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The 400th anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower carrying the Pilgrim settlers to North America provides a useful hook on which to hang this ‘state of the field’ collection of articles on Anglo-American relations. All four of the reviewers commend the editors for assembling a collection which is both thought-provoking and timely. Indeed, it is of particular value for bibliographical purposes, given that the contribution by the late Alan Dobson, along with the editorial introduction by Robert Hendershot and Steve Marsh, provide a reasonably full, although by no means comprehensive, review of the key literature on contemporary Anglo-American relations. Both of these pieces also critique the field and provide valuable suggestions for possible future lines of research.

Perhaps it is fitting to begin with Dobson’s article, which acts as a review essay for work published on Anglo-American relations over the past half century, which also broadly corresponds to the period in which Dobson was an active scholar in the field. Dana Cooper notes that Dobson’s passing leaves a void in the field of Anglo-American relations, in which he was not only active as an individual scholar but played an important convening role most notably through his establishment of the Journal of Transatlantic Studies in which this special issue appears. The other contributors to the collection also pay tribute to Dobson’s scholarly contribution.

In his article, Dobson identifies a particular focus in the field of Anglo-American relations on what he terms the ‘traditional’ concerns of diplomacy, defence, and intelligence relations between Britain and the United States. While this preoccupation with state-to-state relations has yielded many valuable insights it has tended to neglect the broader concerns of the emotional and cultural ties between the two countries, he argues. As Kathleen Burk notes, Dobson’s article, which is of ‘lasting value’ for bibliographic purposes, is also a plea for scholars to cast their nets more widely when framing future research projects in the field.

Hendershot and Marsh, meanwhile, are commended by the reviewers for exploring both the differences between the disciplines of international relations and international history and the potential for them to complement and enhance each other. They highlight the ‘dialogue of the deaf’ between the two disciplines, which has seen historians and IR specialists essentially adopt two diametrically opposed approaches to similar sets of questions. Historians begin with what is often voluminous empirical evidence and try to build upwards from specific case studies towards conclusions which may have a more general historical applicability. IR specialists meanwhile begin with theories, which they sometimes test by conducting what might be termed cattle raids on the past, rounding up evidence which might be useful in confirming their more general hypotheses. Hendershot and Marsh’s article, Alison Holmes notes, appeals in effect to historians to learn more from the greater theoretical diversity of IR, and move beyond the relatively narrow neo-liberal approach focused on interest and power which has typified their efforts in this field to date, so as to include the study of culture and language. The fundamental point raised in Hendershot and Marsh’s article, as Sam Edwards notes, is whether scholars are asking all the questions which are necessary about Anglo-American relations.

In his additional individual contribution to this collection, Hendershot answers this question in the negative. He focuses in particular on the challenge of looking at Anglo-American relations through the prism of the

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4 Hendershot and Marsh, “Celebrating the Mayflower,” 408.
“cultural turn.” Edwards in his review endorses Hendershot’s conclusion that there is much more work to be done in exploring the cultural frontiers of the relationship. Clive Webb, meanwhile, also picks up Dobson, Henderson, and Marsh’s call for new approaches in the field, focusing in his case on the importance of ethnicity and race in shaping the relationship. While he shows that some valuable work has already been carried out in addressing these themes, there remains in his view much more work to be done.

Holmes in her review helpfully organises the six articles into three pairs. Her first pair is formed of the Dobson plus the Hendershot and Marsh contributions, which lay out the current state of the field and suggest an agenda for future research. The second pair is provided by the Hendershot and Webb contributions which carry this call for new ideas and approaches forward in respect of cultural relations in various guises. The final pair in her frame of analysis is provided by the contributions of David Ryan and Jennifer Torres together with her collaborators at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. This pair of articles views the Anglo-American relationship through the prism of collective memory. Ryan focuses on the collective memory on both sides of the Atlantic of Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The example of Churchill has been used by both British and American leaders, and their speechwriters, to convey the themes of authority, resolve, and courage. Collective memory, he argues, develops a consciousness which supersedes history and can be used to galvanise, define, and motivate public opinion in certain circumstances. Meanwhile, the Reagan Library contributors, according to Cooper in her review, demonstrate the power of memory from the perspective of the archivist. Reflecting on the collections of the Reagan Library regarding Anglo-American relations, Torres and her collaborators show how the requests of historians for the declassification of materials in particular fields have actually shaped the availability of archival materials and thus indirectly our current understanding of the past.

Underlying this collection of articles, in Holmes’s view, are three key questions about the Anglo-American relationship: what constituted ‘specialness’; when did it begin; and has it ended (Holmes)? The collection as a whole presents a powerful plea for a broader understanding of the relationship in its various forms, together with an acknowledgement of its persistence and importance. The views of the various reviewers on the importance of the volume are largely positive. Burk calls the special issue both interesting and tremendously useful, particularly from the bibliographic point of view. Edwards sees it as both a ‘state of play’ and a ‘call for action’ volume and a timely intervention in a field where scholars’ approaches have for too long been shaped by traditional concerns. Cooper sees it as an exceptional review of the state of the field. Perhaps only Holmes is a little more measured in her praise, arguing that it provides a “solid recap of the literature and themes in the scholarship to date,” while noting that although the emphasis on the themes of race and ethnicity plus the cultural turn are to be welcomed, these are hardly novel more broadly in the study of history and IR.

The openness to new approaches emphasised in this special issue of the Journal of Transatlantic Studies is certainly valuable. But in pursuing such approaches it would not be wise to neglect the significance of the existing themes of war, defence and intelligence in the field, whose continuing importance has only been underlined by the most recent events in Europe.

Participants:

8 Ryan, “Memory,” 479
Nigel Ashton is Professor of International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He specializes in the contemporary history of Anglo-American relations and the Middle East. His books include Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser (Macmillan, 1996), Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War (Palgrave, 2002) and False Prophets: British Leaders’ Fateful Fascination with the Middle East from Suez to Syria (Atlantic Books, 2022).

Kathleen Burk is the Professor Emerita of Modern and Contemporary History at University College London (UCL). Author of a number of books and articles on Anglo-American relations, her two most recent books on the subject are Old World, New World: The Story of Britain and America (Little, Brown, 2007) and The Lion and the Eagle: The Interaction of the British and American Empires 1783-1972 (Bloomsbury, 2018).

Dana Cooper is Professor of History at Stephen F. Austin State University. Specializing in women’s, gender, and transatlantic history, she has presented papers in Austria, Canada, England, and Germany and has published with presses in Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United States. She is the author of Informal Ambassadors: American Women, Transatlantic Marriages, and Anglo-American Relations (Kent State University Press, 2014), which led to her interview for the documentary, “Million Dollar American Princesses,” that appeared on the Smithsonian Channel. She is the co-editor of Transatlantic Relations and Modern Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Examination (Routledge, 2013), Motherhood and War: International Perspectives (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), and Motherhood and Antiquity (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

Sam Edwards is a Reader in Modern Political History at the University of Loughborough. A historian of the United States, of transatlantic relations, and of twentieth century war commemoration, his research has been funded by the ESRC, the US-UK Fulbright Commission, the US Army Military History Institute, the American Philosophical Society, the USAF Academy, and the US Naval War College. His first book, Allies in Memory: World War II and the Politics of Transatlantic Commemoration, 1941–2001, was shortlisted for the Royal Historical Society’s Gladstone Prize.

Alison Holmes is Professor of International Studies at Cal Poly Humboldt. She received her PhD in International Relations from the London School of Economics in 2005. Prior to academe and among other positions, Holmes worked for the UK Liberal Democrats as the National General Election Campaign Manager for the 1992 and 1997 elections (and a consultant in 2010), Deputy Head of Strategic Communication for the BBC, Managing Director of BritishAmerican Business Inc in London, and speechwriter to the US Ambassador in London. Her most recent book, Multi-layered Diplomacy in a Global State: The International Relations of California (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), is a case study of California's international affairs and the intersection of state/subnational diplomacy with inherent/indigenous sovereignty. Her four prior books examine diplomacy, US/UK relations, and politics as dialogue. She has a regular column on international affairs in The American magazine in London and, in January 2022, she was named the inaugural editor of a forthcoming online journal, csuglobal, designed to showcase the faculty, staff and students of the California State University system by highlighting California’s role in the world.

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What were the editors trying to do? They make it quite clear in their introduction: essentially, the point is to discuss the various approaches to the research into and writing about Anglo-American relations.¹

International Relations and Diplomatic History scholars might ask the same questions, but they come up with different answers. In brief, IR scholars have theories and want information to support those theories, whilst diplomatic historians prefer to find the evidence first and then to construct a theory. It is not unusual that both approaches fail to consider just what each can contribute to benefit the other. Both tend to utilise a functionalist approach, whilst many diplomatic historians have a neo-realist cast of mind when it comes to interpretation. The latter is perhaps not surprising when one considers the months or years spent burrowing through governmental-related papers.

The fundamental question is whether there actually an Anglo-American special relationship? Is it unique, different in quality and, historically at least, different in importance from any other alliance that each country may have? In their introduction, the editors give nothing away. Rather, the intended focus is on the scholarship of the ‘special relationship’ (SR), however that may be defined, and here their colours show. Whilst traditional modes of investigation can still offer insights, they concede, they urge colleagues to consider whether they are asking the right questions, using newly-available lines of investigation, adapting to and adopting new technologies, and placing more emphasis on interdisciplinary research. If not, the following essays, which are both analytic and bibliographic, are meant to lead the way.

But first of all, Alan P. Dobson, the founder of the journal, provides a very useful and wide-ranging historical bibliographical context in “The evolving study of Anglo-American relations: the last 50 years.” This is his summary of his intention in this article: “I have attempted to capture both continuity and change in scholarship as well as some abiding themes such as the successive claims of non-existence of the Anglo-American Special Relationship, of its past existence but current demise, and its repetitive Lazarus-like quality.”² He points out the scepticism as to whether there actually was, or is, a SR, a scepticism demonstrated by a number of scholars from the 1960s through to this century. During these years, and indeed up to now, the predominant approach was to look closely at high politics, diplomacy, and security policy. There were, however, other streams. Some historians were attracted by the personalities who had helped to develop close Anglo-American relations; another stream is the impact of domestic politics in the UK on the relationship.

His primary argument is that scholars should spread their nets more widely, both in terms of topics and in the range and types of evidence used.³ He then trawls the work of the past fifty years, classifying and assessing it. His scope is impressive and his essay will be of lasting value.

The next three essays exemplify what Dobson was urging should be done. Clive Webb kicks off play with his “More Colours than Red, White and Blue: Ethnicity and Anglo-American Relations,” arguing that the intersection of ethnicity, race, and Anglo-American relations are understudied. More pointedly, he argues that, except for transatlantic slavery and abolition, most writing under this tent concentrates on twentieth-century war and diplomacy. Furthermore, works looking at these topics have focussed on governmental interaction and grassroots activism. There is, he suggests, much further to go and much more to do.⁴

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He points out the role of slavery in shaping British responses to the Civil War, making it manifestly clear what an intricate web of opinions historians have produced. He also, however, indicates the lack of attention paid to the impact of Native Americans after the Revolution, and in general on racial imperialism. He shows how the transatlantic circulation of racist ideology led to the joint belief that their shared Anglo-Saxon heritage elevated both countries over all other peoples, thereby justifying their domination of other races. In short, racism and imperialism are closely intertwined.

Looking at post-war politics, Webb poses the question of how important racism was and is in Anglo-American relations. Was liberal internationalism little more than “the old rags of racism and imperialism dressed up in new finery?” (449) One could ask whether, beginning with that premise, a scholar is likely to conclude just that? That can be a bit reductionist: Colin Powell was secretary of state at the beginning of the Iraq War, and this is unlikely to have formed part of his argument whichever direction he took. Turning in another direction, centring every event or argument on government officials and politicians means that the non-state actor or actors might be pushed out of the picture, an argument with which Webb has great sympathy.

In general, he argues, scholars have hardly begun to analyse the persistence of racism and imperialism, and how they intertwine, in post-war foreign policy. The interconnectedness of civil rights campaigns, not only between Britain and the United States but around the world, is rightly pointed out by Webb, providing as it does an historical context for the Black Lives Matter movement. What about British and American policies with regard to apartheid South Africa? The influence of African-American music in the UK is another topic of interest that has not been significantly explored.

Yet even if masses of studies have appeared and will appear, he argues, they still need to be integrated into the “broader narrative of British and American interaction.” This is undoubtedly the case if the goal is to move beyond academia into the wider world of popular knowledge—otherwise, how will these insights have any lasting impact?

Robert M. Hendershot’s assessment, in “Reflecting on the ‘Cultural Turn’: New Directions in the Study of Anglo-American Relations and the Special Relationship,” is much more upbeat than that of Webb. He sets out his stall at the beginning: “The growing integration of cultural analysis stands out as one of the most notable contemporary movements in international and diplomatic history. The ‘cultural turn’ in these fields has made it evident that the analysis of cultural artefacts, identities, and representations has much to teach us about the way states behave in the international system, as well as how cultural factors contribute to the conditions of alliance or enmity between nations.” Indeed, he claims that the growing integration of cultural analyses into the study of Anglo-American relations is one of the most notable contemporary movements in international and diplomatic history.

His two heroes are Clifford Geertz and Akira Iriye. Geertz’s work, he says, “redefined academic understanding of culture itself,” “conceptualising culture as the ‘webs of understanding’ and the system of ‘symbols and meanings’ that impose structure in the world, shape group identities and influence behaviour.” In this view, both culture and its meaning were publicly visible.

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9 Hendershot, “Reflecting on the ‘Cultural Turn’,” 457.

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conservative fields of diplomatic history and IR (I remember reading some years ago an article by Geertz in which he wrote that he was a bit bemused that a theory which he had intended for fellow anthropologists had been absorbed by so many other fields).

The fact that the ‘cultural turn’ has been very successfully appropriated by internationalist cultural history he ascribes to Iriye, who argues that historians need to question the relationships between culture and power, adding questions of cultural context.10 This has been done by expanding the types of evidence looked at, with one result demonstrating how nations wield culture as a diplomatic tool. This work can clarify which and how international connections existing beyond the state influence policymaking, which is part of the wide interest in non-state actors.

Hendershot considers that since the turn of the century, a growing number of specialists have been pushing the boundaries of diplomatic history and IR, absorbing and utilising the theories and methodologies of the ‘cultural turn.’ One outcome is the recognition of how non-state actors have the ability to disseminate influential narratives about the special relationship, and, in general, to show that the special relationship is “more than a short-hand term referencing the post-1940 functional cooperation between the American and British governments. It is also an intangible but influential construct that exists in the consciousness of both societies.”11 The concept of a special relationship between America and Britain is an element of social reality shared by both governments and societies, and he predicts that the intersection of technology, culture and international relations, underlaid by the growing power of the media and telecommunication, have led to further and different questions. One very relevant and important question he poses is how changes in the ways Americans and Britons access information about the world have influenced, and influence, their views of each other? In particular, what has been the impact of social media (the answer to which, I am sure, we would all like to know).

In short, he predicts that the use by diplomatic and international historians of cultural studies will increase by leaps and bounds, and his enthusiasm is certainly contagious.12 After all, why shouldn’t the cultural approach to the special relationship continue to develop? Virtually any approach that furthers our knowledge and understanding is good.

David Ryan states firmly in “Memory: Churchill and the US lures of the quagmire” that collective memory and history are not the same thing—indeed, they are the opposite. He argues that war has always been central to US identity, but that “failed wars” have worsened the ‘culture wars’ that have prevailed in the US since the 1960s. The “culture of defeat” devastates the traditional narrative, including the myths, and can pull apart the stability of the country. To try to pull it back together, historical memory is a “crucial phenomenon” which allows, even encourages, a common understanding of the past.13 These ‘correct,’ or contrived—but not historical—group memories can be utilised to draw members of the national community back together. Ryan’s article discusses the growth and use of collective memory, cleverly illustrating his argument by hanging it on Churchill.14 But he could equally have used President George Washington, who could never tell a lie, and had indeed chopped down the cherry tree with his little hatchet. (I cannot be the only one amongst this readership who as a child had to read an illustrated booklet containing this myth.) Sadly, however, Washington would have not fit into such a favourable narrative with regard to Anglo-American relations as does Churchill.

11 Hendershot, “Reflecting on the ‘Cultural Turn’,” 470.
12 Hendershot, “Reflecting on the ‘Cultural Turn’,” 473.
14 Ryan, “Memory,” 480.
Whilst Vietnam was a ‘bad war’, World War II was a ‘good war,’ since the continent was neither bombed nor invaded nor civilians killed (pity about Hawai'i or the Philippines). Within fifteen years after the war, there was general agreement that Churchill was a great transatlantic symbol of unending determination (‘we will fight on the beaches…we will never surrender’), inspiration (that, and other radio speeches), and the Anglo-American endeavours that jointly defeated Germany (never mind the Russians). According to Ryan, he was increasingly idealised and references to him picked up and, importantly, persisted.\(^{15}\) He was utilised, for example, by presidential speechmakers who, drawing on the American public’s strong memories of the war, invoked the spirit of Churchill to mobilise public opinion to support whatever contemporary endeavour that particular president was planning. They were not invoking history: rather they were invoking a wildly inaccurate collective memory whilst strengthening this memory.

This invocation was crucial, because it provided the frame of reference or state of mind within which the speechwriters could operate. It is, of course, useful to remember that Prime Minister Anthony Eden did precisely the same thing when he equated the ‘appeasement’ of Prime Minister of Italy Benito Mussolini with any reluctance to take on President of Egypt Gamal Abdel Nasser after he had nationalised the Suez Canal. It is a universal phenomenon. President George W. Bush used this collective memory of Churchill arguing against appeasement whilst he was arguing for a war against Iraq. All countries call on their heroes for support and inspiration: at that point, historical accuracy—if they know it—is deemed irrelevant.

The final article is in the nature of a report from the front line or, if you prefer, the exemplification of one of World War II’s Churchillian quotes, modified to “we’ll give you the tools and you finish the job.” This is “The Special Relationship Revealed: US-UK Materials in the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.” The five authors are four senior officials and archivists connected with the Library plus a former Archive Technician at the National Archives who is now an Information Specialist at the Department of the Treasury. The point of the article is to introduce researchers to the vast repository of material in the Reagan Library, including its nature and extent, the problems sometimes arising from its use, and the policies being developed by the archivists in the Library and elsewhere.\(^{16}\) The details, of course, are not of the sort to provide inspiration, but knowing them will be immensely useful to those who plan to go there to do some research. What more could one ask?

This issue is not only very interesting, it is tremendously useful. I suspect that relatively few of us are deeply knowledgeable about all of the subfields described in the articles, and they give an overview of their scope. Furthermore, they provide entryways into the range and nature of both the important books and articles one should read and the historical arguments arising from them. This is a journal issue that will not be filed with my other issues: rather, it will sit on the shelf next to my most important bibliographies.

\(^{15}\) Ryan, “Memory,” 485.

Given the current state of affairs around the world, it seems an especially peculiar time for scholars of transatlantic studies. Between the rise of autocracies, a once (at least we can hope) in a lifetime pandemic, and a rise in violent and erratic spurts of nationalism, what many transatlantic intellectuals may have considered known, predictable, and stable is no longer the case. This loss of an assumptive (or perhaps presumptive is a more accurate description) world has rocked the transatlantic community. Even the phrase—assumptive loss, which hails from the psychological and therapeutic world by referencing a significant death and traumatic effects—feels foreign and even alien to our intellectual studies. But given recent events on either side of the Atlantic, political, economic, and cultural traumas have indeed occurred in ways not seen in almost a century when the fog of World War II transformed history and international relationships forever. Are we in a moment in history where future transatlantic academics will point to as a line in the sand or turning of the tide?

How I wish Alan Dobson was here to answer this momentous question. His absence from the current conversation leaves a void in the historical community that may very well never be filled. At the very least, his passing leaves enormous shoes (or trainers, as it were) to fill. Having created the esteemed Journal of Transatlantic Studies more than twenty years ago, he pledged he would never publish in his own journal. How fitting it is that one of his last articles appeared in the very journal he established so many years ago and presents a comprehensive review of major studies and shifts in the field. Very nearly his entire career focused on Anglo-American relations; thus, who better to review where this particular study of history began and how it has evolved in recent decades. His perspective of the “special relationship” having a “repetitive Lazarus-like quality” was most apt.1

Dobson’s examination of the continuity and paradoxical changes in Anglo-American studies provides an excellent historiography of major works in the field. Notably, he questions why the focus remained for so long on state-to-state relations and seemed to push away, if not overtly reject, the emotional bond or cultural ties across the pond. American history so often remarks upon the exceptionalism of its own history, for which it is often criticized. And yet, Anglo-American history seems (at least, in the past tense) to offer the same behavior in stressing how the United States and the United Kingdom were connected to one another and unlike other countries. Only relatively recently have Anglo-American publications seemed to embrace the less official but increasingly multifaceted elements of transnational relations in lieu of official policy.2 In casting a wider historical net, Dobson encouraged us all to consider more broadly the what and why of transatlantic events in the past. Simply put, by broadening our vision, we increase our understanding. He always had a way of making the complex so simple.

Robert Hendershot has most certainly heeded Dobson’s advice in embracing a cultural analysis between nations. While traditional research of the historical past has long been the core of Anglo-American studies, Hendershot picks up the transatlantic torch handed to him and readily accepts the new call for a cultural focus, specifically discussing the promising and troublesome element of memory. He argues that such an approach of cultural studies benefits the dominant strain of international and diplomatic history in four critical ways: an expansion of analysis; a revelation in the ways in which culture has been manipulated, which does not necessary maintain a negative connotation; an expansion of cultural perceptions, and finally, the opportunity for the exercise of power outside governmental bodies and persons. He also dissects the manner

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2 For examples of recent works along these lines, please see David Haglund’s The US “Culture Wars” and the Anglo-American Special Relationship (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Bowman, Stephen. The Pilgrims Society and Public Diplomacy, 1895-1945 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018); Hendershot and Marsh, eds., Culture Matters: Anglo-American Relations and the Intangibles of Specialness (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

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in which a focus on Anglo-Saxonism served as a catalyst for the Great Rapprochement and explains how the very same development did not result in an increasing focus on Anglo-Saxon relations. This noteworthy feature of transatlantic relations serves to remind us as to the role of identity and dominance in historical research.

Hendershot’s connecting work with Steve Marsh, another longtime colleague and friend of Dobson’s continues the deconstruction of controversies and contradictions that seem to almost serve as the intellectual backbone of transatlantic studies. Their collaborative view highlights the exchange of cultural influence across the Atlantic in the way of art, literature, music, and protest, which are not cultural features to which we are unaccustomed in the present-day mind. Instead, they center upon the relatively recent trend in some works to serve as pieces of advocacy rather than historical exploration. In highlighting the disciplinary differences between diplomatic historians and international relations experts, they acknowledge the two may very well ask the exact same questions. But their scholarly conclusions remain quite different; thus, Hendershot’s and Marsh’s ultimate splitting of historic hairs is not so much about the special relationship itself but rather the scholarship on this very unique relationship as a connective identity across an ocean that may be viewed as a as a barrier or highway, depending on the scholar who is viewing it at any particular moment.

David Ryan, however, takes the mantle of memory and runs with it full-throttle. He argues that such an approach allows a shared perspective to be utilized by a wider audience. Ryan maintains that this approach includes presidents and speechwriters who collectively embrace the public for particular purposes. His focus on denotation of meaning, and less so on feelings or idea, which have so long been crucial to a shared Anglo-American identity, proves critical moving forward in this area of transatlantic studies. Ryan emphasizes the crucial role that a shared memory plays in the lives of speechwriters. Acknowledging the fact that the past is problematic because it is so often idealized over time and through memory, he focuses on the use of Prime Minister Winston Churchill by leaders on both side of the Atlantic. Churchill, as he has been used time and time again by speechwriters and national leaders, has come to imbue the powerful. Safety. Authority. Unquestioned resolve. Courage. While Churchill was an exceptional leader in an exceptional time, the malleability of his image and memory has proven valuable in constructing Anglo-American memory at critical point history. Whether it was President Lyndon B. Johnson and Vietnam or President George W. Bush and 9/11, Churchill has long been the ‘go-to’ in Anglo-American semantics of strength and unity. Efforts to view this approach must consider the evidence versus emotion element of speechwriting while also considering the accuracy versus action of the moment at hand.

But Churchill is hardly the only Anglo-American leader who has been hailed as a crucial piece of the US-UK puzzle. Jennifer Torres and her colleagues at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library clearly demonstrate the power of the tangible past from an archivist perspective. Undoubtedly, President Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher shared a special relationship as transatlantic leaders in a problematic period. Their personal and political rapport seemed to fan the flames of transatlanticism after years of historic hibernation. As staff of the most fertile location in the United States of untapped Anglo-American research, Torres et. al., make a persuasive case of the multi-factored approach and archival process available within the United States.

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Moreover, the increasing digital world of archival research pens this door to researchers on either side of the Atlantic.

The final article in this celebration of the Mayflower retrospective is Clive Webb’s call for more studies on ethnicity and race within Anglo-American studies. His article serves as the most overt answer to Dobson’s call for expanding the transatlantic lens. Webb provides an excellent review of those, albeit limited, works that have considered the role of race and ethnicity within transatlantic history to date. While it comes as no surprise that a transatlantic abolitionist movement served as a key connection between the United Kingdom and United States during the early nineteenth century, comparatively little has been explored in this racial regard since. While imperialism opened an intellectual door of exploration upon both countries, their respective foreign policies simply mirrored their increasingly obvious pursuits outside their national boundaries. Such actions took place even as both countries sought to export Anglo-Saxon values to presumably uncivilized states outside their own.

This is a timely collection of articles for any number of reasons. Clearly, the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower provides researchers a distinct moment to focus upon as they reflect upon a rich history of transatlantic communities, entities, and influences. Moreover, Dobson’s recent passing demonstrates the bittersweet nature of looking upon our past and considering the future. Collectively, these articles provide an exceptional review of where we, as transatlantic scholars, have been and what we have built upon. Just as this current era in history is determined by the actions of individual men and women, the histories we research, write, and read are constructed in the same way. Let us deeply reflect upon what these scholars have written and the path they have shared with us for consideration and an academic undertaking.

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In 2020, the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower sailing— which was marked amid a global pandemic— drew significant attention on both sides of the Atlantic. Much like during the Tercentenary, special organisations were established to coordinate the occasion and the commemorations involved communities in the United States, United Kingdom, and the Netherlands (to which the so-called Pilgrim Fathers had first fled in 1608, prior to their journey to North America). The anniversary also drew scholarly interest, with its underlying cultural politics the subject of engaged scrutiny. This was particularly the case in Britain, where the memory and meaning of the Mayflower had not previously received sustained attention (in contrast to the United States, where Pilgrim Fathers commemorations had already drawn thoughtful critique). The innovative research project led by Tom Hulme examining the Mayflower in British cultural memory is of note in this regard, and it has bequeathed a fascinating digital resource mapping the sites, artefacts, and ephemera through which the story of the Pilgrim Fathers has been assimilated into the national narrative.

This special issue of the *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*— the periodical of the Transatlantic Studies Association (TSA)— marks the anniversary in a different way, by providing a detailed interrogation of the voluminous scholarship examining the Anglo-American relationship, past and present. This is very much a ‘state of the field’ assessment involving several leading scholars, each of whom provides a knowledgeable overview of a particular feature of the historiographical landscape as well as offering critical food for thought regarding certain absences and omissions which are still in need of further research. The final article in the issue— authored by the team at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library— adds to this overview by providing an illuminating discussion of the business of archiving Anglo-American relations, especially for the ‘special relationship’ between Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. In short, the editors— Robert M. Hendershot and Steve Marsh— have skilfully curated a volume outlining ‘where we are at,’ ‘what we have overlooked,’ and ‘where we still need to go.’ It will be invaluable to those starting out in the field (especially undergraduate students encountering for the first time the intimidatingly extensive scholarship on Anglo-American relations) as well as more established practitioners seeking to consolidate their understanding or indeed blaze new trails.

In the introduction, Hendershot and Marsh sketch out some of the complexities shaping Anglo-American relations, drawing particular attention to the vigorous discussions amongst and between those scholars (of various persuasions) who have endeavoured to interpret the relationship over the last century. They note, for instance, the persistent debate over whether the relationship is indeed ‘special’, and they note, too, the differences of purpose identifiable within this extensive body of scholarship, highlighting the tendency amongst some assessments to be ‘more concerned with advocacy than explanation.’ The editors also carefully consider the “dialogue of the deaf” which has for so long shaped the dynamic between diplomatic history and International Relations (408). Scholars of the latter have generally sought “to determine what in general constitutes a special relationship within international relations” whilst the former are more often found interrogating “primary source materials” in order to identify “Anglo-American modes of behaviour”

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10 See the major AHRC project led by Dr Tom Hulme, the first of its kind: [https://voyagingthroughhistory.exeter.ac.uk/](https://voyagingthroughhistory.exeter.ac.uk/).

(408). The result of this on-going disciplinary debate is, the editors explain, a substantive body of scholarship shaped by different answers to what essentially amounts to the same question. This picture of lively academic debate is further intensified by issues internal to diplomatic history. For whilst many diplomatic historians agree (implicitly if not explicitly) that Anglo-American relations are at root shaped by a “functionalist dynamic,” beyond such tacit agreement debate rages about the fine details (408). Key here are the differences of opinion concerning exactly when the relationship became ‘special,’ the extent of its ‘specialness,’ and, of particular interest over the last half century, the diagnosis of its demise. Hence, explain the editors, the purpose and point of this issue of the JTS: by “focusing not on the special relationship per se but instead on the scholarship about it” they intend that it—respectfully—examine whether current scholars are “asking all of the necessary questions” and “availing themselves of all the available avenues of investigation” (410). Five essays follow, each of which contributes to the above agenda by focusing on a particular aspect of the scholarship on Anglo-American relations.

In the first essay, the late Alan Dobson, founder of the TSA, and long-time editor of its journal, considers some of the ways in which the study of Anglo-American relations has evolved over the last 50 years. The result is, says Dobson, a “slightly British, and necessarily idiosyncratically selective overview;” but it is also careful, considered, and comprehensive, clearly benefitting from its author’s sustained engagement with the field.12 Dobson explores questions of “continuity and change” as well as some of the “abiding themes,” most notably the long-running debate over whether or not the Anglo-American relationship is indeed ‘special’ (and if so, whether it continues to exist as such). But the key theme to emerge from Dobson’s knowledgeable review concerns the long-held dominance within the scholarship of the ‘traditional,’ that is, of works interested in “high politics, defence and diplomacy” (418). Dobson identifies this persistent preoccupation in the histories he first encountered as a researcher in the 1970s, and he notes, too, that whilst later decades witnessed various efforts to broaden the scope of analysis the more “easily examinable” “intellectual bedrocks” of traditional diplomatic history have nonetheless tended to hold sway (421). He concludes, though, by acknowledging that over the last few years there are signs of welcome change as new and emerging scholars cast their nets wider, turning attention to those aspects of the Anglo-American relationship—especially its cultural, racial, and gendered dynamics—which had been previously overlooked or marginalised.

The next two essays develop this observation in more depth and detail. Clive Webb skilfully traces the “racial and ethnic dimensions of Anglo-American relations,” a subject which he explains has been comparatively “understudied.”13 Starting with the scholarship on slavery and abolition (wherein he notes the relative ‘academic consensus’ concerning the role and significance of transatlantic abolitionism) Webb next considers the rather fraught scholarly debate regarding the “role of slavery in shaping British responses to the American civil war” as well as the equally thorny issue of to which side Britons lent their support during the conflict (440). On this latter subject there is an “intricate web of opinions,” the product of a long-running debate which shows no signs of abating (441). The second half of Webb’s essay turns to the subject of race and twentieth century Anglo-American relations. Webb acknowledges the burgeoning scholarship examining “racial imperialism” and, in particular, the role played by Anglo-Saxonist ideology in the turn of the century ‘rapprochement’ between the United States and the United Kingdom (443). He also considers the important work examining Second World War-era relations, specifically vis-à-vis the presence in Britain of segregated African American service-personnel as well as those “revisionist studies” similarly highlighting the role played by race and racism in Cold War Anglo-American relations (446–447; 448). Following a nod towards those recent events indicative of the “enduring relevance” of race and ethnicity to Anglo-American relations (such as the popular and press response to the marriage of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle), Webb concludes by identifying certain areas that merit further research, including “Anglo-American policy towards apartheid

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South Africa, the influence of African American popular culture on Britain, the interrelationship of immigration policy, and the collusion of the British and American governments in upholding rights of national sovereignty to undermine the United Nation’s human rights agenda” (451).

The third essay, authored by Hendershot, similarly picks up on Dobson’s comments regarding the need for ‘new approaches’ which go beyond the ‘traditional’ confines of diplomatic history. In doing so, Hendershot carefully works through the impact in the latter twentieth century of the “cultural turn,” arguing that the methods and interests of cultural historians have bequeathed four specific benefits:

First, they significantly broadened the scope of these fields, particularly by re-conceptualizing the question of agency in foreign affairs and by expanding the types of evidence consulted in the search for answers to important questions. Second, they revealed the ways nations have attempted to harness and wield culture as a diplomatic tool, as well as the results of such tactics. Third, this scholarship has demonstrated the diverse ways in which culturally constructed perceptions of the world can influence the process of policy formulation. And fourth, cultural studies have enhanced our understanding of powerful international connections that exist beyond the official apparatus of national governments.14

Despite the undoubted post-1970 impact of the cultural turn, Hendershot nonetheless explains that it was only relatively recently—in the early twenty-first century—that the full potential of such innovations in focus and approach began to be realised. For instance, new work has revealed the role played in Anglo-American relations by “shared cultural biases,” by religion, by memory, and commemoration, by non-State actors, and by various artefacts of transatlantic popular culture, especially film and music (468). Hendershot closes by cautioning that there is still far more to do if we are to develop further our understanding of the “cultural frontiers” of the special relationship, and he anticipates a future in which “cultural studies will continue to multiply and diversify, exposing new analytical spaces and methodological perspectives through which we may evaluate the relationship between the US and the UK” (473).

The fourth and fifth essays in this special issue shift gear subtly, offering connected but different introductions to some of the ‘materials’ available to the scholar of Anglo-American relations. Through an examination of post-1945 US political discourse, David Ryan uncovers the various meanings attached to the figure of Winston Churchill, author of the ‘special relationship’ as phrase and concept and a man who made much during his life of his Anglo-American parentage. Ryan skilfully shows how Churchill has been “used” by successive American presidents, often as a shorthand to assert the legitimacy (if not necessity) of a certain course of diplomatic action, most frequently the idea of defying and confronting overseas “aggressors.” Invoking Churchill, in short, has proved a useful mechanism through which to critically undermine any idea or activity which might be characterized as ‘appeasement.’ Ryan notes, too, that this reading of Churchill has rested on “the extraordinary memory and hold of the “good war” [in the United States].”15

In the fifth essay, the team at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library conclude the special issue with an interesting survey of the archival material in their holdings pertinent to Anglo-American relations. This material includes records detailing the personal relationship between President Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the correspondence of US ambassadors to the UK, and other material connected to specific and well-known events in Anglo-American diplomatic history, such as the 1982 Falklands Crisis and the 1983 American invasion of the Commonwealth territory of Grenada. The Reagan Library team also outline the archival process before closing with an overview identifying the most significant recent develop to this process: digitization. This is something to which the Library has been committed since at least 1997,

though the pace has notably quickened over the last decade. Interestingly, the Library’s archivists explain that when it comes to digitization “being flexible and following the researchers lead are the two most important tenets to employ,” a statement which reveals the extent to which historians play an influential role in shaping the very accessibility of those materials at the centre of our research.16

All told, this special issue provides an invaluable historiographical overview teasing out how the study of Anglo-American relations has developed over the last half-century together with an engaging discussion—in the final two essays—of some of the ways in which the ‘call’ to cast the net wider might be answered; by deploying new categories of analysis (like ‘memory’) and by diversifying the materials assessed.

This is a timely intervention into the field. As the authors in this special issue rightly acknowledge, the study of Anglo-American relations has for some time been dominated by what might be termed—not unreasonably—the ‘traditional’ concerns of ‘traditional’ scholars. Put another way, the actions, and activities of white male elites have frequently loomed large, a scholarly reductionism which is clearly no longer tenable. This is not to say that the words of twentieth century presidents and prime ministers are no longer of import; clearly, they are. Rather, it is to say that a fuller understanding of Anglo-American relations must go far beyond summit diplomacy, the interactions of official state actors, and the familiar ground of intelligence and defence relations and of the economics of transatlantic trade. Indeed, as various scholars have already shown (including several of those in this issue) a detailed consideration of twentieth century Anglo-American relations must also acknowledge the role played by ‘race’ (both as structure and ideology). It must consider the post-1945 agency of African American and Afro-Caribbean civil rights activists. It must ponder the extent to which the Churchillian ‘special relationship’ is both a racialized and gendered idea (as much as a statement of diplomatic ambition or objective).17 And to do all of this, the field—like the discipline of history more broadly—must proactively diversify so as to draw in scholars who will no doubt ask questions (and exploit source material) not yet even considered. Herein lies the key strength of this special issue; it provides both an overview of the current state of play and a call for more action, for more scholarship, and especially for more research confounding the conventions and limitations of the field as found in the 1970s. This is a well-executed and fitting response to the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower, one which will prove useful to those making their first forays into the field as well as to those scholars more familiar with the overall subject but who are keen to identify new paths to pursue.

Those who study ‘transatlantica’ never seem to be short of an anniversary (or two) in any given year. The *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* has taken advantage of this fact to gather a collection of authors broadly around the idea of the 400th Anniversary of the Mayflower. The date is a bit of a red herring however, as the issue remains well within the journal’s more traditional areas of inquiry rather than delving very deeply into early colonial history. In this case, the milestone moment of the Mayflower is used as a beginning indicator or “bookend”¹ with Brexit as the corresponding weight at the other end of the shelf. The Pilgrim Fathers thus become a symbol of longevity both of the relationship and the field rather than being studied as an event or period of time. The six essays fall broadly into three pairs and essentially showcase the evolution in the most enduring questions of transatlantic relations: what constitutes UK/US ‘specialness’; when did this ‘relationship’ begin; and, even more contentiously, has it ended?

The first pair of articles examines the development of the field of transatlantic studies: where it has been and where it may be going. Robert Hendershot and Steve Marsh set the parameters of the theme by outlining the constant push and pull of the “special relationship” from its very beginning, while also foreshadowing the concepts of culture and identity that weave their way through the issue. This is achieved by framing the entire issue as a kind of critique of the traditional (and now generally considered very old-fashioned) ‘neoliberal’ approach to the special relationship with its standard analyses of interest and power at the core of its explanation for this unusual bilateral duo. In an attempt to move the field towards softer power or more cultural issues, they point to the “othering” vs sharing that goes on between the two partners as well as the deep and often underexplored impact of a shared language, the cultural implications of Anglo-Saxon traditions on political culture and the resulting practices of liberalism writ large.²

Alan Dobson effectively takes up the task of the issue and moves it forward with a great deal of useful work periodizing the literature into its themes and schools of thought over the years. These include: the existence (or not) of something that could be called “special;” power and balance; continuity and change, interest, and sentiment. With Hendershot and Marsh, he frames the historiography of the field through the lens of critique and what he considers the standard or traditional analysis of the relationship as overly focused on the high politics of defense and diplomacy while lamenting the relative lack of interest in his own area of economics. He concludes that more work needs to be done to explore the cultural areas that were once the heart of the historian’s work, but were somehow deemed less important in the face of more traditional hard power calculations between these once great powers.³

The second set of essays presses the critique of more traditional examinations of the special relationship theme even further by examining culture and identity in more detail. Hendershot discusses the ways in which what is now regularly called the “cultural turn” that has appeared in—if not taken over—most of the social sciences is manifesting itself in transatlantic studies. He argues that cultural analysis has been “noticeably uneven”⁴ in the field and seems to give little space for the recognition that the challenge of every discipline is to understand that a focus on any one question requires a scholar to leave out at least a million others. Ironically, even as he suggests that international relations and diplomatic history are only recently coming to appreciate the “cultural constructs such as ethnicity, race, social class, gender, sexuality, mentalities,

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² Hendershot and Marsh, “Celebrating the Mayflower,” 405.
nationalism, and memory,” his discussion overlooks the fact there are few symbols or constructs as powerful as sovereignty, made manifest through diplomacy as its institution of implementation.

Meanwhile, Clive Webb tackles the culture question more directly and seeks to explore what he sees as the missing piece of transatlantic studies by highlighting race and ethnicity as shapers not only of bilateral relations, but all global affairs. His examination of the literature in this area, in contrast to that of Dobson or even Hendershot and Marsh, offers a reframing of the transatlantic relationship from this distinct and often overlooked perspective. Perhaps to the traditional international relations question of ‘levels of analysis,’ we are now usefully adding the context of layers and new voices as areas of research and scholarship. However, the danger remains that any detailed story or history can become a single narrative if it ignores what falls outside its line of sight.

The final two essays leave the high plains of overview to return the reader to the familiar and even comfortable territory of Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Ronald Reagan. That said, David Ryan’s examination of Churchill through the lens of collective memory almost miraculously opens new ground in such well-trod terrain by creating a frame that manages to overtly connect it to the preceding discussion on culture. By focusing on the idea that leaders use symbols “to cultivate legitimacy, resonance and support” he homes in on the impact of shared language, the crucial difference between memory and history, and the different roles both play in political analysis. Churchill was a consummate purveyor of “performative” diplomacy and, like many leaders both before and after him, found the transatlantic arena a welcoming stage for such theater.

Finally, and in an interestingly similar way, a refreshingly diverse group of authors, Jennifer Torres, Jennifer Mandel, Ira Pemstein, Randle Swan, and Gina Risetter also begin to explore this intersection of memory and history. By pulling back the curtain on the practical nitty gritty of the Reagan Presidential library, they reveal a great deal about possible avenues of research for future scholars. Further, in what one could almost be identified as a classic social constructivist mode, they demonstrate how the queries of scholars create the new pathways and understandings of the material at hand, while at the same time highlighting how curators guide that process in both intentional and unintentional ways. Thus, as scholars, we become both participants and witnesses to the creation of collective memory and the means by which history is curated.

The Mayflower per se may not feature in the essays, but its 400th anniversary certainly warrants a review and even a recasting of the field of transatlantic studies. This special issue provides a solid recap of the literature and themes in the scholarship to date—even if it tends to recycle the rather tired tropes of international relations. The call here for a different perspective and for more cultural awareness on issues of race and ethnicity is to be heartily welcomed. However, such an approach might have had more resonance if there had been more recognition of the fact that this “cultural turn” has already affected the disciplines of international relations, history, and diplomacy that they see as lacking. These questions may be new to transatlantic studies in a very narrow sense, but there are already many scholars exploring new voices and layers of interaction in

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5 Hendershot, “Reflecting on the ‘Cultural Turn’,” 456.
8 Ryan, “Memory,” 481.