American Studies without Exceptions

MICHAEL BÉRUBÉ

IN THIS ESSAY I ASK ABOUT THE RELATIONS BETWEEN AMERICAN studies and the state; in so doing, I also ask about the relations between American studies and the corporate multiversity, since I think these sets of relations are mutually implicating. I focus more on the former than on the latter, however, partly because at first blush the corporatization of the university does not seem to have had much impact on the substance of intellectual work in American studies. For in one sense American studies is peripheral to the "productive" work of the United States university in the wake of the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980, insofar as nothing written or taught in American studies, under any description, generates a form of knowledge that can be patented, owned, and sold. In the world of nanotech and bioengineering—two of the substantial growth areas of higher education in the United States—American studies promises no deliverables, offers no opportunities for research and development, and produces no profit-generating products. To the extent that American studies is a creature of the arts, humanities, and social sciences, it tends to fly under the radar, so to speak, of Monsanto and Microsoft; thus, it does not generate any indirect cost recovery funds—or National Institutes of Health funds, or National Science Foundation funds, or private subventions—for the rest of the campus, and for that reason you do not often see glistening new high-tech campus buildings devoted to American studies cheek by jowl with dilapidated and inadequate facilities for supercomputing and genomics. Also for that reason it really does not matter to most campus administrators whether your local American studies program is turning out critiques of the cultures of United States imperialism, studies of the possessive investment in whiteness, or renderings of the virgin land and the machine in the garden. Regardless of its content, the work of American studies is

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in a financial sense immaterial to the corporate multiversity, its fate inseparable from that of the arts, humanities, and social sciences in general.

But in another sense this argument is quite wrong, for two potentially contradictory or complementary reasons. The first has to do with the place of the nation-state in the production of knowledge. Here I want to take issue with a recent essay by Masao Miyoshi, who writes:

> The basis of national literatures and cultures is very much hollowed out, as the nation-state declines in the hegemonic imaginary. The humanities as they are now constituted in academia are no longer desired or warranted. There is a decisive change in the academic outlook and policy to de-emphasize the humanities and to shift resources to applied sciences. (18)

Miyoshi is right, here and elsewhere, to note the increasing disparity in prestige and resources between the humanities and the applied sciences, a disparity that has grown geometrically since 1980 and partly as a consequence of the Bayh-Dole Act. But I doubt that he is right to ascribe this to the decline of the nation-state in the hegemonic imaginary. It would appear, on the contrary, that the hegemonic imaginary is one place where the nation-state has been doing just fine, on campus and off, in part because of Americans' and American universities' possessive investment in Americanness. To take just one odd example, the most recent National Association of Scholars (NAS) survey of English departments in the United States reports that since 1964 there has been a decisive Americanization of the college literature curriculum—and, make no mistake, this is something the NAS laments.[1] But because the group has largely failed to get journalists and think tankers to join them in ruing the Americanization of the humanities, they have tended to publicize it instead under the banner "English departments have turned away from Shakespeare." The NAS report is fascinating testimony against the proposition that the basis for United States national literatures and cultures has been "hollowed out," and it constitutes a kind of old-guard, paleoconservative dissent from the *rise* of the nation-state in the hegemonic imaginary. Perhaps it suggests, moreover, that there is a residual sense, in Raymond Williams's sense of "residual sense," in which the knowledges produced in American studies might matter even to those administrators and trustees who see in them no potential for enhancing the university's portfolio or for building "partnerships" with key "stakeholders" in private industry.

The other reason for the potential importance of American studies in the multiversity concerns not the residual nationalism of United States universities but their emergent internationalism. Higher education is, after all, one of the few product areas in which the United States finds itself with a trade surplus; international students now constitute one of our significant constituencies, as the FBI has lately learned, and American studies, for its part, is without question more internationalist in scope than it was in the days of Henry Nash Smith and Leo Marx. If, then, the corporatization of the university is one aspect of the ongoing globalization of capital, as Miyoshi rightly suggests, what are the actual and potential intellectual functions of an increasingly internationalist American studies in an increasingly transnationalist economic environment? And how are we to understand the emergent internationalism of American studies in conjunction with the residual nationalism that still justifies this enterprise to many university administrators?

During my four years as a humanities-program administrator at the University of Illinois, Urbana, a public Research I university at which research and development in the applied sciences has indirectly subsidized the humanities for half a century, I learned that two key terms were most likely to secure funding and generate excitement at the highest administrative levels: *new technologies* and *international studies*. The heading of *international studies* accommodated a wide variety of intellectual initiatives, ranging

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from programs to enhance the university's international standing in the applied sciences to the Ford Foundation Seminar in Identity and the Arts in Diaspora Communities, in which my humanities program had a minor role. If faculty members at Illinois were to propose a new program in American studies, interestingly, it is possible that they would be more successful if they pitched it as an explicitly international concern: an area of study invested in the understanding of what it is to be American, possibly, in the residual nationalist sense, but also an area of study devoted to the "production" of postnational American identities and cultures in transnational exchanges. The result could be a determinedly progressive and anti-imperialist and anti-isolationist program in American studies, but, curiously, it could also be a program perfectly of a piece with the university's roles as partner to corporate management and stimulant to financial growth, under the auspices of which "internationalism" is understood as an important development area, as the titles of most of Illinois's international units indicate: the Center for International Business Education and Research, the Center for International Education and Research in Accounting, the International Programs in Engineering, the International Soybean Program (INTSOY), the Office of International Strategic Management, and the International Trade Center. Though it is unlikely that AMSTUD will ever be constituted as an adjunct to INTSOY, the point remains that internationalism is no guarantee of any political or intellectual tendency in United States universities or in American studies.[2]

I will come back to the meaning of this international nationalism for what John Carlos Rowe and others have called "post-nationalist American studies" and George Lipsitz calls "American studies in a moment of danger," but first, to try to get a handle on the present, I want to turn to the no-longer-recent past, to a time when the concordance between American studies, the nation-state, and private industry was perhaps somewhat clearer than it is now. "During the height of the Cold War," writes Frances Stonor Saunders in the opening paragraph of her recent book, *The Cultural Cold War*,

> the US government committed vast resources to a secret programme of cultural propaganda in western Europe. A central feature of this programme was to advance the claim that it did not exist. It was managed, in great secrecy, by America's espionage arm, the Central Intelligence Agency. The centrepiece of this covert campaign was the Congress for Cultural Freedom, run by CIA agent Michael Josselson from 1950 till 1967. Its achievements—not least its duration—were considerable. At its peak, the Congress for Cultural Freedom had offices in thirty-five countries, employed dozens of personnel, published over twenty prestige magazines, held art exhibitions, owned a news and features service, organized high-profile international conferences, and rewarded musicians and artists with prizes and public performances. Its mission was to nudge the intelligentsia of western Europe away from its lingering fascination with Marxism and Communism towards a view more accommodating of "the American way." (1)

Much has already been said of Saunders's work, particularly by those who are shocked, shocked, to find the CIA involved in the cultural front of the cold war and by those who, like the late *Partisan Review* editor William Phillips, continued to insist, in spite of clear and convincing evidence to the contrary, that they were never direct or indirect beneficiaries of covert Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) support (see Sharlet). And I must admit that the level of denial among such people really is remarkable: in the morning they emerge from a meeting with the rest of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom with fresh funding for a high-level conference of writers and artists committed to the anti-communist cause, and by mid-afternoon they cannot seem to remember where exactly the money came from. Still, whatever the degrees of duplicity or self-delusion of many of the principals involved in the CCF, I want to insist that

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in a perverse yet entirely unremarkable sense, the years of the cold war were the good old days for American artists and intellectuals—the days when, despite the "pernicious consequences of having a clandestine government agency act as the Ministry of Culture," as Michael Rogin's review of Saunders in the *Nation* put it, "the CIA was the NEA" (18, 16). Imagine if you will, if you can, a time when the work of abstract expressionists and twelve-tone composers was considered vital to national security, a time when the establishment of the pax Americana required the funding and nourishment of a noncommunist left with high-modernist tastes in arts and letters. It is hard to tamp down a sense of nostalgia.

In a way I say this to be contrarian and to emphasize the counterintuitive in the mission of the CCF. But in invoking the CCF as the index of a halcyon time when American intellectuals had a well-defined function for the state and for crucial segments of the private sector that identified freedom with free markets, I do not mean to gloss over the many brutal contradictions of the cultural cold war. As Saunders's work makes clear, the project of the CCF produced a series of political conundrums that in retrospect makes the landscape look like an M. C. Escher print. First and most obviously, there was the potentially (and eventually) fatal contradiction involved in promulgating the virtues of the open society by covert means. The rationale underlying this contradiction held that "the most effective kind of propaganda" was that in which "the subject moves in the direction you desire for reasons which he believes to be his own" (national security directive of 10 July 1950, qtd. in Saunders 4). One of the corollaries of this contradiction was the minor paradox that many CIA fronts based in the United States did not need to take direction from the CIA, since they were staffed by cold warriors who were if anything all too eager to serve the state; these willing partners had to present themselves, sometimes unwillingly, as independent intellectuals, lest their association with the United States government taint them in the eyes of their British and Western European counterparts. Such subjects, it was clear, were happy to move in the direction the state desired for reasons they believed to be their own, and yet they had to pretend that they were acting on their own. "The joke," writes Saunders, "was that if any American philanthropic or cultural organization carried the words 'free' or 'private' in its literature, it must be a CIA front" (135–36).

Such is contradiction 1 and its odd corollary; contradiction 2 is somewhat more complex. Because the CCF's chief purpose was to contrast Western cultural freedom with Stalinist tyranny, the artists and intellectuals most useful to the CIA were those whose works had been banned or labeled degenerate by the Soviet Union. Hence the curious nature of the CCF's emphasis on composers such as Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and Alban Berg and artists such as Pollock, Motherwell, and Rothko—figures for whom you could not expect to find any significant support in the United States Congress but who served the purpose of championing abstraction and experimentalism as cultural practices acclaimed and supported by Western democracies. Embedded in that contradiction, however, was a still nastier one, contradiction 3: the proposition that Western democracies tolerate and even foster dissidents in arts and letters was the one proposition that CIA-supported artists and intellectuals could not dissent from. Under this heading, dissent is possible in an open society and for that reason unnecessary; it follows, then, that for the cold warrior, dissent in the United States is not an index of freedom but a form of treason. Or, as Saunders more pithily puts it, "to promote freedom of expression, the Agency had first to buy it, then to restrict it" (90). After 11 September 2001, needless to say, this cultural contradiction returned once again, in full force—in the White House and in the country at large—as the "war on terrorism" allowed United States patriots both to champion America as the home of the free and to turn with fury on anyone who presumed the freedom to

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dissent from the premises of the war. Thank goodness we are on familiar ground.[3]

Both these contradictions, involving, on the one hand, the freedom to dissent from the cold war construction of the free world, and, on the other, the relation between the forms of art touted as uniquely Western and the widespread indifference or repulsion most Americans expressed for such art, would flare at the height of McCarthyism, which was for the CCF a profound cultural embarrassment. (As Saunders points out, Josselson cabled Eisenhower to plead for clemency for the Rosenbergs for the same reason: the United States' willingness to traduce its own principles did not go over well with its European allies [183–84]). The appropriate analogy in the 1990s culture wars, for instance, would be a high-ranking CIA official's securing covert funding for Karen Finley, Andres Serrano, and Robert Mapplethorpe over the objections of a Jesse Helms, because the propaganda value of such artists in international courts of opinion outweighed the domestic outrage their work provoked. After the events of 11 September, United States internationalists have argued that we need to demonstrate to the Islamic world—and perhaps even more urgently to our Western allies—that we are not simply SUV-driving, Big Gulp–guzzling, Enron-scheming yahoos, and if Josselson were leading the charge today he would no doubt be trying to sign up Laurie Anderson, Tony Kushner, Bill T. Jones, Joe Goode, Philip Glass, Anna Deavere Smith, and—just to strengthen our new friendship with Vladimir Putin—the former Soviet emigrés Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid. Saunders quotes the art critic Philip Dodd:

> [T]here is a perverse way of looking at this question, which is to say that the CIA took art very seriously. [. . .] The great thing about politicians when they get involved in art is it *means* something to them, whether it's the Fascists or the Soviets or the American CIA. So there may be a really perverse argument that says the CIA were the best art critics in America in the fifties because they saw work that actually should have been antipathetic to them—made by old lefties, coming out of European surrealism—and they saw the potential power in that kind of art and ran with it. You couldn't say that of many of the art critics of the time. (259)

The rest of the contradictions of the CCF are fairly familiar ones, as Saunders shows, and uglier ones as well. Most have to do with the agency's willingness to overlook an artist's prior associations with fascism and Nazism if the artist could be made to serve a useful propaganda purpose. This is of course the central contradiction of the United States' conduct in the cold war, not only with regard to client artists but especially with regard to client states in Iran, Guatemala, Chile, and elsewhere, and I need not rehearse it here. Suffice it to say that when the fate of the free world was in the balance, there was a critical role for American studies, and it was unambiguous: "like foreign-area studies," Doug Henwood has written, "this new discipline was of clear imperial import, in that it allowed us to understand our unique fitness for our postwar role as the world's governor, and encouraged a finer appreciation of our cultural sophistication among the ruled" (qtd. in Saunders 238). But the astonishing thing about American studies in the cold war, in this light, is not that it was supported by the state but that it was hardly supported enough. For two decades the field examined the "special American conditions" that differentiated American class mobility from European class stratification, and it produced book after book distinguishing the American romance from the British and French and Russian novel of society. The cold war years in American studies are practically defined by the field's investment in American exceptionalism; indeed, the field did a kind of double duty, exempting the United States from Marxist analysis even while American studies "served," as Michael Denning has famously written, "as a substitute for a developed marxist culture" (357). It seems almost a shame, in retrospect, that the American Studies

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Association did not get more substantial CCF funding for all this important work undertaken by independent intellectuals in leading American universities.

That is not to say that intellectuals in leading American universities were left out in the cold. The career of Arthur Schlesinger is exemplary in this regard; to this day, few of the prominent American liberals involved in the CCF are so undeceived about the CCF's relation to the CIA as Schlesinger, who stood, if you will, in the vital center of the enterprise from the start. In his 1996 interview with Saunders, Schlesinger admits, "I knew because of my intelligence links that the original meeting of the Congress in Berlin was paid for by the CIA. [. . .] It seemed not unreasonable to help the people on our side. Of all the CIA's expenditures, the Congress for Cultural Freedom seemed its most worthwhile and successful" (91). To do justice to Schlesinger's remarks (as Saunders does not), it should be noted that it was far better for the CIA to provide funding for Motherwell than to lead a coup against Mossadeq; and it is worth repeating, I hope, that the Soviet Union was indeed an enemy worth defeating, that its policies regarding artists, intellectuals, and assorted dissidents were indeed totalitarian and murderous, and that opposing Stalinism by trumpeting intellectual freedom in the West indeed seemed—and to me still seems—one of the best uses of public funds imaginable for an agency of the state. There were very good reasons for the United States to promote the growth of a noncommunist left in Western Europe, and I wish only that the United States had not done so while simultaneously trying to infiltrate and destroy the noncommunist progressive left at home. One of the reasons I am revisiting the history of the CCF is not to register some ludicrous loss of innocence, mine or the nation's, involved in coming to terms with the relations between intellectuals and the state but to remind us how difficult it is, in the wake of the contradictions I have just enumerated, for contemporary American intellectuals on the cultural left to think of incorporation by the state as anything other than cooperation with evil. It is as if, when the CIA's support of the CCF was first uncovered in 1967, we had somehow obtained decisive proof that Schlesinger himself had participated in the murder of Patrice Lumumba.

Over the next two paragraphs, then, I would like you, gentle reader, to take part in a thought experiment that will be thoroughly counterintuitive and counterfactual. I want you to imagine an ideological state apparatus in the cold war that was not defined by all the contradictions I have mentioned, an apparatus in which the promulgation of the values of the open society takes place openly, by means of a national endowment rather than under the auspices of central intelligence; in which the open society harbors no ex-Nazis and fascists under the cloak of anticommunism; where dissent is welcomed even when it does not toe the party line. Imagine for a moment that the United States had fought the cultural cold war on those terms, that there was no House Un-American Activities Committee, no COINTELPRO, no contradiction between American democratic ideals abroad and American apartheid at home; imagine that Joseph McCarthy never came close to holding elected office; imagine no plutonium experiments on unsuspecting citizens; imagine no possessions—I wonder if you can. And hear in that rarefied spirit the words of George Kennan, addressing the Council of the Museum of Modern Art in 1955, and take them at face value:

> We have . . . to show the outside world both that we have a cultural life and that we care something about it. That we care enough about it, in fact, to give it encouragement and support here at home, and to see that it is enriched by acquaintance with similar activity elsewhere. If these impressions could only be conveyed with enough force and success to countries beyond our borders, I for one would willingly trade the entire remaining inventory of political propaganda for the results that could be achieved by such methods alone. (qtd. in Saunders 272)

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I am asking you to imagine a world in which United States national leaders are actually and genuinely anxious to show the rest of the world that we have a cultural life and that we care something about it—enough even to be internationalist in outlook, "to see that it is enriched by acquaintance with similar activity elsewhere." And I ask you to imagine this not merely because Kennan's words were betrayed by actual United States conduct in the cold war but more immediately because it is so difficult to imagine Kennan's counterparts today saying any such thing. That is not because our current foreign policy elites are significantly less brilliant or less cosmopolitan than Kennan. It is primarily because, since the fall of the Soviet Union, it has become harder and harder for Americans to imagine a time when geopolitical competition did not revolve solely around the availability of consumer goods; since 1991 it has become widely accepted by liberal democrats and free-market conservatives alike that the United States economy simply outperformed the Soviet economy and that our standard of living—what the White House spokesman Ari Fleischer called our "blessed" way of life—is an argument for American hegemony. The idea that Nixon did not simply bury Khruschev in the kitchen debate, the idea that the United States could not just point to Chevrolets and Frigidaires and Oxydol but also had to compete with Tolstoy and the Bolshoi—this idea is increasingly foreign not only to the Bush administration but to American self-representation in any area, which is why American political elites feel so little national anxiety about how United States arts and letters are perceived abroad, whether in Paris or in Islamabad. When American culture is touted to the world today, the standard citation is not, say, a work of art like *United States I–IV* but a TV show like *Baywatch*; in the home of the brave and in the court of world popular culture, Pamela Anderson beats Laurie Anderson every time.

Back to the present, to review and conclude. Since there is little likelihood in the foreseeable future that CIA officials—or, for that matter, university presidents and provosts or the chief executive officers of major multinational corporations—will decide that American studies is so central to the national interest that George Sánchez and Mary Helen Washington must be given security clearance and the American Studies Association should be simultaneously funded and infiltrated, how can we think about American studies in its relation to the state? Fifty years ago the picture was rather clearer: even if the ASA was never on the payroll of the CCF, American studies' elaborations of theories of American exceptionalism were broadly in concordance with the overall cold war program for the American intelligentsia, and the new field, as Henwood says, was of clear imperial import. Today, by contrast, American studies is defined emphatically by its wholesale rejection of exceptionalism, its success at putting American race relations at the center of cultural analysis, its increasing willingness to expand its intellectual interests beyond the borders of the United States nation-state, even to consider changing its name to reflect its geopolitical concerns more adequately, as Janice Radway suggested in her 1998 presidential address to the ASA convention. As I remarked at the outset, this shift in American studies takes place at a time when the field is not generally seen, by the state or by multinational capital, as an area of vital interest that requires official encouragement and support. But is it perhaps possible that the fitful globalization or hemispherization of American studies somehow coincides with the globalization or hemispherization of American capital? And if so, might American studies not have a more complex and tangled relation to corporatization on campus and in the Uruguay Round than most commentators have imagined?

American studies is currently an enterprise at once nationalist and internationalist, at the same time that the dominant discourse of American identity and American mission is at once nationalist and internationalist. And just as surely

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as cold war American studies spoke to its historical moment, so too has American studies in the crucial decade between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the fall of the World Trade Center spoken to its historical moment, mixing United States traditions of affirmation and dissent in ways that can conceivably be construed (though they usually have not been) as reinforcing precisely those traditional affirmations of American dissent that marked American studies in the cold war. Of course, it is always possible, as American studies scholars have lately noted, that "invocations of the post-national by U.S. intellectuals can function as disturbing disavowals of the global reach of U.S. media and military might" (Curiel et al. 2); the danger in such invocations is not that American studies might be replaying an old script but that it might not be reading a new one. But I have a different, though related, question: what if the relation of American studies to the state turned out, in the next few decades, to be uncomfortably similar to that between cold war American studies and the apparatus of central intelligence, such that American studies scholars found the cultural activities of a noncommunist left funded and encouraged by enlightened multinationals, and their supporters in government, who were interested in the propaganda value of a critical, anti-imperialist, internationalist American studies?

It is an uncomfortable question. Everyone who works in a college or university in the United States is already, of necessity, woven into the fabric of the nation-state, and some of us are even reconciled to or pleased about the fact; but it seems another matter altogether to be sponsored by Philip Morris International's office in Curitiba or to occupy the distinguished Dole Banana Chair in Asian American studies. Such a state of affairs calls to mind an unpleasant passage from Richard Rorty's *Achieving Our Country*—unpleasant because all too accurate: "this frightening economic cosmopolitanism," writes Rorty, "has, as a byproduct, an agreeable cultural cosmopolitanism. Platoons of vital young entrepreneurs fill the front cabins of transoceanic jets, while the back cabins are weighted down with paunchy professors like myself, zipping off to interdisciplinary conferences held in pleasant places" (85). This is a seating arrangement Rorty maps, two pages later, onto a dystopian vision of what globalization will mean for members of what he calls, after Orwell, the Inner Party ("the international, cosmopolitan super-rich," who will "make all the important decisions") and the Outer Party ("educated, comfortably off, cosmopolitan professionals—[Michael] Lind's 'overclass,' the people like you and me"). "The job of people like us," according to Rorty,

> will be to make sure that the decisions made by the Inner Party are carried out smoothly and efficiently. It will be in the interest of the international super-rich to keep our class relatively prosperous and happy. For they need people who can pretend to be the political class of each of the individual nation-states. (87)

I believe that many American studies scholars would find this to be a less than desirable fate for American studies, and I believe that many of them would prefer to imagine the place of American studies in the corporate multiversity rather differently. I believe that most American studies scholars might prefer to imagine, on the contrary, a dissident American studies that served neither as an apologist for United States adventurism in Haiti, in Grenada, in El Salvador, and throughout Central and Latin America nor as the intellectual wing of the United Fruit Company, flying around the hemisphere to pleasant places in coach.

But if anyone is to imagine such a dissident American studies, an American studies of the loyal opposition, if you will, American studies scholars will need to think more dialectically and less aversively about their relation to the state. I draw this lesson in large part from a leading American studies scholar from whom I have learned more than I can fairly acknowledge in one essay, George Lipsitz. Lipsitz's latest book of essays, *American Studies in a Moment of*

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Danger, is not only an exemplary text of the new American studies, especially in its theorization of the relation between American studies and dissident social movements, but also an exemplary text for the new American studies' profound reluctance to imagine the nation-state as anything but a vehicle for racism and repression. Indeed, one would be hard-pressed to find a book more suspicious of the state than *American Studies in a Moment of Danger*. In his first chapter Lipsitz writes:

> The hegemony of the nation-state as the ultimate horizon in American studies (and other nationally based inquiries in the humanities and social sciences) has deadly consequences. It encourages us to confine politics to the realm of the citizen-subject, to view emancipatory movements for social change as primarily efforts to reform the state and its privileged institutions. This emphasis on the state as the primary (and often exclusive) site for political action occludes the unity of politics, culture, and economics in social life, leading us to an idealist and inaccurate view of culture as the site where economic and political exclusions become neutralized by the purported inclusiveness of cultural practices and stories. These acts of cognitive mapping leave us poorly prepared to understand the ways in which culture functions as a social force or the ways in which aesthetic forms draw their affective and ideological power from their social location. (17)

However nativist and particularist "nationally based inquiries in the humanities and social sciences" may be at their worst, this seems an excessive string of crimes with which to charge them. Surely it is a mystification to see culture as the site where economic and political exclusions become neutralized by the purported inclusiveness of cultural practices and stories, and it is even worse to fail to understand how culture functions as a social force or how aesthetic forms draw their affective and ideological power from their social location, but does all that really follow from thinking about the nation-state? Can people not have idealist, formalist, and even misty-eyed views of culture without subscribing to nationalism? Likewise, there are any number of sins of omission and commission I would lay at the feet of American studies scholars who took the nation-state as the ultimate horizon of their work (such as their willingness to serve as literal agents of the nation-state in the covert cultural operations of the cold war), but those enumerated in Lipsitz's list are not among them.

Two pages later, Lipsitz goes further, arguing that "scholars may still have the luxury of thinking in exclusively national terms, but workers, citizens, migrants, artists, and activists do not" (19). This opposition between scholarly luxuries and political exigencies looks plausible enough, since the unfinished and uneven globalization of capitalism, together with the new new world order after 11 September, requires everyone to think globally and act globally as well. But one could easily reverse this formulation and argue that scholars may have the luxury of thinking in postnational terms but that workers, citizens, migrants, artists, and activists do not, since the actions and policies of nation-states structure their lives in obvious and immediate ways. Lipsitz admits as much elsewhere in the book, where, in his discussion of the state's promotion of consumer capitalism, he argues that "the seeming contemporary eclipse of the state by the power of private capital and transnational corporations hides the crucial role of the state in promoting, protecting, and preserving the technologies, social relations, and economic interests of corporate capital and finance" (241). Whereas earlier an emphasis on the state as the site for political action occluded the unity of politics, culture, and economics in social life, had deadly consequences, and was a luxury only scholars could afford, now it is imperative to understand the state's crucial role in underwriting the growth of the private sector and the evisceration of public goods and services since 1945, for the state has only *seemingly* been eclipsed by the power of private capital and transnational corporations.

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Lipsitz is not wrong about the role of the state as the structural support for so-called private enterprise; on the contrary, when he theorizes the state in his essay "In the Sweet Buy and Buy: Consumer Capital and American Studies," he does a wonderful job of showing how the state in the postwar United States has diverted public funds to private interests and how a "'free market' for business requires enormous amounts of state intervention and invention" (241). Lipsitz's critique of official state neoliberalism recalls Richard Cheney's obscene claim, during the October 2000 debate between vice presidential candidates, that he had made his fortune at Halliburton without any help from the federal government—and this after swelling Halliburton's coffers (and his own estate) by means of federal contracts so generous that one is compelled to wonder whether the recipients of state handouts do not, after all, experience a profound personal moral decay. Nevertheless, despite the merits of Lipsitz's critique, the point remains that there is something of a disjunction between the nation-state Lipsitz dismisses in chapter 1 and the one he excoriates in chapter 10, as if his form of American studies cannot decide whether the state is irrelevant or insidious. And it should be said, as well, that the state Lipsitz theorizes in these passages is not the state of the Food and Drug Administration, or the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, or the minimum wage, or the National Labor Relations Board, or the Clean Air and Water Acts, or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or the Voting Rights Act—each of which testifies to the myriad ways in which workers, citizens, migrants, artists, and activists have changed the composition and the public functions of the state.

I close this brief discussion of Lipsitz's work by returning to the argument with which I started—that is, to admit that it may not matter at all to the state whether I am right to suggest that Lipsitz's treatment of the state is consistent only in its hostility to the state. The state is a complex and conflicted set of institutions and practices, and I am not going to try to predict what kinds of knowledges in American studies will someday be of use to it and why; all I will say is that the potential uses and misuses of our work are not entirely ours to control. At the moment, surely, there is no real danger that the State Department will attempt to make Lipsitz's work the centerpiece of a new propaganda offensive intended to show our European and Middle Eastern critics that the United States is an open and pluralistic society that fosters critical knowledge about the Knights of Labor, the musicians of Miami, and the Movimiento Chicano; the state that finds Lipsitz's work congenial to its domestic or international politics is a state I do not live in and cannot currently envision. For all that I have said about those good old days when the CIA was the NEA, I do not imagine that the relations between left intellectuals and the state, or, a fortiori, between left intellectuals and global capitalism can be anything other than conflicted. But if left intellectuals in American studies want to be something other and better than what Rorty calls the paid political class of the international superrich, then I propose that they must undertake some hard thinking about American studies' relation to the nation-state and thus about how academic intellectuals, however compromised and corporatized their academic institutions may be, can best realize their commitment to the ideal of a vital and contentious public sphere and—as if this phrase had never been abused in our lifetimes—to the ideal of a free society.

Notes

[1] "The biggest change since 1964," according to the NAS study, "has been the relative de-emphasis of classic British and Irish authors, the group comprising the most important single component of the English literary tradition. While 47% of the names cited in 1964 course descriptions were authors found in the third edition of the *Norton Anthology of*

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English Literature, that figure fell to 33% by 1989, and 28% by 1997" (16). The phrasing suggests that even in 1997 the NAS was gauging the literature curriculum against the third edition of the *Norton Anthology*. For statistical purposes, I presume, the NAS list of "standard British authors" must remain static, the better to make the contrast between 1964 and now. Indeed, at certain points in the report, the language suggests that any change since 1964 is ipso facto change for the worse, as in the following: "Our statistics also clearly confirm the reality of 'race' as a driving factor in revamping literature programs. The fact that the United States has produced many more 'authors of color' than the British Isles is another reason for the English curriculum's increasing Americanization. Many African-American writers have gone from little or no notice in 1964 to substantial visibility in 1997. Among the better known, Langston Hughes, Frederick Douglass, and Ralph Ellison—each unmentioned in course descriptions in 1964—accounted for 0.3%, 0.4%, and 0.4%, respectively, of all author citations by 1997. Richard Wright went from 0.1% in 1964 to 0.6% in 1997" (19). There is nothing in the NAS report to suggest that the process by which major African American writers began to appear in United States college courses between 1964 and 1997 might be justifiable or salutory, and there is accordingly nothing in the report to defend "the reality of 'race' as a driving factor in revamping literature programs" on nationalist or intellectual grounds.

[2] In "Resituating American Studies in a Critical Internationalism," Jane C. Desmond and Virginia R. Domínguez report that their survey of American studies program descriptions in the 1995 American Studies Association directory found only one program that "includes an international orientation: the result of a new initiative to internationalize all aspects of education at that university." But they immediately follow this observation with the argument that "the lack of an international thrust" in United States American studies programs "is all the more troubling and paradoxical, given the current globalization of economic, cultural, and informational flows and the amount of cultural studies scholarship devoted to charting them" (481). Here the argument for critical internationalism would seem to depend on the idea of an international American studies as a kind of supplement, in the Derridean sense, to global capitalism.

[3] The proposition that dissent is unnecessary because possible also animated much of the most heated rhetoric of the culture wars, with their ritual denunciations of unpatriotic faculty members on United States campuses. Indeed, one of the most striking features of the deployment of that rhetoric was that cold war liberals engaged in it as eagerly and unreflectively as did cold war conservatives. Witness Jason Epstein in his 1994 interview with Saunders: speaking of the 1949 Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace held by Communists and American fellow travelers at the Waldorf-Astoria, in New York, Epstein says that "the Stalinists were still a very powerful gang; they were like the political correctness lot now. There was good reason, therefore, to question the Stalinists' right to culture" (48). Accordingly, Epstein's *New York Review of Books* was often friendlier to figures like Dinesh D'Souza than to figures like Stanley Fish in the early 1990s, presumably on the grounds that assorted multiculturalists and poststructuralists were basically warmed-over Stalinists and that there was therefore good reason to question certain literary theorists' right to culture.

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