If this era witnessed increased British scrutiny of the American system, a need to confront an impending crisis in international power, and proposals for reuniting the two nations, what discourses were employed to justify the last of these rather than another approach? Especially in the face of pervasive anti-British rhetoric and the continuing political advantage in America of, as one historian puts it, “twisting the lion’s tail,” what convinced British thinkers and the public that a formalized alliance was natural and would triumph over contemporary antagonisms? That is, what convinced readers that brotherhood and commonality, rather than animosity, were the essence of the relation between the two peoples?

The story of British racial ideologies has been described before, but this chapter traces the sublimated forms expressed through
Anglo-American relations. The role of race in Anglo-American discourse varies, but at the turn of the twentieth century, it only infrequently appears as a strict biological designator of inherited characteristics. Part of this sublimation involves viewing race as a psychological phenomenon, in which instinctive antagonisms and empathies ground individual and communal perceptions of the other. While the psychological model of race still naturalizes difference and commonality, Anglo-Saxon racialist discourse increasingly manifests in the associative and classificatory assumptions of narratives and criticism, providing a forum within which performances of the cultivated ideal described in the Introduction occurred, and sometimes operating as a subtext. These forms straddle the performative and pedagogical, drawing upon a culturalist rhetoric to promote British superiority—in empire and in international affairs—while confronting the nation’s failure to live up to its legacy. In turn, visions of racial reintegration are offered as a means of guaranteeing national, and world, progress.

**The King Alfred Millenary**

In 1901, the opening of the Edwardian era in Britain was marked by commemorations of three deceased leaders. Queen Victoria’s funeral in February and President McKinley’s funeral in September preceded the millenary celebration of the death of the Anglo-Saxon King Alfred. Each of these commemorations prompted reflection upon the relationship between the two nations.

Historian Frederic Harrison, in proposing the Alfred celebration, says “I trust that, in the first year of the twentieth century, the English-speaking world may unite in its tribute of homage to the hero-saint who was the true father (if any man can be so styled) of our common literature, ‘the model Englishman,’ . . . the herald of our civic and religious organization” (Bowker 4). The emphasis upon the international nature of the event, and the sense of Alfred as a “model Englishman,” along with the rhetoric of his argument—“I trust that”—indicate his opinion that strengthening Anglo-American relations are inevitable and link the transatlantic bond to a national ideal. Promoting a ritual of joint Anglo-American memory, Harrison’s paternalism contrasts sharply with the triumphalist rhetoric associated with jingoism, both at home and