After the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in March 1817, Cobbett feared that he would soon be reimprisoned without trial. By the end of the month, he had sailed for America, where he would remain for the next two and a half years. He continued publishing the *Political Register*, just as he had done from Newgate, but exile imposed a new set of constraints on his journalism. He worried about the effect it would have on his circulation and his position within the reform movement: Thomas Wooler, the editor of a new radical weekly, the *Black Dwarf*, accused him of deserting the cause, while the Tory *Quarterly Review* suggested that he was simply fleeing his debts. The six-week transatlantic crossing added a lag-time of several months to his journalism, first as he waited for news of events in England, and then as his articles travelled back. His audience had the novel experience of reading an English newspaper written in America, while Cobbett had to find an alternative to his weekly commentary on events.

In addition to this temporal disjunction, he had once again been removed from the rural environment that was central to his political identity. Having constructed a journalistic persona that was inseparable from his position as a working Hampshire farmer, Cobbett found that exile involved a sudden and dramatic change of role. In order to compensate for this, and in contrast to his previous sojourn in the United States, he stayed away from the centres of American journalism and politics. Instead, he established himself on Long Island, declaring ‘my intention to be a downright farmer’. His new identity as a Long Island farmer represented his continued, metonymic relationship with his English audience. Long Island becomes at once a site of exile – even, following Newgate, another prison – and, paradoxically, an extension of Cobbett’s England.
From Adam to Crusoe

In exile on Long Island, Cobbett was determined to maintain a weekly English newspaper, continuing the cheap, mass circulation mode he had pioneered at the end of 1816. In its ambition to bridge the three thousand miles that separated him from his audience, Cobbett’s journalism becomes part of the ‘annihilation of space and time’ that was vital to nineteenth-century modernity: as Clare Pettitt has shown, this phrase, usually associated with Marx, was quoted as common currency by *The Times* as early as 1821.4 Cobbett’s transatlantic journalism both emphasizes and tries to eclipse the temporal and spatial divide between writer and reader, and the reassuringly familiar sight of ‘Botley’ at the head of his letters was replaced by an even more vivid emphasis on Long Island. After a silence of fifteen weeks, the first edition of the ‘Two-Penny Trash’ from America was published in London on 12 July 1817, with all thirty-two columns taken up by a letter ‘To the People of England, Scotland, and Ireland’. This had been written two months earlier, a few days after Cobbett’s arrival, and describes the voyage out, accompanied by his two eldest sons:

On Wednesday evening, the 27th of March, we embarked on board the ship IMPORTER, D. Ogden master, bound to New York, where we arrived on the 5th of May, with about 40 steerage passengers, farmers and tradesmen, who were fleeing from ruin and starvation. In all respects that can be named our passage was disagreeable; and, upon one occasion, very perilous from lightning, which struck the ship twice, shivered two of the masts, killed a man, struck several people slightly, between two of whom I was sitting without at all feeling the blow.

The account places his own exile within a shared, post-Waterloo experience of ‘fleeing from ruin and starvation’, but the lightning strike also suggests a uniquely providential escape, through which Cobbett’s life and liberty have been preserved so he can continue the struggle for reform. Having remained in New York for ‘only twenty-hour hours’, he moves on to the surprisingly familiar surroundings of Long Island:

All that I see around me here is well calculated to attract the attention and to please the sight of one like myself, brought up in the country, always greatly delighted with, and somewhat skilled in, its various and pleasing and healthful pursuits. The people are engaged