friend, Edward Beach Gallaher designed and built one

of the first gasoline-powered automobiles, made money from electric railroads, and in 1910 founded the Clover Manufacturing Company and an economic advisory service, the Clover Business Letter, which in the late 1940s had a circulation of over 150,000.⁴⁷ The Clover Business Letter appeared in the format of a stock market advisory letter, or, perhaps, a newsletter of a learned society, which conveyed Gallaher's opinions of current events. Its circulation extended as far (or near) as the department of industrial administration at Yale, the head of which wrote to the provost at the beginning of November 1949 that: "Mr. Gallaher is greatly disturbed, as I am, over the rapid drift in recent years toward a totalitarian governmental and economic system in this country, and unless one of the clearly stated objectives of our general program is to counteract this tendency I doubt if he would be interested in supporting it."⁴⁸ A few days later, we find in a Prospectus of American Studies Program, coincidentally, that it is to be: "A program based on the conviction that the best safeguards against totalitarian developments in our economy are an understanding of our cultural heritage and an affirmative belief in the validity of our institutions of free enterprise and individual liberty."⁴⁹ Which seemed to fit the bill. But then we find this comment in a letter from the provost to E. B. Gallaher, November 22, 1949: "In my opinion, the present drift toward statism is to be attributed in some measure to the action of [business and financial leaders in the past]. If we are to stop the present trends and to return to a real system of free enterprise, it seems necessary to take some sort of steps to prevent a recurrence of the more serious mistakes made by the powerful figures in the business and financial world."⁵⁰ Challenged, and perhaps surprised, Gallaher agreed: "I have found that you get nowhere if you try to convince people that Socialism is against their best interests if you do not at the same time call their attention to the greed of industry and the financial interests when they are in control."⁵¹ This is the first indication of a certain tension between the highest officers of Yale and their industrial benefactors in the campaign for an endowment for the American studies program. It was, as yet, only a ripple. The field of American studies at Yale supported three or four groups: Professor Gabriel and his scholarly colleagues, who wished to study American culture; Pearson and his associates, who also wished to demonstrate its value internationally; Coe and Gallaher, who wished to demonstrate its value within the country; and Yale's fund-raisers, who wished to coin that value, as it were. Of course, these are merely logical distinctions and there was much overlap among these groups.

The real conflict among them would be over academic control of appointments and course content, and the conflict expressed in terms of differing emphasis on the importance of the domestic threat of communism. Gabriel and his colleagues were thinking of a program the purpose of which was "to strengthen research and teaching in the American field,"⁵² but the provost described it as "A program based on the conviction that the best safeguards against totalitarian developments in our economy are an understanding of our cultural heritage and an affirmative belief in the validity of free enterprise and

individual liberty.” This rhetoric of the “affirmative belief in free enterprise” served well in fundraising efforts, such as described in the following escalation of goals, both academic and fiscal:

There is no more urgent need in American education today than instruction in our own history and civilization. Indeed, the need transcends the province of education; it is a critical national interest. Events have placed the United States in a position of world leadership and world responsibility. Every American citizen who has had practical experience in those events reminds us that we cannot hope to exercise that leadership or discharge that responsibility merely by opposing ideas and institutions we do not like. We cannot save ourselves with negatives. We must have an affirmative belief in our own institutions, a belief so well founded in fact and general comprehension that we can demonstrate it to the world without benefit of special pleading or propaganda The rise of American studies since 1930 symbolizes our lost innocence, an innocence which was really an ignorance of our own country that very nearly carried us to disaster . . . the vast majority of American citizens receive from our educational system only the poorest and most meagre instruction in the fundamentals of their own civilization. For this vital part of their education they are thrown on the resources of press, radio, and television, easy prey to the demagogic and the meretricious If our democracy is to survive and prosper this weakness must be remedied The American Studies Program of Yale University is specifically addressed to this problem To carry out [its] varied program we submit the following specific inventory of needs⁵³

Those needs were a professorship endowed at \$500,000 for an income of \$17,000 per annum, a faculty fund endowed at \$1,500,000 for an annual income of \$52,500; a teacher training program endowed at \$1,500,000 for a yearly income of \$52,500; a library fund endowed at \$750,000 for an annual income of \$26,250; and a research and publication fund endowed at \$400,000 for an income of \$14,000 per annum—a target totaling \$4,650,000 for an income of \$162,750.

Meanwhile, Gallaher had supplied double what the foundations had refused, \$50,000. A grateful Provost Foord wrote to him in June 1950:

I have not reported before now on the progress of our American Studies program With the aid of your gift we have been able to add two younger men to the staff for the coming year

and to increase the course offerings available to undergraduates I am sure you will be pleased to learn that we have just now received the promise of an endowment of a half million dollars in support of our plans The most urgent need at the moment is for a man qualified to give the program leadership and to direct its development along sound lines. We had looked to Professor Griswold to do this but, of course, his selection to the Yale presidency makes it impossible for him to take on this task, although it augurs well for the program to have as President one who is in thorough sympathy with its objectives Please consider this letter both a report of progress and an appeal to your interest in our plans I must not close without thanking you for the Clover letter which reaches me regularly. I read it with interest and hope that it exerts a wide and expanding influence on public opinion.⁵⁴

Let us look at a typical passage from one of those Clover Letters:

Keep your feet on the ground! All this A-bomb and H-bomb propaganda, silly as it is from the angle of good diplomacy, has been launched to divert public attention from the shattering effects of Truman's "A-bomb" handling of our internal affairs, which have brought the country to the very brink of disaster. The idea is to get people so worried about the A-bombs and H-bombs that they won't stop to realize how their country, their wealth and their personal liberty have been almost wrecked The country is slowly waking up to the fact that a great mistake was made in having elected a Socialistic government in 1948 Many are becoming alarmed at our rapid drift towards a Socialistic State and want to do something about it The labor bosses are America's enemy No. 1; the present Administration is their stooge In 1932 we elected what we thought was an honest, conservative man who was supposed to be a true American, one who stood for our free-incentive enterprise system, not knowing that he had sold his soul to Socialism It was not long before we found he was collaborating with Lord Keynes and the English Society of Socialists, called the Fabian Society, which was, at the time, well on its way to the socialization of England (April 1950: "The Situation Today")⁵⁵

This is not the rhetoric of Pearson's Bloomsbury friends, nor that of the interlocking worlds of Wall Street and the managers of the cold war. Provost

Foord's expression of sympathy for views of this type is surprising in the light of his institutional position and later developments.

In June 1950 President Charles Seymour announced the gift to Yale from William Robertson Coe of \$500,000,⁵⁶ for, not exactly Gabriel's "strengthening of undergraduate and graduate studies and research," but

to provide for more general understanding of the facts of American history and the fundamental principles of American freedom in the field of politics, and of economics. In both schools and colleges, American history has been neglected to a point where the illiteracy of our citizens in regard to the most vital aspects of America's past has become notorious [T]here is a serious danger that foreign ideologies of various kinds have found a foothold which would not be possible if American citizens really understood the privileges which have molded our development as a nation Mr. Coe . . . shows the way to meet positively and intelligently the menace of foreign philosophies and starts Yale in this path with material assistance.⁵⁷

Ralph Gabriel resigned as chairman of American studies on Yale's acceptance of the Coe fund, which his protégé and Yale's incoming president, Professor Griswold designated in favor of David Potter, naming Potter the first Coe Professor, on Griswold's first day as president of Yale.⁵⁸

Some technicalities followed the next year. The donor, W. R. Coe, wrote to Lawrence B. Tighe, treasurer of Yale University, describing the transfer of shares of stock valued at \$546,625, then stating: "I hereby further request that the Professor to head the Program of American studies shall always be one who firmly believes in the preservation of our System of Free Enterprise and is opposed to the system of State Socialism, Communism and Totalitarianism, and that the portion of the income of the fund which is set aside for the Program of American studies shall be used for the furtherance of the System above referred to."⁵⁹ This was fine with the treasurer, who, in his transmittal letter to the president and others in the fundraising apparatus of the university, wrote: "You will note the terms of the professorship as set forth in the last paragraph of Mr. Coe's letter. I am writing him that this condition is agreeable to the University but will not send the letter if anyone thinks it is not advisable to do so."⁶⁰ Apparently someone, probably Griswold, did think it advisable not to do so. Coe's intentions for his gift to Yale become clearer when we read the conditions of the donation he presented to the University of Wyoming in early 1954. The American studies program there was described as "designed as a positive and affirmative method of meeting the threat of socialism, communism, totalitarianism, and to preserve our freedom and our system of free enterprise."⁶¹ The University of Wyoming accepted Coe's veto over nominations to his professorships, and the condition that they would be required to speak for business and freedom against socialism, communism, and

totalitarianism. Late that year, Griswold wrote to Coe in terms which the latter must have found disappointing, referring in passing to someone who was to become fairly well-known for advocating positions close to those of the benefactor of Yale American studies:

It is not what is on the label, but what is in the bottle that counts. The way to strengthen American studies is to staff the program with superior teachers and scholars, whose intellectual and moral integrity and devotion to their country is unquestioned, and who are highly respected by their colleagues. This we have done at Yale, insinuations to the contrary notwithstanding. . . . In the character and quality of its teachers the American studies Program at Yale needs no apology, to Buckley or anybody else Arguing with Buckley is futile: he is intemperate to the point of irrationalism.⁶²

William F. Buckley, Jr., upon graduating from Yale, published *God and Man at Yale*, a book of some lingering fame. It has a section on American studies:

The major course in the American studies Program is taught by Ralph H. Gabriel . . . Mr. Gabriel is a fine scholar and his course is of vital scholarly interest. But in no way does it attempt to persuade the student to line up on one side or the other of the collectivist issue There is clearly no bias—for or against free enterprise—in [other courses in the American Studies Program] . . . Mr. Coe's generous gift to Yale has made possible highly interesting studies in American cultural history. But it is nonsense to assume that the instructors of the courses dedicate themselves to affirming a "belief in the validity of our institutions of free enterprise and individual liberty."⁶³

Early in the new year, Dean DeVane reinforced Griswold's position, as against that of Buckley, Gallaher, and Coe: "We have faith in the soundness of American institutions and culture to believe that if we give [American studies students] freedom and the truth they will come out strong and healthy American citizens, knowing why their country is strong and how to keep it that way."⁶⁴ And David Potter, Yale's Coe Professor, wrote to his patron that Buckley "wanted his college to do exactly the same thing which he wants his church to do—that it hand down to him a directive telling him what to believe. When Mr. Gabriel gave him the facts and in effect asked him to stand on his own feet and use them for himself," Potter wrote, "he was disappointed, and he felt that if Mr. Gabriel did not try to control his thought, then Mr. Gabriel had no convictions."⁶⁵ In the end, Coe was unable to impose his views on Yale as he had on Wyoming. Nevertheless when

he died in March of 1954 he left \$4,000,000 to Yale, including \$1,240,000 to American studies,⁶⁶ much to the fury of the Yale librarian, who thought American studies a fad, and the money rightfully destined to the library, by a sort of right of first request.

But the issue of the nature of American studies at Yale, whether it was to be “objective” or “affirmative,” did not die with the donor. His son, William Rogers Coe, kept up the pressure on David Potter. As Potter put his side of the argument in a letter of December 21, 1955,

The problem lies, as I see it, in the fact that there is a distinction, which may be fine, but is also clear, between having a primary purpose to teach American history, with the faith that from such teaching an appreciation of the principles of individualism and free enterprise will result, and a purpose to teach the principles of individualism and free enterprise, using American history as the medium of instruction. One actually involves teaching . . . the other involves indoctrination . . .⁶⁷

Given what, in the national political context, must be seen as his nearly heroic forthrightness, Potter was obviously troubled by his delicate situation. He sent a copy of his letter to President Griswold, commenting:

This letter illustrates a situation that has existed for quite a long time, where I have had to attempt the very difficult task of saying “no” to Mr. Coe and at the same time trying to avoid alienating him. Of course there is less at stake now, but I am still trying to do essentially the same thing that I did in a number of letters to Mr. Coe, Sr.: to give him honest information and advice, to maintain our own standards, and to keep just as much of his good-will as I could consistently with the other objectives.⁶⁸

But he need not have worried, he had strong backing from his president, who told him that “your letter . . . is admirable from start to finish,”⁶⁹ and, ultimately, he won. Yale kept the money and control over its American studies curriculum and Potter went to Stanford, far from Coes, their enthusiasms, and their letters.

The Yale University position—that of the university administration—on what was called the threat of international communism was essentially that of Dean Acheson (a member of the governing committee of the university), who in a speech a couple of years earlier on the occasion of an award from Yale, had given it as his opinion that the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union was not a “moral” crusade, but was simply a typical geo-political situation where there had come into being “a coalition to resist the imposition by a powerful state

of its hegemony upon others.”⁷⁰ He likened it to the English grand coalitions against Louis XIV and Napoleon, and, of course, to the grand alliance against Germany. His was the Kennan doctrine of containment, and, to the distress of Coe and Buckley, insofar as American studies was concerned, it ruled at Yale. American studies, with the other programs in the humanities and social sciences at Yale, would be “positive,” not a matter of preaching against communism, but one of advocacy for the American alternative. The importance of the distinction, analogous to that between Main Street and Wall Street in the contemporary Republican party, can be exaggerated, but it appeared important at the time.

It was entirely consistent with that doctrine—as a matter of fact, it was as a natural extension of that doctrine—that behind the scenes, away from Potter’s duel with the Coe family and theirs with Fair Deal Communism, Norman Holmes Pearson from the first administered the American studies program, serving on its executive committee from 1951,⁷¹ while enrolling 235 students in his “Twentieth Century American Prose” class, which was that year, and usually, the largest advanced course in the English Department.⁷² It was a typical literature class of the period, its syllabi indicating close readings of canonical masterpieces in the New Critical manner, “positive,” in the fashion of the time and place, an ideological method of omission, “scandals,” and “fallacies.” (Pearson also kept up his interest in contemporary poetry, conducting an immense correspondence with H.D., and bringing poets—cumings, for example—to New Haven for readings and tea.⁷³) By 1958, finally as chairman of American studies, Pearson was able to report that the program had 111 undergraduate majors and 14 graduate students. In a marginal note on the 1957-58 “Annual Report” in the presidential files, Griswold growled that this: “Confirms my suspicion that American studies is bleeding History white!”⁷⁴ Griswold’s first loyalty was to history—American studies was, in his view, only a part of that larger whole, a part experiencing unnatural growth. But American studies had the advantage: it had the Coe’s money, and, in one way or another, it had the Cold War program, which indeed mobilized “as a weapon in the ‘cold war’ the merits of our way of thinking and living in America.” Fueled by donations motivated by fear of domestic “subversion,” it was well-equipped to play its international role as a weapon in the cold war, focusing attention on the subject of American culture, rather as did the traveling exhibitions of the New York School of Abstract Expressionism in those years, part of what the CIA’s covert operations chief, Frank Wisner, called his “might Wurlitzer” of psychological warfare.⁷⁵

Ten years later Pearson and Gabriel, looking back at the program that the one had administered and the other founded, discussed another use for American studies at Yale under the title, “The Concept of American Studies,” on a radio program, “Yale Reports,” broadcast on WTIC (New Haven), Sunday, May 25, 1958. When he was asked “what disciplines (does) American Studies consist of?” Pearson replied,

Well, almost as many disciplines as go to make up a culture in which we live, and which we're studying men who are intending to go into law or into business make up a very large proportion of our students, so too are students who are going into ministry Teachers, of course And some of our men, and I am very proud of this, are entering the government service to be our representatives abroad, to know, if they can, before they set out to another shore what it is they represent, to articulate, if they can, what we stand for

Later in the interview, Pearson elaborated on the broader purposes of American studies at Yale:

Professor David Potter [wrote] "When the free world is really less than half a world, the basic principles and values of our society cannot be defended at all unless . . . understood and appreciated . . . [The Yale student] must be educated to think of democracy not in narrow or formalistic political terms, but as a germinal impulse with profound bearings upon every phase of human activity. In short, he must comprehend his own history and grasp the basic principles of his own society, and he must, of course, do it for himself through a real understanding of the issues of the day and not through any superficial instruction which tells him what he ought to believe . . ." This, I think, expresses . . . our goal⁷⁶

But Potter's politics were not quite the same as those of Pearson. Let us look again at Pearson's comment about one of the careers for which Yale men in the American studies program were being prepared:

And some of our men, and I am very proud of this, are entering the government service to be our representatives abroad, to know, if they can, before they set out to another shore what it is they represent, to articulate, if they can, what we stand for.

...

One would suppose that this refers to the State Department, although that is not quite what foreign service officers are commissioned to undertake. It was, however, very much the program, in those years, of such institutions as Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and their sponsoring agency.

In addition to his advanced courses in twentieth-century literature, Pearson at Yale taught introductory courses in nineteenth-century American literature, as

he had during a brief stint at the University of Colorado before the war. Among his papers can be found this typical examination topic, mimeographed on that thin paper often then used for the purpose:

American Studies 35, Test, 15 December 1950 1. (50 min.)
Describe and compare the final dinner-parties in *The Age of Innocence* and *A Lost Lady* in terms of the symbolic value of each to the theme of the novel in which it appears.

This is innocent enough, or not, in the manner of the New Criticism, directing students to “symbols” and “themes,” avoiding issues of intention and context. On the other side of the paper is a typescript, with no title, and no date:

In referring to the recruitment of service personnel
Younger personnel will normally be recruited from university circles. These will in general have some intellectual training and social presentability, as well as particular language qualifications resulting sometimes from study and sometimes by accident of experience. Being without fixed professional interest they are suitable for training for eventual responsibility. The advantages of colleges and universities as a source is largely due to the extraordinary number of individuals who pass through, coupled with an extended time for their observation on the part of those aware of what characteristics and abilities are needed. No direct approach should be made to such persons by the spotters, but their names and qualifications, permanent addresses, and the like, plus a report should be on file at headquarters. . . . If I am to take Yale as a typical example, no one on the campus knows how to direct or advise those students who on their own initiative are interested in such careers. This is as officially true of myself, who is openly known to have been associated with such work in the past, as it is of the Colonel in charge of the local unit of the ROTC. Even if by some accident we were somewhat insecurely able to put these individuals in touch with present members of the C.I.A., there is no one to eliminate the obviously unusable. . . . [T]hroughout many of the colleges and universities in the country there are former intelligence officers who are regular members of the faculty, who could be indoctrinated in minimal requirements or at least given the name of some person to whom either suggestions or actual individuals could be referred. For example, to name former men who served under me and who would be typical of the kind of men so to be used:

Donald Jordan (Chairman, Dept. of History)	Clark University
Calvin Tenney (Asst. Prof. French)	Wesleyan University
Reginald Phelps (Dean's Office)	Harvard University
Edward Weismiller (Dept. of English)	Pomona College
Eugene Waith (Asst. Prof. English)	Yale University ⁷⁷

Robin Winks, who is knowledgeable about such matters, has pointed to this document as the draft of a suggestion to the recruitment office of the CIA. William Corson, equally knowledgeable, describes a national recruitment structure, eventually involving thousands of American academics talent-spotting for the CIA.⁷⁸ Pearson's memorandum may well be the origin of this system.

*

Concerning American studies at Yale, we have these narratives: There is Professor Gabriel's story, how a group of historians began to include literature in their studies, taking some methods from anthropology. There is the fund-raiser's story, how Yale, as a corporation, could acquire capital funds by appealing to the anti-communist fervor of wealthy businessmen. And there is Norman Holmes Pearson's story, which appears to be that of his teacher and mentor Gabriel, but has this other dimension, a secret history, as it were, where American studies at Yale could be taken to form at once part of the professional preparation of employees of the Central Intelligence Agency, a likely site for recruitment, and "a weapon" as part of the "psychological warfare" of the time.

Can these disparate narratives be joined into a master narrative of the rise of American studies, at least at Yale? Perhaps not. One is apparently independent, that of Ralph Gabriel and his friends. Given the nature of universities, these gentlemen would probably have continued to develop their research and teaching in the interdisciplinary direction they thought important, quite without regard to larger fundraising or overt ideological issues. On the other hand, fundraising and anti-communism were pretty well interwoven for the purposes of American studies. Without the need to raise funds, Yale might never have met Mr. Coe, and certainly without anti-communism as a domestic concern, Mr. Coe would not have been attracted to American studies. Coe's concerns (and those of the young William F. Buckley, Jr.), were actually in conflict with those of the Gabriel group, as we have seen in their exchanges with David Potter. It took all the diplomacy of President Griswold, Dean DeVane, and Provost Foord to keep Coe sufficiently enthusiastic, while not quite agreeing to his terms for the endowment.

These interests were bridged by Pearson's, and those of the organizations he represented. He was an academic of a familiar type, highly educated by virtue of family as much as talent, an editor rather than a scholar, the nearly perennial associate professor well-known for his personnel judgments, the business agent of poets. This was as true in 1939 as in the 1960s. And yet, for three or four years,

he had been something quite different: a key player in the great game, if not a great spy, the master of spies. H.D.'s daughter Perdita had noted a certain hesitation about Pearson's abandonment of the secret world, when she met him, by chance, in New York just after the war:

Then, who should tumble from the blue but our own dear little Norman. Just appeared on the phone in the middle of a very hot afternoon—absolutely his first sign of life since I arrived—& said What About Dinner. He was in great form, dynamic as ever, bless his heart, though I think he misses his war-time intrigues and ramifications. Difficult to infuse a Yale tutoring career with quite the same lofty spirit. Though he now contemplates a job at Rochester, which will pay him more, on the other hand, the people would be bourgeois. He was on the way to an interview, sandwiched me in between trains⁷⁹

Pearson's contemporaries became the chess masters of the cold war—Sherman Kent, Masterman, Philby. His protégé, James Jesus Angleton, was chief of the counterintelligence staff of the CIA for a generation, more of a legend than a human being. And Pearson lived in New Haven, taught his courses on Hawthorne and Melville, served on American studies panels for American Council of Learned Societies, was not promoted as quickly as he would have liked, befriended young foreigners, and eventually died, rather suddenly, on a trip to the Far East late in 1975.⁸⁰

Or is that the whole story? Sometimes secrets are well-hidden. Sometimes they rest on the surface. William Buckley once wrote that he “should be disrespectful of Yale if I did not credit her with molding the values and thinking processes of the majority of her students.”⁸¹ Pearson stated explicitly in his WTIC radio interview that for him a matter of prime importance for American studies was that it was a course of preparation for careers in government service. One of Pearson's natural roles in the O.S.S. had been that of a trainer of intelligence staff and agents. It would be easy to overstate this point, but it is not impossible that to some extent that is how he continued to function, in some moods, in some contexts. He would have considered this completely natural, indeed a duty. And in as much as Pearson was a dominant influence on American studies, as a teaching program, at Yale, the way in which Pearson worked, his goals, would have helped shape that program. Again, one does not wish to overstate this. American studies exists independently of international politics. Since the end of the cold war, and its special funding, this has been demonstrated by the continuing existence of the field. The present academic generation has sought to recast it, even to make it oppositional to the tendencies indicated here. But it is important to remember that it was not always so.

We would do well to remember, as a CIA historian has written, that: “The CIA research and analysis shops deserve great credit for realizing from the first

that a symbiotic relationship exists between scholars in government intelligence agencies and scholars elsewhere.”⁸² One direction of this relationship, that under review here—the influence of government on academe—is generally acknowledged, but perhaps not well-known in detail. According to McGeorge Bundy, a singularly present figure in the secret history of the last fifty years, “It is a curious fact of academic history that the first great center of area studies in the United States was not located in any university, but in Washington, during the Second World War, in the Office of Strategic Services. In very large measure the area study programs developed in American universities in the years after the war were manned, directed, and stimulated by graduates of the O.S.S. . . .”⁸³ When trying to arrive at a judgment concerning Norman Holmes Pearson’s influence on American studies and its students, we might consider a few more lines of the passage from which this paper draws its epigraph: “[C]ases may take years to mature. Items in the files that have every appearance of being dead can suddenly become of primary importance. Thus, it is known that enemy organizations will normally plant as many “sleeper” agents as they can to be alerted and used at a later date.” Not that Pearson was an agent. He was an intelligence officer. The difference is crucial. One carries out policy. The other, given sufficient rank, has a hand in its formation.

Notes

1. NHP’s revised version of the history of Office of Strategic Services (hereafter O.S.S.), p. 524. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Za Pearson, Section 4, Wooden File Box 1, Row 1, OSS, Yale University.

2. My concern here is a certain play of ideology: how it is voiced, by whom it is voiced, how it connects, on one side, with scholarship, how it connects, on other sides, with finance and what used to be called the national security state. (Which is not to say that scholarship, finance, and the national security state can not in themselves be properly considered as reified ideology.)

3. The Pearson papers were first brought to scholarly attention by Timothy Naftali.

4. William H. Epstein, “Counter-Intelligence: Cold-War Criticism and Eighteenth-Century Studies,” *ELH*, Spring, 1990.

5. The *American Quarterly*’s special bibliographical issue in 1979 is another marker.

6. Noam Chomsky, et al., *The Cold War and the University Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years* (New York, 1997). Rebecca S. Lowen, *Creating the Cold War University: The Transformation of Stanford* (Berkeley, 1997).

7. Robin W. Winks, *Cloak & Gown: Scholars in the Secret War, 1939-1961* (New York, 1987).

8. For example, see Harvard University, Houghton Library: Cummings; bMS Am 1892 (668); Letter from NHP to eec, 20 October 1937, NHP letterhead, 147 Cottage Street; NHP editing the *Oxford Anthology of American Literature* with William Rose Benet.

9. There is a curious Yale/Colorado/CIA connection that might warrant some exploration.

10. Bryher, *Days of Mars, 1940-46* (New York, 1972). Copyright NHP.

11. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Za Pearson, Section 4, Wooden File Box 1, Row 1, OSS.

12. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Za Pearson, Section 4, Wooden File Box 2, Row 1, OSS. Emphasis added.

13. “In the two years and four months of its existence, X-2 worked out firm agreements with FBI, G-2 and the Department of State. In London, the basic operating agreement that was negotiated in 1943 with MI-(V) was supplemented by a scarcely less important agreement with MI-5 in early 1944. X-2 thus gained full access to the experience and extensive files of both the external and internal British GE services . . . OSS/X-2 was now treated as an independent equal.” This appears to be NHP’s contribution to the OSS History (Vol.

II, 540 mss.)Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Za Pearson, Section 4, Wooden File Box 1, Row 1, OSS.

14. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Za Pearson, Section 4, Wooden File Box 1, Row 1, OSS; OSS History, 527.

15. We should not underestimate the effects of the achievement of the Twenty Committee on the post-war intelligence communities: there are agents, all of them can be found, they can be turned so as to be double agents. Even paranoids have real triumphs.

16. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Za Pearson, Section 4, Wooden File Box 3, Row 1, OSS.

17. The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Bryher Papers, Correspondence—ncoming, Schaffner, GEN MSS 97, Series Number I, Box Number 55.

18. Private conversation with retired CIA officer who wishes to remain anonymous.

19. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Za Pearson, Section 4, Wooden File Box 1, Row 1, OSS. The Norwegians gave him the Knight's Cross, First Class, of the Royal Order of Saint Olav. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Za Pearson, Section 4, Wooden File Box 1, Row 1, OSS.

20. See a memorandum of 23 April 1946 for Colonel William W. Quinn, from James R. Murphy, recommending placing X-2 (counter-intelligence) under the Central Intelligence Group, rather than in the FBI or military intelligence. [Based on Memorandum of 22 April 1946 to Quinn on Necessity for Integration or Coordination of SI and X-2 Functions, author's name deleted. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Za Pearson, Section 4, Wooden File Box 1, Row 1, OSS.]

21. Russell Plan—State Department, April 22, 1946, Office of Intelligence Coordination and Liaison (OCL): "OCL is established as of March 1, 1946 . . . [represents] all interested elements of the Department on the staff of the National Intelligence Authority . . . [prepares] special intelligence estimates for the Secretary The Special Assistant for Research and Intelligence" is chairman of the Advisory committee on Intelligence, reporting to the Secretary." Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Za Pearson, Section 4, Wooden File Box 1, Row 1, OSS.

22. Letter dated 28 May 1946 to David Zagier "At this moment when I am retiring from Government service . . ." signed NORMAN HOLMES PEARSON Assistant Chief of Branch. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Za Pearson, Section 4, Wooden File Box 2, Row 1, OSS.

23. Robert French, English chair, to Provost, 3.23. 46; Yale, Provost, YRG-3-A, Series I, Box 21, (folder 217).

24. Yale Archives, Presidential Papers, Charles Seymour, YRG 2-A-15, Series I, Box 15, Folder 127. The same press release noted that the program would be staffed by Ralph H. Gabriel, Larned Professor of American History (chair), Stanley T. Williams, Sterling Professor of American Literature, Director of Graduate Studies, and Norman Holmes Pearson (Assistant Professor of English, Director of Undergraduate Studies).

25. Robert French to Provost, 2.7.46. Yale, Provost, YRG-3-A, Series I, Box 21, (folder 217).

26. [NHP \$3,800 + \$500 for Area Studies, 9.23.46, English Department Salary Commitments. Yale, Provost, YRG-3-A, Series I, Box 21, (folder 217).

27. Salary scale for assistant professors in 4th and 5th year = \$4,300. Letter from the provost to the chair of English, 3.25.47. Yale, Provost, YRG-3-A, Series I, Box 21, (folder 217).

28. The "Committee to consider the organization of American Studies was: Mr. Williams for English, Mr. Labaree for History, Mr. Healy for Economics, Mr. Corbett for Government, Mr. Davie for Sociology, Dean Meeks for the School of Fine Arts, and Mr. Gabriel, Chairman." American studies proposal sent to President Seymour on 1.11.46 by Ralph Gabriel (letterhead: Yale University—Yale Studies for Returning Service Men): "Recommendations to the President: . . . II. that . . . Yale Archives, Presidential Papers, Charles Seymour, YRG 2-A-15, Series I, Box 15, Folder 127.

29. Approved 1.19.46 Yale Archives, Presidential Papers, Charles Seymour, YRG 2-A-15, Series I, Box 15, Folder 127.

30. A Prospectus of the Yale School of American Studies for Foreign Students (Professor Turner) 4.17.46 (Summer School) Yale Archives, Presidential Papers, Charles Seymour, YRG 2-A-15, Series I, Box 15, Folder 127.

31. Yale Archives, Presidential Papers, Charles Seymour, YRG 2-A-15, Series I, Box 15, Folder 127.

32. Arthur B. Darling, *The Central Intelligence Agency: An Instrument of Government, to 1950* (University Park and London, 1990), 248.

33. Peter Grose, *Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles* (London, 1995) 282.

34. Burton Hersh, *The Old Boys: The American Elite and the Origins of the CIA* (New York, 1992), 231-2.

35. Darling, 266-7.

36. The recruiting of foreign students by the CIA is a story that deserves closer study. One aspect of its impact, according to William Corson, was that in the thirty years after

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1948, "40 of the agents so recruited have committed suicide in response to the fear of exposure of their relationship with America's intelligence services." William R. Corson, *The Armies of Ignorance: The Rise of the American Intelligence Empire* (New York, 1978), 313.

37. "A Survey of Programs of American Studies," B. D. Henning, September, 1946 (typescript, 73pp). Surveys programs at Barnard, California, Grinnell, Harvard, Leland Stanford, Mills, University of Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Princeton, Smith, Vassar, Williams, with course requirements and other material. Yale Archives, Presidential Papers, Charles Seymour, YRG 2-A-15, Series I, Box 15, Folder 127.

38. This can be seen against the background of a letter from DeVane to Provost Edgar S. Furniss:

December 5/47

Dear Ed:

Here is what Gabriel would like for American Studies:

1) Two-thirds of the time of a permanent man to be executive secretary of the American Studies and conduct undergraduate seminars, Senior essays, etc. The other third to be in a regular department, such as English, history, Sociology, etc. (I think Gabriel has Norman Pearson in mind, but of this I am not quite certain.) This would cost at the beginning about \$4,000.

2) Money for visiting lecturers

3) This would necessitate a separate budget, or perhaps the inclusion of a sum in the Areas budget under American Studies. We now have an item of \$500 for Pearson in the Areas Budget.

4) Since Pearson plans to be away, I believe, next year, we could get out on less money for a year, and might get by on a token beginning on the program. Pearson's absence might also ease the situation of promotions in the English Department. The American Studies is going to be a thriving field, I think, with in undergraduate and graduate work, but it will not get far without a budget of some sort of its own—Gabriel as Chairman, Pearson (or another) as executive secretary, and a small budget for expenses.

Faithfully yours,

Bill DeVane

Provost, Records of the Provost: Edgar S. Furniss, Group No. YRG 3-A, Series No. I, box No. 3, folder 29, American Studies 1946-51.

39. Dean William C. DeVane to the Ford Foundation, 4.29.47: Yale Archives, Presidential Papers, Charles Seymour, YRG 2-A-15, Series I, Box 15, Folder 127.

40. At about that time, the Guggenheim Foundation awarded a fellowship to Sherman Kent to write his standard textbook on National Intelligence Estimates. Kent was between his tours at O.S.S. and CIA at the time.

41.

The undergraduate work in American Studies has grown to important proportions. In Yale College American Studies is offered only as an intensive major, requiring a dean's list average for admission. In the election of intensive majors last spring American Studies was second only to English in the number selecting it. The supervision of the coordinating seminar and the direction of the senior essays that are an integral part of the major is a time-consuming undertaking . . . the administrative work connected with a department as large as this is becoming very great and is a burden on men who devote only part time to the work of the Department . . . With the concurrence of my colleagues I recommend the appointment of a full time man in American Studies together with a budget that would enable the Department to have two-thirds of the time of one instructor or one-third of the time of two instructors. Specifically we recommend the following. Associate Professor (Norman Pearson) \$4,500 . . ."

Ralph H. Gabriel, chairman, American Studies, Memorandum to the Provost, October 15, 1948. Yale Archives, Presidential Papers, Charles Seymour, YRG 2-A-15, Series I, Box 15, Folder 127.

42. Provost, Records of the Provost: Edgar S. Furniss, Group No. YRG 3-A, Series No. I, box No. 3, folder 29, American Studies 1946-51.

43. "American Studies" n.d. DeVane? 1949? Yale Archives, Presidential Papers, Charles Seymour, YRG 2-A-15, Series I, Box 15, Folder 127.

44. "American Studies at Yale" a document by William C. DeVane to President Seymour (received 5.16.49): Yale Archives, Presidential Papers, Charles Seymour, YRG 2-A-15, Series I, Box 15, Folder 127.

45. Letter from provost to James T. Babb, Librarian, University Library, September 27, 1949. "I have prepared for your consideration the attached estimate of funds needed for our American Studies program. It amounts to a total of two million dollars. I have tried to break it up into packages in the thought that Mr. Coe might be persuaded to take on part of the bill in case he was unwilling to carry the whole load." Provost, Records of the Provost: Edgar S. Furniss, Group No. YRG 3-A, Series No. I, box No. 3, folder 29, American Studies 1946-51.

46. This, and the notes on Griswold and NHP from, Yale University American Studies Newsletter, #1, June 1956. President A. Whitney Griswold, YRG-2-A-16, Box 82, folder 729.

47. Flyer Yale Archives, Presidential Papers, Charles Seymour, YRG 2-A-15, Series I, Box 15, Folder 128.

48. Letter from Hudson B. Hasting, Department of Industrial Administration, Yale, to provost, November 3, 1949. Provost, Records of the Provost: Edgar S. Furniss, Group No. YRG 3-A, Series No. I, box No. 3, folder 29, American Studies 1946-51.

49. Prospectus of American Studies Program, November 14, 1949. Provost, Records of the Provost: Edgar S. Furniss, Group No. YRG 3-A, Series No. I, box No. 3, folder 29, American Studies 1946-51.

50. Letter from provost to E. B. Gallaher, November 22, 1949. Provost, Records of the Provost: Edgar S. Furniss, Group No. YRG 3-A, Series No. I, box No. 3, folder 29, American Studies 1946-51.

51. Letter from Gallaher to Furniss, stamped November 28, 1949. Provost, Records of the Provost: Edgar S. Furniss, Group No. YRG 3-A, Series No. I, box No. 3, folder 29, American Studies 1946-51.

52. "Outline of American Studies Program as approved in discussion by President Seymour, Dean DeVane, and Professors Gabriel and Griswold, June 8, 1949" Yale Archives, Presidential Papers, Charles Seymour, YRG 2-A-15, Series I, Box 15, Folder 128.

I. PURPOSE. The purpose of American Studies is to strengthen research and teaching in the American field. Not only do we wish to make every existing research opportunity and course offering in this field the best of its kind, but we wish to expand and improve them according to sound principles of scholarship and teaching. to this end, we propose a program of research and teaching on three levels, as follows. . . . Research . . . Graduate Curriculum . . . Undergraduate Curriculum . . . Debated at length last winter and agreed upon by the President, the Provost, the Dean of Yale College, and the Chairman of American Studies, all appointments should be made to the existing departments representing the fields and disciplines contributing to American Studies. We do not contemplate the creation of a new department.

53. Appendix: American Studies - Divisional Program, English Courses: English 15, 24, 25, American Literature, English 56, Major American Writers of the Nineteenth Century, English 57, American Literary Theory and Practice, English 58; American Studies 35. Drafts October 7 & November 17, 1949 Yale Archives, Presidential Papers, Charles Seymour, YRG 2-A-15, Series I, Box 15, Folder 128.

54. Fundraising: Letter from Provost Foord to Edward Beach Gallaher, president, Clover Manufacturing Co., of Norwalk, Connecticut, June 6, 1950. Yale Archives, Presidential Papers, Charles Seymour, YRG 2-A-15, Series I, Box 15, Folder 128.

55. Yale Archives, Presidential Papers, Charles Seymour, YRG 2-A-15, Series I, Box 15, Folder 128.

56. Income on \$500,000 = \$31,755 in 1951. President A. Whitney Griswold, YRG-2-A-16, Box 82, folder 729.

57. President Charles Seymour's Remarks Announcing the Gift to Yale University of \$500,000 from William Robertson Coe 19 June 1950 (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1950) President A. Whitney Griswold, YRG-2-A-16, Box 82, folder 729.

58. President A. Whitney Griswold, YRG-2-A-16, Box 82, folder 729.

59. Letter from W. R. Coe to Lawrence B. Tighe, treasurer, Yale University, January 2, 1951, Provost, Records of the Provost: Edgar S. Furniss, Group No. YRG 3-A, Series No. I, box No. 3, folder 29, American Studies 1946-51.

60. Note from Tighe to president, provost, librarian, January 4, 1951. Provost, Records of the Provost: Edgar S. Furniss, Group No. YRG 3-A, Series No. I, box No. 3, folder 29, American Studies 1946-51.

61. "Coe gives \$750,000 to U[niversity of] W[yoming] for Program of American Studies" Newspaper article 4.23.54, President A. Whitney Griswold, YRG-2-A-16, Box 82, folder 729.

62. Griswold to Coe, November 27, 1951. Provost, Records of the Provost: Edgar S. Furniss, Group No. YRG 3-A, Series No. I, box No. 3, folder 29, American Studies 1946-51.

63. William F. Buckley, Jr., *God and Man at Yale: The Superstitions of "Academic Freedom"* (orig. 1951; rev. ed: Washington, D.C., 1986), 102-103.

64. Dean William C. DeVane to A. Whitney Griswold, 1.15.1952, President A. Whitney Griswold, YRG-2-A-16, Box 82, folder 729.

65. 11.10.54, Provost, Records of the Provost: Edgar S. Furniss, Group No. YRG 3-A, Series No. I, box No. 3, folder 29, American Studies 1946-51.

66. Provost, Records of the Provost: Edgar S. Furniss, Group No. YRG 3-A, Series No. I, box No. 3, folder 29, American Studies 1946-51.

67. December 21, 1955, letter from David Potter to William Rogers Coe, President A. Whitney Griswold, YRG-2-A-16, Box 82, folder 729.

68. December 23, 1955, letter from David Potter to President Griswold, President A. Whitney Griswold, YRG-2-A-16, Box 82, folder 729.

69. January 5, 1956, letter from Griswold to Potter, President A. Whitney Griswold, YRG-2-A-16, Box 82, folder 729.

70. Woodrow Wilson Award for Distinguished Service Prize Speech, 10.1.53. "Post-War Foreign Policy: Second Phase." The first phase was "shortly after the end of World War II to the Communist Party Congress in Moscow in the autumn of 1952; the second phase we are now in, and cannot foresee its end, except that it will not come soon," 3. President A. Whitney Griswold, Acheson folder, YRG-2-A-16, Box 4.

71. NHP asked to serve on the executive committee for American studies, September 10, 1951 (Potter, chair). Provost, Records of the Provost: Edgar S. Furniss, Group No. YRG 3-A, Series No. I, box No. 3, folder 29, American Studies 1946-51. 235 students enrolled in his Twentieth Century American Prose class, which was that year, and typically, the largest advanced course in the English Department. David M. Potter to W. R. Coe, 10.18.51, President A. Whitney Griswold, YRG-2-A-16, Box 82, folder 729. He was earning now \$6,250 (to Potter's \$8,500).

72. "Mr. Pearson's Twentieth Century American Prose now has a larger enrollment (numbering 235) than any advanced course in the English Department." David M. Potter to W. R. Coe, 10.18.51, President A. Whitney Griswold, YRG-2-A-16, Box 82, folder 729.

73. Norman Holmes Pearson to E. E. Cummings, 29 April 1950, NHP letterhead; Norman Holmes Pearson to E. E. Cummings 11 Nov. 1950, NHP letterhead. Harvard, Houghton Library, bMS Am 1823, (1004).

74. Report on American Studies to the Provost, 18 March 1958 President A. Whitney Griswold, YRG-2-A-16, Box 78, folder 704.

75. The role of government-sponsored foreign cultural activities in the Cold War is the subject of Serge Guilbaut's *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago and London, 1983).

76. President A. Whitney Griswold, YRG-2-A-16, Box 82, folder 729.

77. This appears to be part of a Memorandum to William Jackson, Subject: Intelligence Training in Service Schools. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Za Pearson, Section 4, Wooden File Box 2, Row 1, OSS.

78. Corson, *Armies of Ignorance*, 311-2.

79. Roger Williams Hotel, 28 E. 31 St, New York City, 20th June 1946. The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Bryher Papers, Correspondence—Incoming, Schaffner, GEN MSS 97, Series Number I, Box Number 55.

80. The following may be of interest: "To spot and evaluate [foreign] students, the Clandestine Services maintained a contractual relationship with key professors on numerous campuses. When a professor had picked out a likely candidate, he notified his contact at the CIA and, on occasion, participated in the actual recruitment attempt. Some professors performed these services without being on a formal retainer. Others actively participated in agency covert operations by serving as "cut-outs," or intermediaries, and even by carrying out secret missions during foreign journeys." Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence* (New York, 1974), 234.

81. *God and Man at Yale*, 114.

82. Ray S. Cline, *Secrets, Spies, and Scholars: Blueprint of the Essential CIA* (Washington, D.C., 1976), 148.

83. McGeorge Bundy, in *Dimensions of Diplomacy*, Edgar A. G. Johnson, ed. (Baltimore, 1964), 2-3.