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Redeemer Nation / Remedy Nation: American Studies and Military Occupation

George Blaustein
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Introduction

Academic American Studies has always been an international endeavor, but not always in predictable ways. It is common, for instance, to associate the spread of American Studies abroad with the major apparatuses of American cultural diplomacy during the Cold War. Thus Norman Podhoretz, the conservative editor of *Commentary*, posed a direct correlation between American Studies and the expansion of American power:

> Does Finland have a great literature? Does Afghanistan? Does Ecuador? Who knows or cares? But give Finland enough power and enough wealth, and there would soon be a Finnish department in every university in the world—just as, in the 1950s, departments of American Studies were suddenly being established in colleges where, only a few years earlier, it had scarcely occurred to anyone that there was anything American *to* study.[1]

In fact the full history is more complicated than this, and involves a foray into comparative and transnational history. To be sure, American Studies as we understand it today is, to a large degree, a creature of midcentury cultural diplomacy, spread abroad under the auspices of the State Department and large foundations. But military occupation is also important, and American Studies took on new meaning in occupied Germany, Austria and Japan. This essay approaches the topic of American Studies and military occupation in three ways. First I discuss similarities between the structures of American Studies in occupied Europe and in occupied Japan, with particular attention to the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies and

[1] Norman Podhoretz, *Making It* (New York: Random House, 1967), 90–91.

similar Japanese institutions. Second I look back at the somewhat hidden history of prewar American Studies in both places, since that brings certain elements of the postwar period into clearer relief: American Studies under a democratizing military occupation could represent a break from a darker past, or it could mark a reassertion of liberal commitments. I have focused on the Japanese Americanist Yasaka Takagi, whose career stretched from 1917 through the occupation. The final section explores the overtones of remedy and redemption that attended American Studies in occupied countries.

I. Tale of Two Seminars

Two formative seminars founded during the occupations illustrate certain similarities between the European and Japanese scenes. The first is the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies; the second is the Tokyo Seminar in American Studies. The Salzburg Seminar is a famous origin story for post-war American Studies in Europe, established in 1947 by a Americans and Europeans with the tenuous approval of the U.S. Military Government in Austria. It was a private institution, located in a baroque 18th-century castle in Salzburg, and its purpose was to expose formerly warring European parties to American thought and art, particularly those parties who had been cut off from American culture under Nazi domination. In 1947, funded by the Harvard Student Council and the Geneva-based International Student Service, the Seminar attracted ninety-seven European students from seventeen countries (iron curtain countries among them), including former Nazis and current DPs.[2]

Since American Studies would later be so associated with the Cold War, it is interesting to note that the original organizers in Salzburg had no particular devotion to American Studies as a field (indeed, as a field, American Studies had no real coherence: it

[2] Information about the Salzburg Seminar is drawn from George Holt Blaustein, "To the Heart of Europe: Americanism, the Salzburg Seminar, and Cultural Diplomacy" (Ph.D., Harvard University, 2010), chs. 3–4.

was an ideologically diffuse movement across sundry disciplines). Rather, the Salzburg Seminar was primarily a student relief operation, and American Studies was attractive as "a relatively neutral field of study"—simply by not being "European civilization."[3] It was also a relatively obscure field in European universities.

The Salzburg Seminar was unusual in many ways, but it epitomizes several broad currents in American cultural diplomacy at midcentury, first and foremost its private character. It was led by non-state actors without governmental funding. It trumpeted its independence from the State Department, and denounced "propaganda" (always a bad word in the American imagination). But by 1950 it had forged a harmonious relationship with military authorities and with the official apparatuses of American cultural diplomacy in the era of the Marshall Plan. And by 1950 much of its funding would come from the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations.

The second seminar is based on the first: the 1950 Tokyo Seminar in American Studies was directly inspired by the successes of Salzburg. Its organizers were the Stanford diplomatic historian Claude Buss, the Rockefeller Institute's Charles Fahs, and the Japanese scholar Yasaka Takagi (about whom more below), and for them the private character of the Salzburg Seminar was particularly attractive because they wanted some form of institutionalized American Studies to last well beyond the occupation.[4] Like the Salzburg Seminar, the original content of the Tokyo Seminar did not announce a particular platform of American Studies as a field; instead, they advertised a harmony of the humanities and the social sciences. The humanities would "help the Japanese people become aware of themselves and of other people," said Genpachiro Konno at a conference on voluntary agencies in occupied territories, while social sciences would "provide the Japanese with a

[3] Henry Nash Smith, "The Salzburg Seminar," *American Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1949): 31.

scientific approach to behavior." He called it "our most successful seminar on American Studies": 120 Japanese professors and educators studied philosophy, economics, history, international relations, and political science, and were dedicated to "furthering the democratization of our country."[5]

Both seminars took the form of an intensive six-week course taught mainly by American professors with about 100 students. Both announced themselves as "democratic" endeavors, and of course both placed American Studies uneasily at that inherent paradox-point of installing "democracy by fiat"[6]. In both contexts, American Studies was part of higher education reform, much-needed correctives to the excessively pedantic and hierarchical universities that had evidently incubated authoritarianism. In both places the interdisciplinarity of American Studies was at least as important as the American subject matter: to merge the social sciences and the humanities would inculcate pragmatism and relate education to everyday life. At the same time, both established American culture as worthy of serious academic attention, and the word "Seminar" evoked both high German seriousness and American democratic inclusiveness.

Historiographically, it is possible to see the very same endeavors as representing the better angels of American internationalism, or as exquisitely subtle manifestations of American hegemony and cultural imperialism. American Studies was no doubt intertwined with military occupations and with emerging apparatuses of cultural diplomacy, and the lurking subtext of American Studies scholarship was always, as the British historian Max

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[4] For details on the Tokyo Seminar and the similar organizations that followed it, see Takeshi Matsuda, *Soft Power and Its Perils: U.S. Cultural Policy in Early Postwar Japan and Permanent Dependency* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2007), chapters 7–8.

[5] Genpachiro Konno, "The Humanities and Social Sciences in Japan: Their Status and Problems," in Harold E. Snyder, ed., *Responsibilities of Voluntary Agencies in Occupied Areas; A Report of the Second National Conference on the Occupied Countries Held Under the Auspices of the Commission on the Occupied Areas of the American Council on Education in Cooperation with the Department of State and the Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., November 30 and December 1, 1950* (Washington, D.C., American Council on Education, 1951), 51, 57–58.

[6] John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999), 70–71.

Beloff put it in the first issue of *American Quarterly* (1949), "the projection of America abroad"—even if there was little consensus over what this "projection" was supposed to look like.[7] American Studies, broadly considered, could be a cultural gloss on American hegemony, an erudite exercise in "soft power" undergirded by the purposeful collusion of government organizations, universities, and large foundations.[8] Or it could be an avenue of international dialogue, an institutional formation facilitating the exchange of persons and ideas across borders—the latter was the rhetoric surrounding the Salzburg Seminar and its progeny.

II. Prehistories

Such were the institutional and structural similarities in the founding, funding and administration of American Studies in postwar Europe and postwar Japan. But what of the deeper question of what exactly was "American" in American Studies? Various forms of American exceptionalism have always been at the center of Amerian Studies, but behind the ostensibly dry topic of military occupation and academic American Studies is is the meta-drama of American exceptionalism, German *Sonderweg*, and Japanese uniqueness (*nihonjinron*). These were, after all, rival discourses, that "ran on parallel tracks, not only countering but also bolstering each other," in Peter Bergmann's thoughtful analysis.[9] All three countries had, supposedly, arrived at modernity by exceptional routes—say, an incomplete modernity in Germany and Japan, or, in the American case, by the absence of anything truly pre-modern.

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[7] Max Beloff, "The Projection of America Abroad," *American Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1949): 26.
[8] The term "soft power" was coined in 1990 by Joseph S. Nye in *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990),. and elaborated in Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004). Takeshi Matsuda has made this argument about postwar American relations with Japan. Matsuda, *Soft Power and Its Perils*.
[9] Peter Bergmann, "American Exceptionalism and German *Sonderweg* in Tandem," *International History Review* 23, no. 3 (September 2001): 506.

A look back at the prehistory of American Studies in Germany and Japan is illuminating in this respect. After all, "American Studies" existed outside of the United States well before it existed inside the United States. In the United States, academic American Studies only emerged in the 1930s, but in Europe immediately after World War I, there had emerged a relatively robust study of the United States as a civilization (often lacking an authentic culture), corresponding to rising American political, economic and cultural influence. The closeness and interaction between "the Old World and the New," according to the Norwegian Americanist Sigmund Skard's pioneering synthesis, prompted the need to define and differentiate between them. European programs resembled integrated area studies programs more than they would in the United States.[10] Their purpose was "to grasp the totality of [American] civilization by means of a team-work between many branches of learning," an interdisciplinary, exceptionalist (though Skard didn't use the term) framework which, Skard maintained, "seem[s] to have originated in Europe." The first European academic chair devoted specifically to American literature was created in 1918 at the Sorbonne for Charles Cestre, who pushed for "concentric investigations, guided by the methods of History, Psychology and the Social Sciences, and directed toward American Civilization as a living whole, expressive of American aspirations and ideals."[11]

Both Germany and Japan had particularly robust traditions. At the end of World War I, one of Kaiser Wilhelm's last acts as emperor was to establish a university chair in "amerikanische Landeskunde" in Berlin.[12] This was one of the earliest named positions in American Studies. The early holder of that chair, Friedrich Schönemann, suggested in a 1921

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[10] Note that this international line of inquiry complicates debates about whether or not American Studies can be "area studies," for instance Paul A. Bové, "Can American Studies Be Area Studies?," in *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies*, ed. Masao Miyoshi and Harry D. Harootunian (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

[11] Sigmund Skard, *American Studies in Europe: Their History and Present Organization* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958), I:34–37, I:157.

[12] Werner Sollors, "The American Studies Century," in *Predecessors: Intellectual Lineages in American Studies*, ed. Rob Kroes, European Contributions to American Studies 43 (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1999), 401–402.

manifesto (*Amerikakunde: eine zeitgemäße Forderung*—"American Studies: a timely proposition") that Germany had lost the war because it did not really know or understand the United States.[13] In 1930 he became a full professor for *Kulturkunde Nordamerikas*. At first a liberal who had studied with Hugo Münsterberg at Harvard and taught in the U.S. for nearly a decade, he joined the Nazi Party in May 1933 and became known for his anti-Semitic views.[14] Here was an integrated cultural approach to American history—"area studies" of a sort, but also "enemy studies"—that in the Nazi period, as Philipp Gassert has shown, evolved into a form of "political reconnaissance work" for the regime.[15]

Clearly this is a more complicated origin story for American Studies in Europe than the charming, idealistic Salzburg Seminar. After the Second World War, not surprisingly, German academics eagerly disavowed this Nazi pre-history and welcomed "American Studies" as a fresh, unsullied import, even though there was some continuity in personnel from the 30s to the 50s. The American scholars and statesmen who made serious efforts to establish American Studies programs in postwar Europe likewise preferred to start from *Stunde null* (zero hour): they believed Nazi-era images of America could be dismissed as Nazi misinformation without rummaging too deeply for skeletons in the closet of prewar *Amerikakunde*. And American Studies could safely be an idealistic element of reeducation and democratization.[16]

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[13] Friedrich Schönemann, *Amerikakunde: eine zeitgemäße Forderung* (Bremen: Angelsachsen-Verlag G.M.B.H., 1921).

[14] Frank-Rutger Hausmann, *Anglistik und Amerikanistik im "Dritten Reich"* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2003), 191. Erwin Helms notes that the Nazis used the available *Amerikakunde* as "an instrument for their foreign and racial policies." Positive aspects of American culture were considered to be due to "the contribution of the German immigrants"; negative aspects included "the rule of high finance" and (somewhat ironically) racism. Erwin Helms, "The Influence and Significance of American Studies in Germany After World War II," *Paedagogica Historica* 33, no. 1 (1997): 321.

[15] Philipp Gassert, "Between Political Reconnaissance Work and Democratizing Science: American Studies in Germany, 1917-1953," *GHI Bulletin*, no. 32 (Spring 2003). See also Philipp Gassert, *Amerika im Dritten Reich: Ideologie, Propaganda und Volksmeinung 1933-1945* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997).

[16] See for instance Henry J. Kellermann, *Cultural Relations as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy: The Educational Exchange Program Between the United States and Germany, 1945-1954* (Washington: Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Dept. of State, 1978), 3.

Japan also had long experience with some form of American Studies. In 1917 an American banker donated money to the University of Tokyo for "an American Professorship in International law and Comity"; those funds eventually endowed a chair in American history, held for decades by the so-called father of modern American Studies in Japan, Yasaka Takagi. Takagi studied in America under Frederick Jackson Turner, among others, and saw the essence of America in the frontier, and simultaneously, in the intellectual and religious heritage of Puritanism. American Studies in Japan thus began as an undertaking by pro-Western liberals who saw the United States as a model for Japanese democratization. The major works in Japan corresponded to major works in the United States, especially Takagi's obviously Turnerian "The Significance of Free Land in American Political History" (1927) and Shiga Masaru's leftist, Parringtonian "The Main Currents of American Literature" (1937).[17]

Takagi is an interesting figure. In the 1930s, he walked a delicate line: still a liberal pleading for "international understanding" and peace, he nevertheless explained and often justified Japanese expansion by likening it to American expansions. The winning of the American West provided "the exact replica—if not the originals—of the Manchurian incident." "Of all the peoples on earth," he said in 1932 to a Western audience, "I am inclined to think that Americans would probably be the first to understand Japan's position and even appreciate the psychology of her people in desiring to see Manchuria become a land of peace and order." Takagi regretted the inability of Japanese liberals like himself to restrain the ultranationalists (who, interestingly, reminded him of "the Southern Secessionists in the American Civil War"—both were "absolutely convinced of the justness of their cause," convinced that "it is they who would be fighting for liberty and lasting piece"), but he

[17] The major works in Japan corresponded to major works in the United States, e.g. Takagi's obviously Turnerian "The Significance of Free Land in American Political History" (1927) and Shiga Masaru's leftist, Parringtonian "The Main Currents of American Literature" (1937). See Makato Saito, "American Studies in Pre-War Japan," in *American Studies Abroad*, ed. Robert H. Walker (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975).

considered the American Monroe Doctrine the obvious prototype for the "Asia Monroe Doctrine."[18] Three months before Pearl Harbor he compared Japan's "New Order" policy to the pan-Americanism and the Good Neighbor policy in the U.S.[19]

What was different and unfortunate about Japanese history, Takagi believed through his whole career, was the absence of a Christian reformation: "Without the experience of deep spiritual struggle and the subsequent conviction gained through such discipline, our people may perhaps be criticized as not being congenial in thought and readily appreciative of the motivating power which underlay the great events of modern history, such as the founding of the first Puritan colonies in America or even the declaration of the Rights of Man."[20]

To my knowledge, Takagi never wrote anything "anti-American" or even especially critical of the US—the closest he came was a 1943 historical overview of American Far East policy, suggesting that the US approached the east with a combination of "idealistic, humanitarian sentiments" and "realistic, material interest," and that all the rhetoric about "democracy" had a "'holier than thou' attitude" that really had more to do with "high American standards of living." He hoped America would take the noble path of peace, not be "policemen of the world," since, after all, Japan was fighting "not a war for domination or enslavement, but a war for liberation." Both sides were noble, even in 1943.[21]

My point here is not to tar prewar American Studies in Japan as complicit, only to emphasize pre- and post-war continuities, and thus differentiate the American Studies project in occupied Japan from that of occupied Germany and Austria. Takagi remained the major

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[18] Yasaka Takagi, "World Peace Machinery and the Asia Monroe Doctrine" *Pacific Affairs* 5, no. 11 (1932), reprinted in *Toward International Understanding: Enlarged Edition*, ed. Center for American Studies, University of Tokyo, The Collected Works of Yasaka Takagi vol. 5 (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1971), 17, 20.

[19] Takagi, "Letters to Ambassador Grew" (1941), in Ibid., 92–93.

[20] Takagi, "On International Reconciliation," *Contemporary Japan* 4, no. 2 (September 1935), reprinted in Ibid., 82–83. Cf. Tadashi Aruga, "Japanese Scholarship and the Meaning of American History," *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 2 (1992): 504–514.

voice of American Studies in Japan after the war. As early as 1946, he along with other Japanese intellectuals pursued a revival of American Studies, with mixed success, well before Americans arrived with money from the Rockefeller Foundation.

His programmatic statements about American Studies after the war sound a lot like his pronouncements before the war. Christianity was even more prominent. In his opening remarks to the Tokyo American Studies seminar (the analog to the Salzburg Seminar), he said that the main weakness of American Studies in Japan (and of Japan in general) had been the failure to understand "the fundamental ideas and values at the basis of American democracy and also of internationalism. The Japanese tradition which stresses the virtue of obedience under the Buddhist and Confucianist influence has failed to nurture the concept of individual personality, without which which no one can hope to attain a true understanding of American civilization, [which was] based upon the Christian ethical idea of human personality." And he closed this inaugural address by frankly admitting "the close relationship between democracy and Christianity as the world faith and universal religion"[22]

III. Redeemer nation/remedy nation

In the aftermath of World War II, and in the context of military occupations, both in Europe and Japan, "Americanism" became a supra-national creed. American Studies was an important part of that transformation, but it took different forms in each context. The key drama of American Studies in Austria and Germany after the war was *reconciliation*, with "America" as the strangely neutral territory on which rival parties could meet, thus to redeem (or invent) something called "Europe." Europeans would learn American lessons, so to speak, but those lessons were part of an Atlantic heritage. For American scholars and statesmen in Europe, the key metaphor was kinship, with American Studies in Europe as a sort of

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[21] Takagi, *Toward International Understanding*, 115.
[22] Yasaka Takagi, "On the Development of American Studies in Japan," opening remarks at the Stanford-Tokyo Summer Seminar (1950), printed in Ibid., 251–252.

intensely awkward family reunion. (In the face of European anti-Americanism, this could be a taunt: Perry Miller, a founder of American Studies in the United States, taught in Europe in 1951 and in Japan in 1952, and he liked to remind European intellectuals that the America they often loathed was really "bone of European bone, blood of European blood." The "American impact" was "the reimportation of ideas."[23])

American exceptionalism at midcentury was Eurocentric at its core, but in postwar Europe, American exceptionalism was not nationalism; it was instead the antidote to nationalism. To take one of many examples, the German Americanist Hans Galinsky, whose scholarship in the Third Reich had a Nazi tint, embraced American culture as a "supra-national" phenomenon.[24] American Studies was part of this broader "living faith," he said, "part of the new European civilization worth working for."[25]

In Japan, American Studies offered a set of usable "democratic" methods, especially in the social sciences—that, to some degree, was what American Studies had always been. After the war, though, it was the occupier's remedy rather than the Japanese liberal's aspiration. For the Japanese intellectuals involved, American Studies was a welcome escape from Japanese nationalism (whether or not they held to Takagi's association of democracy with Christianity). Nationalism was a mental illness, and American Studies a cure (among many cures)—remedial both in the sense of *medical*, and in the sense of *elementary*.[26]

If the guiding metaphor in Europe was kinship, in Japan it was something else. Marriage was one possibility. Takagi's appointment to Japan's first American Studies professorship coincided with his marriage in 1919, and at his wedding reception, he later

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[23] Perry Miller, "The Reimportation of Ideas," in *The Impact of America on European Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951).

[24] Galinsky thought it not unlike "the supra-national character of the Roman Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire" in an earlier era. Hans Galinsky, "American Studies in Germany," in *American Studies in Transition*, ed. Marshall W. Fishwick (Philadelphia: University of Pennsyslvania Press, 1964), 243.

[25] Hans Galinsky to Robert Mead, 25 January 1954, Box: Ditty File, Salzburg Seminar Archives, Leopoldskron, Salzburg, Austria.

[26] Laura Hein, "Revisiting America's Occupation of Japan," *Cold War History* 11, no. 4 (2011): 591.

recalled, someone told him "Now that you are happily married, your next duty is to work for the desired objective of spiritual wedlock between America and Japan."[27]

For the Americans involved in American Studies, however, the operative metaphor was not kinship, nor a spiritual marriage of equals, but rather a foster-relationship. This was Perry Miller's image in 1952, after he had taught American literature and intellectual history in Japan at the end of the occupation: at the Tokyo American Studies seminar, as well as other events like a conference on "American 'civilization' in Hiroshima" ("I do not recommend the experience to fastidious consciences," he said about his visit to Hiroshima). Then a professor in Harvard's English department, Miller had been on the vanguard of American Studies in the United States, enlivening the study of American intellectual history with magisterial volumes on the "New England mind." Politically, he was more-or-less a left-liberal Cold Warrior, and an admirer of the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr's cautions against liberal complacency.[28]

Miller wrote one essay about his experience in Japan, which on one hand recycled familiar tropes of Cold War orientalism, but at the same time warned against the Occupation's betrayal of democratizing ideals. Japan was free of Europe's "anti-Americanism," he said; Japan's desire to emulate "the American way of life" was "as openhearted a gesture as was ever made in modern international relations." But the "ineradicably Japanese" tendency toward abstractions made "America" into "Americanism"—a creed to be wholly rejected or wholly embraced. Miller unwittingly echoed Douglas MacArthur's comment about Japan being like "a boy of twelve": the

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[27] Takagi replied, "If each of the contracting parties is really a worthy individual personality, there would be no trouble in any marriage." Takagi, *Toward International Understanding*, xxvii. This story has a postwar coda. In 1948, Takagi agreed to write an article for *Foreign Affairs* on "Defeat and Democracy in Japan"; in it he recycled paragraphs about the Japanese absence of a Christian reformation from earlier essays. Republishing this piece in 1971, he wrote: "Incidentally, it was during the critical weeks of my wife's illness that I strove to write this article; and the gift package of streptomycin from *Foreign Affairs* reached me too late to help her in her valiant fight for life, which was markedly long-suffering and unselfish." Ibid., 147n.

Japanese in Miller's portrait had so trusted "the father-image of America" that American hypocrisies in the Cold War (the Korean War and the issue of rearmament) were a "foster father"'s betrayal. He quoted (or ventriloquized) a Japanese friend: "if you [Americans] reverse yourself, and tell us [Japanese] to pick up again the accursed [military] toys, what do you expect from us—from a people as docile, as abstractly-minded, and as emotionally excitable as are the Japanese?"[29]

On one hand this cast the Japanese as "docile" subjects for whose welfare the American must take up a white man's burden. But this rhetorical turn could cut in more than one direction, and Miller warned that American hypocrisies in the Cold War (the Korean War and the issue of Japanese rearmament) were a foster father's perilous betrayals of a rare trust. Thus Miller closed with a warning:

> The United States has become in Japan a foster father who, however unwillingly, has taken up the obligation. Can we let this child be himself, let him develop according to his own deep genius (not that false genius imposed upon him by the militarists), without trying to force him into our own image—or worse than that, into a sentimental image of our image? If we cannot, we shall be bound, sooner or later, to excite his revulsion."[30]

The irony of Americanism as a supra-national creed was that the United States itself would never reach it.

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[28] On Miller and the Cold War, see Nicholas Guyatt, "'An Instrument of National Policy': Perry Miller and the Cold War," *Journal of American Studies* 36, no. 1 (2002): 107–149.
[29] Perry Miller, "Teacher in Japan," *The Atlantic*, August 1953, 64.
[30] Ibid., 64–65.