From Philadelphia to Long Island
William Cobbett's American Writings

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ABSTRACT

Well known for his radical stance on parliamentary reform in Britain, William Cobbett lived in America from 1792 to 1800 (Pennsylvania) and again from 1817 to 1819 (Long Island). Unlike most British "apostates" during the wartime period, Cobbett followed a distinct path in his transformation from conservative to radical, a shift reflected in his writings from both periods. During his first sojourn in America, writing under the pseudonym "Peter Porcupine," Cobbett published pamphlets such as "Observations on the Emigration of Dr. Joseph Priestley," "A Bone to Gnaw for the Democrats," and "A Little Plain English," viciously attacking French sympathizers in America, including Joseph Priestley, James Thomson Callender, and the Democratic-Republicans, whom he viewed as Jacobins seeking to destabilize the American government. Positioning himself as a defender of Britain and a protector of America from revolutionary France, Cobbett's pamphlets contributed to a transatlantic anti-Jacobin discourse rooted in British conservatism and residual cultural values. In his second stay in America, Cobbett became a radical reformist, condemning the corruption of the British government and aligning with emergent democratic ideals. His two travelogues, *A Year's Residence in the United States of America* and *The Emigrant's Guide*, depict America as a land of political and economic freedom. As reciprocal counterpoints, Britain and America form a transatlantic framework of ideological contrast, in which, as Paul Giles suggests, political identity is shaped through mutual opposition and reflection between national systems. Cobbett's writings from both periods engage this contrast to explore alternative models of political and economic systems across the Atlantic.

KEYWORDS: William Cobbett, American Writings, transatlantic discourse, anti-Jacobinism, parliamentary reform

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Introduction

IN Chapter VII of *William Cobbett's Biography*, Edward Smith recounts the changing political climate in America during the 1790s, shifting from an alliance with France to a gradual disenchantment and reconsideration of its relationship with Britain:

> [T]here were not wanting signs, at the close of the year 1796, that the tide was turning in favour of reconciliation with the old country …. A certain estrangement naturally grew between the two republics, and the high-toned conduct of Adet… was highly characteristic of the then rulers of the French nation…. So, from this period, the Federal press began to gain upon its opponents, and one of its acknowledged leaders was Mr. William Cobbett. (181-184)

The Jay Treaty, signed in 1794 between Britain and America to temporarily ease tensions, gradually distanced America from France. The reaction from France, best exemplified by Pierre Adet, the French envoy to the U.S., led "many reflecting Americans" to "consider that 'fraternity' [between the U.S. and France] was one of those good things of which they might have, on occasion, too much" (181). A British exile living in America, [1] Cobbett was not a mere outsider observing this shift in international politics. Instead, he was actively involved, voiced his opinions, and became a leading figure in Federalist journalism.

America in the 1790s was dominated by two major political parties: the pro-British Federalists, represented by the first American president, George Washington, and the pro-French Democratic-Republicans, led by Thomas Jefferson. When Cobbett arrived in America in 1792, the Federalists were in power, but the capital city, Philadelphia, where Cobbett resided, was predominantly pro-French. Seeking an opportunity to work in the American government, Cobbett wrote to Jefferson with a recommendation letter from the American ambassador in France, but was rejected due to the limited number of positions in the newly established government. Turning to journalism instead, Cobbett adopted the pseudonym "Peter Porcupine" and engaged in American political discourse. His writings defended the British government and its political system, scrutinizing any connections with revolutionary France. Interestingly, Cobbett reversed his earlier stance during his second stay in America, encouraging Britons to emigrate to the U.S.

While scholars have primarily focused on Cobbett as a radical reformer advocating for Britain's lower classes, some have recognized the significance of his American writings, particularly from his early years. In "Trans-Atlantic Anti-Jacobinism: Reaction and Religion," Jonathan Den Hartog identifies a

transatlantic network of Anti-Jacobinism spanning Europe, Great Britain, Canada, and America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Viewing the French Revolution as a threat to both politics and religion, figures such as Edmund Burke, William Cobbett, and Timothy Dwight defended the existing political order and religious traditions. These reactionaries "identified a set of radical theorems" and "found their expressions working throughout the Atlantic world," striving to establish "a political alignment that crossed national boundaries and bound individuals together in a common cause" (Den Hartog 145). As a leading figure in the anti-Jacobin camp, Cobbett's contribution lay in how he "fanned the flames of ideological, religious, and partisan rivalries" (139) through his polemical writings. Extending Hartog's concept of transatlantic anti-Jacobinism, this paper argues that Cobbett's anti-Jacobin writings were not merely part of a broader movement resisting Jacobinism; rather, they constituted a transatlantic discourse involving both nations. His works were published both in America (Philadelphia) and Britain (London) and exerted significant influence across the Atlantic.

This transatlantic discourse, rooted in Cobbett's commentary on American politics, intended to defend the British political system. In his edited collection *Peter Porcupine in America: Pamphlets on Republicanism and Revolution*, David A. Wilson maps out the historical context and Cobbett's role within it. The late eighteenth century was a period "when Americans were locked in a crisis of identity over the meaning of liberty and the destiny of empire, when the new republic was buffeted by the rival claims of competing British, French, and Spanish imperialism" (2). Amid this geopolitical struggle, Cobbett "appealed to a sense of 'Englishness' within the American consciousness," and his efforts to prevent Jacobin influence in America placed him in the first wave of transatlantic Anti-Jacobins (2-3). Cobbett's engagement in American politics and his defense of Britain aimed to uphold British interests and maintain its influence over its former colony.

Positioning himself as a representative of residual colonial influence (drawing on Raymond Williams' concept of residual culture), Cobbett distinguished himself through his distinctive writing style. In *William Cobbett's The Politics of Style* (1995), Leonora Nattrass analyzes how Cobbett used plain and concise language to convey his political ideology. Nattrass argues that "Cobbett's colloquial and energetic writings cut self-consciously through the refined circumlocutions of eighteenth-century political discourse" (1995a: 5-6). His dialectical style, characterized by "name-calling," "downright language," and the "dramatic structure based on an imagined dialogue between opposing viewpoints," made his arguments especially forceful (7). Regarding Cobbett's American writings, Nattrass notes that contemporary American journalism

blended Samuel Johnson's and Alexander Pope's refined style with Jonathan Swift's sarcasm. She highlights Cobbett's "stinging personal abuse," his signature "style of invective," as a key factor in his notoriety and influence during this period (1995b: 43-44).

While Nattrass focuses on Cobbett's writing style, Kevin Binfield's "Demonology, Ethos, and Community in Cobbett and Shelley" explores how language constructs and unites a community. Building on E. P. Thompson's analysis of radical rhetoric after the Napoleonic Wars, Binfield argues that Cobbett replaced abstract Enlightenment ideals (e.g., rights, reason, necessity) with concrete identifiers (e.g., stock-jobbers, gentry, placemen) to name and distinguish the evil from the virtuous. Cobbett's "rhetoric of demonology" singled out the wicked ones, such as the Prince Regent, Castlereagh, and Sidmouth, creating a moral dichotomy that strengthened solidarity among the "undemonized" (Binfield 160). In addition to demonization as a rhetorical strategy, Bonnie J. Gunzenhauser highlights Cobbett's appeal to readers' sympathy as a tool for mobilizing the working class and fostering resistance. She argues that Cobbett targeted "a broad readership" to create "a … campaign of discursive resistance that ultimately challenges both the periodical and the political culture of early nineteenth-century Britain" (86). While Binfield and Gunzenhauser focus on Cobbett's later writings, the rhetorical strategies of demonization and appealing to sympathy were already present in his early American works.

Building on and extending previous scholarship on Cobbett's rhetoric, transatlantic anti-Jacobinism, and English identity, this paper examines how Cobbett's political writings during his two periods in America articulate a historically contingent and transnationally constructed political identity. Raymond Williams's concepts of dominant**,** residual, and emergent cultural formations provide a framework for understanding the ideological tensions embedded in Cobbett's works. [2] His early writings, shaped by residual allegiances to monarchy and social hierarchy, reflect values that remained active in American politics. In contrast, his later works increasingly incorporate emergent critiques of class inequality and institutional corruption, which are practices opposed to the dominant order in Britain. To account for the geographic and ideological movement across national boundaries, this paper also draws on Paul Giles's theory of transatlantic literary relations to examine how William Cobbett constructed political identity across British and American contexts. Giles conceptualizes the transatlantic not as a space of cultural convergence but of ideological contrast. As he suggests in *Atlantic Republic*, "to read English literature transatlantically is to counterpoint its more traditional Anglican virtues" (Giles 2006: 1) and to reveal "the parameters of national systems and so

to hollow out their pressing, peremptory claims to legitimacy" (2006:5). Transatlantic discourse, in this sense, exposes the constructed nature of national ideologies by placing them in reciprocal tension. In *Transatlantic Insurrections*, Giles further emphasizes that British literature "reveals strange and unfamiliar aspects that are brought into play by the reflecting mirrors of American discourse," and that transnational reading produces political identity as "a play of opposites, a series of reciprocal attractions and repulsions between opposing national situations" (2001:1). This framework helps interpret Cobbett's rhetorical positioning, as his writings consistently navigate and politicize the contrasts between British imperial authority and American republicanism. Rather than viewing Cobbett's writings as either purely British or American, this approach considers how his political identity was formed in dialogue with and in opposition to both cultural systems. The following sections examine Cobbett's American texts in two phases. First, his early writings, including "Observations on the Emigration of Dr. Joseph Priestley" (1794), "A Bone to Gnaw for the Democrats" (1795), and "A Little Plain English" (1795), illustrate how Cobbett employed personal attacks, demonization through association with revolutionary France, and fearmongering to defend British interests in America, thereby forming a transatlantic anti-Jacobin discourse rooted in British conservatism. Second, his later writings, including *A Year's Residence in the United States of America* (1819) and *The Emigrant's Guide* (1829), reveal Cobbett's admiration for America, which he incorporated into his radical parliamentary reform agenda. His praise for American democracy and economic opportunities shaped a distinct transatlantic discourse on political and economic freedom. In doing so, the paper traces the ideological transformations of Cobbett's transnational political identity within a shifting matrix of residual, dominant, and emergent cultural forces.

A Defender of Both Britain and America

COBBETT'S early American writings, produced during his first stay in the United States (1792–1800), reflect the persistence of residual British cultural values in America, articulated through a rhetorical strategy shaped by transatlantic displacement. His pamphlets reveal an enduring loyalty to monarchy, a commitment to social hierarchy, and a profound suspicion of revolutionary ideologies. While physically located in a republican society, Cobbett continued to uphold and reassert the values of a British political order whose authority had been disrupted by both American independence and the French Revolution.

"Observations on the Emigration" (1794)

In his analysis of William Cobbett's entrance into Philadelphia journalism from 1794 to 1800, William Reitzel argues that when we consider the political and cultural landscape of Philadelphia during this period, "it becomes plain that Cobbett was not creating his own audience or defying the foul fiend in a lonely and heroic way; but that he was fitting himself into a place that circumstances had made for him" (224). It is true that Cobbett mostly responded to, rather than created, the circumstances, though his engagement had a clear purpose. As tensions escalated between Federalists (pro-British) and Democratic-Republicans (pro-French) in late 18th-century America, Cobbett firmly positioned himself on the Federalist side. His foray into American politics began with the publication of "Observations on the Emigration of Dr. Joseph Priestley, and on the Several Addresses Delivered to Him on His Arrival at New York" in 1794, in which he responded to the warm reception of Joseph Priestley by his supporters in America.

Upon his arrival in New York in June 1794, Priestley, a Unitarian minister, scientist, and supporter of the French Revolution, was embraced by the Democratic-Republicans. Seeing an opportunity to engage in American politics, Cobbett, under the pseudonym "Peter Porcupine," published "Observations on the Emigration of Dr. Joseph Priestley" to criticize Priestley and warn Americans about his influence.

At the beginning of the pamphlet, Cobbett appears to welcome Priestley's emigration. However, his tone soon shifts as he condemns Priestley's response to the Democratic-Republicans' addresses, viewing them as an endorsement of their politics. Cobbett accuses Priestley of attempting to mislead and manipulate the American public, claiming that Priestley "endeavours to impose himself on them for a Sufferer in the Cause of Liberty; and makes a canting profession of Moderation, in direct contradiction to the Conduct of his whole life (1794: 19). For Cobbett, it was problematic that Priestley portrayed his emigration as an escape from persecution, complaining that he came to America seeking "[p]rotection from Violence" that Britain failed to provide (19). The "violence" Priestley referred to was the Birmingham Riots of 1791, during which a mob targeted Dissenters, burning their homes and churches, and destroying Priestley's property in retaliation for his support for the French Revolution. Fearing further persecution, Priestley fled to London and later emigrated to America in 1794.

By adopting the pseudonym "Peter Porcupine," Cobbett was able to conceal his British identity, as anti-British sentiment was strong in Philadelphia. His use of a pseudonym also allowed him to craft a new persona— one that spoke as if he were an American rather than a foreigner:

> He [Priestley] certainly must suppose that no European Intelligence ever reaches this side of the Atlantic, or that the Inhabitants of these countries are too dull to comprehend the sublime events that mark his life and character. Perhaps I shall show him, that it is not the people of England alone who know how to estimate the merit of Doctor Priestley. (1794: 19-20)

By stating that it is "not the people of England alone" who know about Priestley, Cobbett implicitly distances himself from his British identity, aligning himself instead with "the Inhabitants of these countries," that is, with Americans. In this way, he constructs an identity that appears native to the American audience, one that receives "European Intelligence." By implicitly presenting himself as an American, Cobbett positions himself as someone empowered to challenge Priestley, a newcomer to America.

Cobbett then sets out to discredit Priestley by portraying him as a Jacobin sympathizer, warning that his presence in America could introduce dangerous revolutionary ideas. He highlights Priestley's religious identity as a Unitarian and his deep connection with radical Dissenters in Britain, emphasizing how "they always introduce their political claims and projects under the marks of religion" (1794: 20). Some 18th-century Unitarians indeed sympathized with the French Revolution, founded political societies, and criticized the British monarchy in their sermons. However, Cobbett takes this further, portraying Priestley as an active conspirator, arguing that his ideas were "subversive of all civil and religious order" (20). He directly links Priestley's beliefs to Jacobinism, suggesting that his ideology was "in perfect conformity to that of the Jacobin clubs in France" (20).

After branding Priestley as a Jacobin, Cobbett shifts the blame for the Birmingham Riots to Priestley himself. He suggests that if Priestley had been a "peaceable subject," "if he had given no provocation to the people," "if he had in no wise contributed to the riots" (1794: 24), the British government would have protected him. Because of his open support for the French Revolution, which angered the British people, "he was himself the principal cause of these riots" (24), placing the responsibility for violence on Priestley rather than on the mob. Cobbett depicts the British government as a protector of human rights, but one that could do nothing for those who incited social unrest in the first place.

To reinforce his accusations, Cobbett points to the September Massacres of 1792, during which thousands of prisoners were executed by revolutionary mobs for being suspected counter-revolutionaries. Cobbett questions whether Priestley would "insist upon calling that massacre an act of *civism*, and the actors in it the *Heroes* of the 12th of September?" (1794: 28), posing a rhetorical trap for this

French sympathizer. Using historical evidence as a foundation for his argument, Cobbett portrays the French Revolution as a period of bloodshed and anarchy, claiming that Priestley's emigration of America was driven by a desire for "an introduction of the same system of anarchy, that has changed the airy amiable French into a set of the most ferocious inhuman bloodhounds, that ever disgraced the human shape" (29). In a word, Priestley's presence threatens to destabilize the American government and plunge the nation into violence akin to the September Massacre.

After associating Priestley with revolutionary violence, Cobbett critiques his political belief, identifying him as a "system-monger" (1794: 32) advocating for radical political reform. Cobbett points out the fundamental flaw of revolutionary ideas: "The same visionary delusion seems to have pervaded all reformers in all ages. They do not consider what can be done, but what they think ought to be done" (31). Without empirical evidence to support these ideas, the revolutionaries lack a practical, "calculating principle" to assess "whether a reform will cost them more than it is worth or not" (31). James Grande points out that Cobbett's American writings from this period were deeply influenced by Edmund Burke's political ideas and Jonathan Swift's sarcastic styles (as seen in "Gulliver's Voyage to Laputa"). In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Burke dismisses pro-revolutionary arguments as abstract theories divorced from experiences. Following the Reign of Terror and the September Massacre, the anti-revolutionary cause gained further justification. Grande points out that "[f]or Cobbett and Burke, radical declarations of universal benevolence were not to be trusted … and a politics based on abstract principles and speculation would be dispelled by the hard lessons of experience" (2015: 49-50). The term "visionary" is derived from Burke, but Cobbett translated Burke's political philosophy into his own colloquial style, using plain and easily understandable language.

In addition to linking Priestley to the French Revolution, Cobbett engages in character assassination, portraying him as a hypocrite lacking true loyalty to America. He exposes contradictions in Priestley's self-identification, mocking him for calling himself "an American," "a citizen of France," and "a Fellow of the Royal Society of London" in different political contexts (1794: 59). Cobbett ridicules this change of identity, stating that "[w]ith the English he is a Royalist, with the Americans, a Republican, and with the French, a Carmagnole" (59-60). By labeling Priestley a "Carmagnole," the name of a French revolutionary song, Cobbett once again aligns him again with the French Revolution, suggesting that he is a political opportunist who changes allegiances to suit his ambitions.

Finally, adopting the tone of an American, Cobbett sarcastically urges Priestley to return to Britain, mocking his lack of true commitment to America:

> no offence to the New-York addressers, I think *we* ought to wish that this desire [of returning to Britain] may be very soon accomplished …. *we* may hope to see him prune his wings, and take his flight from the dreary banks of the Susquehannah to those of the Thames or the Avon. (1794: 60; emphasis added)

Cobbett's portrayal of Joseph Priestley exemplifies the interplay between residual cultural allegiance and transnational positioning. He sees Priestley not simply as a dissenter but as an ideological threat whose presence in America as a Briton imports the dangers of French Jacobinism. By linking Priestley's theology and politics to revolutionary violence and claiming his ideas are "subversive of all civil and religious order," Cobbett reaffirms residual cultural values of moral and institutional stability. Writing under the pseudonym Peter Porcupine and adopting the rhetorical stance of an American citizen, Cobbett also distances himself from his British identity. His declaration that "it is not the people of England alone who know how to estimate the merit of Doctor Priestley" positions him within American politics, even as his argument seeks to reaffirm British authority. This dual posture reinforces his transnational political identity, shaped through ideological contestation across borders and situated between two conflicting national ideologies.

"A Bone to Gnaw" (1795)

Written in 1795, "A Bone to Gnaw for the Democrats" is the second pamphlet attacking the pro-French faction in America. The publication of James Thomson Callender's *The Political Progress of Britain* (originally published in 1792 and gaining prominence in America by 1794) provided Cobbett with another opportunity to continue his attack on Jacobinism. Callender, a Scottish journalist and critic of the British monarchy, fled to America to avoid prosecution. From 1794 onward, he became a prominent journalist and political commentator, aligning himself with the Republican cause and launching attacks on Federalists, including George Washington and John Adams. In "A Bone to Gnaw" Cobbett denounces Callender's arguments and extends his attack to the broader pro-French revolutionary movement in America.

Cobbett's rhetoric in this pamphlet continues to draw on residual cultural values grounded in loyalty to the monarchy and skepticism of radical ideology. In the preface to "A Bone to Gnaw," Cobbett begins with a combative and satirical tone, making it clear that his pamphlet is aimed solely at Democrats, rather than a general readership. He explains the title of the pamphlet: "I throw it in amongst them, as amongst a kennel of hounds: let them snarl and growl over it, and gnaw it, and slaver it" (Cobbett 2016b: 68). This provocative metaphor

equates Democrats to dogs fighting over a bone and invokes an imagery of social disorder, reinforcing the moral contrast between hierarchical order and revolutionary chaos. He questions Callender's motivation for coming to America, the strategy previously used against Priestley, and mocks his decision to critique Britain from America: "Let me then ask; what could induce him to come all the way from Edinborough to Philadelphia to make an attack upon poor old England?" (69). In a sarcastic tone, Cobbett dismisses Callender's complaints as irrelevant to Americans: "what, could induce him to imagine, that the citizens of the United States were … interested in the affair?" What are his adventures in Scotland, and his "narrow escape," to *us*, who live on this side of the Atlantic?" (69; emphasis added). By mocking Callender's exile, Cobbett discredits him as a foreign agitator, whose writings hold no weight in America. He further undermines Callender's influence by likening him to an insignificant, powerless dog: "In Great Britain, indeed, his barking might answer some purpose; there he has near the object of his fury; but here he is like a cur howling at the Moon" (70). Callender had likened revolutionary pamphleteers to soldiers bravely fighting on the battlefield, describing them as forming the "forlorn hope on the skirts of battle." Cobbett, however, twists this analogy to undermine Callender's status and suggests that, in fact, "[e]very one knows, that the forlorn hope, or enfans perdus, was, amongst the ancient Gauls, composed of the outcasts of society" (70). By redefining Callender's metaphor, Cobbett reduces him to nothing more than a social outcast rather than a revolutionary hero. In mocking Callender's exile and questioning his authority to speak on American affairs, Cobbett once again adopts the guise of a native citizen, a rhetorical strategy that reflects the transnational formation of his political voice. Cobbett's defense of British values within an American political context exemplifies what Paul Giles describes as identity shaped through "reciprocal attractions and repulsions" between opposing national systems. His political stance develops not from national loyalty alone, but from the tension shaped by transatlantic contrast.

After this personal attack on Callender, Cobbett shifts his focus to the broader pro-revolutionary movement, exposing its hypocrisy and inherent violence. Revolutionary forces often justify their attacks on monarchy by claiming they fight for liberty, yet Cobbett turns this logic against them: "*Our* democrats are continually crying shame on the satellites of Royalty, for carrying on a Crusade against Liberty; when the fact is, the satellites of Liberty are carrying on a Crusade against Royalty" (Cobbet 2016b: 76; emphasis added). Cobbett continues to disguise himself as an American ("our democrats"), this time turning the attack on "his" folks. He highlights the paradox of revolution—while revolutionaries condemn monarchs as oppressors, they themselves engage in the same kind of aggressive actions. His inversion of revolutionary logic, that

self-proclaimed liberators become oppressors, underscores his belief that revolutionaries merely replace one form of tyranny with another.

After shifting the target to American pro-revolutionaries, Cobbett points out their ingratitude, reminding them that France's monarchy had played a key role in securing American independence:

> Who is not sensible, that to those efforts America owes her independence? Every one is sensible of it; and it is for this reason, that all parties join in celebrating the 6th of February, the anniversary of the conclusion of the Treaty of Alliance between Louis XVI and the United States. (Cobbett 2016b: 79)

By highlighting the hypocrisy of celebrating Louis XVI's execution, Cobbett condemns the Democrats for their lack of historical awareness and their disregard for past alliances. He then intensifies his argument by exposing the aim of revolutionary forces— not merely reform, but the total overthrow of government: "No body can doubt, that the scheme of the Democrats was, by means like these, to deaden the limbs of Government, and then seize the reins themselves" (Cobbett 2016b: 82). Cobbett warns that revolutions are never truly for the people, arguing that once revolutionary leaders seize power, they will discard their supporters: "When you get your carcases bastinadoed, or, which is far worse, penned up within the walls of a jail, they will scoff at you, as the devil ever does at a baffled sinner" (82). This vivid imagery of betrayal serves as a warning to revolutionaries— they may believe they are fighting for a just cause, but once they are imprisoned, their leaders will abandon them with nothing but mockery.

To drive home his point, Cobbett distances the Democrats from the American people, equating their political stance with a general opposition to all forms of government: "Thus then, I think, nobody will deny, that a hatred of the British Government and that of the United States go hand in hand" (Cobbett 2016b: 88). He condemns the revolutionary ideology, portraying it as a war against order itself: "It is not the form of a government, it is not the manner of its administration; it is the thing itself, they are at war with, and that they must be eternally at war with; for, government implies order, and anarchy cannot exist under it" (88-89). For Cobbett, the revolutionaries are not fighting for a better government, but for anarchy, not for the welfare of the people, but for their desire to seize power and destabilize order. By portraying the revolutionaries as adversaries to government itself, Cobbett reasserts residual cultural values of stability, hierarchy, and institutional legitimacy that reflect the ideological foundations of the British Empire and resists the emergent radicalism taking shape on both sides of the Atlantic.

"A Little Plain English" (1795)

In his proposals for the new edition of *Porcupine's Works*, Cobbett reflects on his stance when writing these works:

> I have endeavoured to assist, disapprove of me as an advocate for the British nation and the British monarchy…. I have ever made the cause of America my own cause; that I have watched her enemies with as much vigilance, pursued them with as much eagerness, and punished them with as much severity, as if they had been my own personal enemies. (1799: 6)

Although Cobbett does not explicitly state why he fought the enemies of America the way he fought those of Britain, it is clear that the hostility towards the two "foreigners," Priestley and Callender, his association of them with the Revolutionary France, and his warning to Americans suggest a broader ideological strategy. His writings seek to reinforce residual cultural values shared by Britain and the Federalists, including reverence for institutional order and suspicion of revolutionary ideology.

Although the United States declared independence in 1776 and successfully won the war against Britain in 1783, tensions between the two nations persisted into the 1790s. Among the most pressing issues were Britain's continued military presence in the Northwest Territory, where it supported Native American resistance against American expansion, and its restrictions on American trade, particularly with France. When war erupted between Britain and France in 1793, the United States found itself caught between the two colonial powers, each seeking to gain American support against the other. To address these issues, President George Washington dispatched Chief Justice John Jay to negotiate with Britain. The result, the Jay Treaty, was signed in 1794 and approved by the American Congress in 1795. Britain agreed to vacate its forts in the Northwest and to expand U.S.-British trade relations, particularly in the Caribbean. However, the treaty failed to fully resolve key economic disputes and, by granting Britain "Most Favored Nation" status while requiring the U.S. to pay pre-war debts, it sparked outrage among the Democratic-Republicans and further strained relations with France. This discontent found expression in *The Letters of Franklin*, a series of writings that fiercely criticized the treaty. In response, William Cobbett issued "A Little Plain English, Addressed to the People of the United States of America" (1795) to defend the treaty and refute its criticism.

Unlike his earlier pamphlets, in which he adopts the rhetorical guise of an American citizen, Cobbett openly identifies Peter Porcupine as an Englishman in the preface to "A Little Plain English." This partial self-revelation marks a

shift in strategy that places him more explicitly within a transatlantic context. When presenting himself as American, Cobbett embeds British values within American political discourse, allowing him to support Federalist interests from within. In contrast, identifying as British while continuing to address American readers highlights a position shaped not by national allegiance but by ideological difference. This strategy reflects the structure of transatlantic discourse, where political identity emerges through shifting positions between cultures. His continued use of a pseudonym, withholding his real name, further underscores the constructed nature of his public persona and allows him to speak both as a participant in and a critic of American politics. In contrast to his earlier pamphlets, which targeted Jacobins and Democrats through the voices of foreigners, Cobbett now directly engages with American Democratic-Republicans. He portrays them as misguided in their hostility toward Britain and accuses them of blind allegiance to France.

Cobbett opens his argument by highlighting the treaty's economic benefits, expressing confusion over Democratic-Republicans' opposition:

> A treaty of amity, commerce, and navigation, with Great Britain, is a thing which has been so long and so ardently desired on your part … that one cannot help being astonished that even the democratic, or French, faction should have the temerity to raise a cry against it, now it is brought so near a conclusion. (2016c: 159)

Since the treaty had long been sought to ease tensions between the two nations, expand trade partnerships, and promote cooperation on the seas, Cobbett argues that its rejection was driven by ideological bias rather than sound reasoning. He asserts that Democratic-Republicans, whom he derisively calls "this faction," are not only "contemptible," but also manipulative in stirring up opposition. Cobbett accuses their leaders of inciting "the mob"— a group that he suggests lacks critical reasoning skills ("simple enough") and is easily swayed by demagogues (159). He further argues that these demagogues seek to stir jealousy, envy, and resentment in their followers, using emotional manipulation to turn public opinion against the treaty and the government. One such demagogue is the author of *The Letters of Franklin*.

After discrediting *The Letters of Franklin* and labeling its author a demagogue, Cobbett proceeds to refute its main arguments, which claim that a commercial treaty with Britain was unnecessary and dangerous. Cobbett first underscores the mutual economic benefits of the treaty. He points out that the two nations "have sought an intercourse with each other, and that they do now seek that intercourse more than ever, is most certain." After the treaty was signed, he continues, "about one half of [the U.S.'s] exports are now made to Great

Britain and her dominions" (Cobbett 2016c: 161). By highlighting America' reliance on British markets, Cobbett argues that strengthening trade relations with Britain was both logical and beneficial. He criticizes the notion that America could afford to alienate Britain without significant economic consequences.

One of *The Letters of Franklin*'s key arguments against the treaty was that it would anger France and increase the likelihood of war. Cobbett dismisses this fear as unfounded, asserting that the treaty was designed "under consideration" to resolve disputes "in an amicable manner," and to "establish universal peace and true friendship between the parties" (2016c: 163).[3] Attempting to distance the U.S. from France, he warns that allowing France to dictate American foreign policy would be a true betrayal of national sovereignty:

> If you must be so cautious in your *demeanour* towards the French Republic, if you dare treat with no nation against whom *she feels* an implacable hatred …. I can see no reason for apprehensions on account of your independence, for you are no more than mere colonies of France. (169-170; original emphasis)

Cobbett warns that blind allegiance to France would threaten rather than preserve America's independence.

Contrary to the claim that the treaty would make America subservient to Britain, Cobbett argues that economic interdependence would prevent Britain from threatening U.S. sovereignty: "You have the surest of all guarantees that Great Britain will never attempt anything against your independence— her *interest*" (2016c: 167; original emphasis). He explains that Britain's economic interest in maintaining stable trade relations with the United States serves as a stronger safeguard against conflict, dismissing Franklin's argument that America would be "again becoming colonies of Great Britain" (167).

Cobbett further challenges the argument that France was a more trustworthy ally than Britain. He highlights France's aggressive actions against American interests, for example: "Within the last five or six months the French have seized upwards of 200 of your vessels... Many of these vessels have been seized in their own ports, where they went in full confidence, and with the most upright intentions" (2016c: 173). By pointing out France's disregard for American sovereignty, Cobbett exposes the hypocrisy of those who attacked Britain while ignoring French transgressions. He asserts that the exaggerated outcry over British military actions (the British Navy confiscated American ships trading with France) intentionally ignores France's even greater offenses.

Through "A Little Plain English," Cobbett delivers a forceful defense of the Jay Treaty, exposing the ideological contradictions of its critics. He dismantles *The Letters of Franklin*, demonstrating the importance and necessity of the treaty

for economic stability, refuting fears of war with France, and illustrating Britain's role as a safer and more rational trade partner. By challenging the blind allegiance of Democratic-Republicans to France, Cobbett makes a compelling argument that American independence would be better secured through diplomacy with Britain rather than antagonism driven by revolutionary fervor.

In his *History of the American Jacobins* (1796), Cobbett characterizes the Jacobin infiltration of America: "When the Jacobins of Paris sent forth their missionaries of insurrection and anarchy, their professed object was to enlighten the ignorant and unchain the enslaved. There was something preposterous in the idea of Frenchmen giving liberty to the world" (1796: 1). Seeing the French Revolution as a threat to stability and order, Cobbett positioned himself as a defender of both Britain and America. As an exile, he took on the role of a self-appointed guardian, committed to protecting America from "insurrection and anarchy." Across the three pamphlets discussed above, Cobbett employed a range of rhetorical strategies, including character assassination (targeting Priestley and Callender personally), moral condemnation (portraying them as immoral or opportunistic), association with revolutionary violence (linking them to the bloodshed of the French Revolution), and fearmongering (warning that their ideas would lead to another revolution in America). His goal was not simply to critique individuals but to safeguard America's alignment with Britain, ensuring that Federalist policies remained dominant.

Cobbett's early American writings construct a political identity rooted in residual British cultural values while responding to an American political context. His polemics against figures like Priestley and Callender consistently defend monarchy and institutional authority in opposition to revolutionary ideology. Cobbett's rhetorical stance reflects what David Armitage describes as the ideological foundations of the British Empire: "Protestant, commercial, maritime and free" (8). Armitage's conception of empire clarifies the structure of Cobbett's transatlantic conservatism. In "Observations on the Emigration of Dr. Joseph Priestley," Cobbett invokes the religious and moral dimensions of this vision, portraying Priestley as a theological and political threat to Anglo-American order. "A Bone to Gnaw for the Democrats" affirms British political stability by denouncing French republicanism, while "A Little Plain English" draws on commercial benefits and diplomatic prudence of the Jay Treaty to present Britain as a stabilizing partner and to depict its Republican critics as misguided in their allegiance to French revolutionary politics. These pamphlets, read through Armitage's lens, articulate a broader imperial ideology concerned with restoring stability and authority in the wake of transatlantic revolution. While consistently advocating for British principles, Cobbett positions himself between British conservatism and American Federalism, constructing a voice shaped by ideological tension across the Atlantic.

America as an Alternative to Britain

COBBETT'S later writings, composed after his return to Britain in 1800, mark a significant transformation in his political outlook. Whereas his early American pamphlets defended monarchy and imperial order by drawing on residual cultural values in America, his later texts exhibit a growing engagement with emergent forms of political consciousness in Britain. By depicting the suffering brought about by the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of capitalism, he delineates a working class distinct from the aristocracy, echoing E. P. Thompson's view that "class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences …, feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs" (9). By drawing on American politics to contrast and challenge the domestic inequalities of British governance, his later writings again exemplify the relational construction of political identity across national boundaries.

After the suspension of Habeas Corpus in March 1817, Cobbett feared being accused of high treason due to his anti-government stance. The popularity of his *Political Register*, a weekly newspaper he founded in 1802 that supported parliamentary reform during wartime, had been a thorn in the side of the British government.[4] Based on his prior experience of incarceration for treasonous libel (for his criticizing the flogging at Ely of local militiamen) in 1810, he decided to leave England for America. He stayed there for two years, returning to England in 1819, following the Peterloo Massacre.

This second American exile differed from his first in many ways. First, while he fled to America in 1792 to escape retribution from the British military officers, his 1817 exile was to avoid direct oppression by the government, making it a political exile. Secondly, during his first exile, he lived in Pennsylvania, the U.S. capital at the time, and actively engaged in American politics, addressing both American and British readers. This time, however, he settled on Long Island, worked as a farmer, and continued publishing his *Political Register*, but exclusively for British readers. Finally, his political views had drastically changed: in 1792-1800, he had been a conservative loyalist defending the British monarchy, but by 1817, he had become a radical reformist advocating for the laboring class. In his writings about America, he now focused on admiring the opportunities it provided, rather than criticizing its politics. Regarding Cobbett's state of mind, G. D. H. Cole comments that "[e]xile sharpened Cobbett's feeling— always abundantly strong— that there was no place like home. His praises of America were genuine enough; but their main object was to further the cause of Reform in England (226). It should be added that Cobbett's admiration for America was incorporated into his parliamentary reformist discourse. America became an

example and a counterpoint to Britain's status quo, not only in terms of political structures and economic opportunities but also as part of a transatlantic configuration of political identity, in which Cobbett's reformist vision was shaped by ideological interplay across national boundaries.

A Year's Residence in the United States of America (1819)

As he continued his "two-penny trash," a nickname Cobbett used for his newspaper *Political Register*,[5] he wrote and published *A Year's Residence in the United States of America* in 1819, a travelogue blending descriptions of America with social critiques of Britain. The book covers a wide range of topics, including agriculture, government and legal systems, and prospects for British emigrants seeking opportunities in America. In the preface, Cobbett contrasts his work with other travelogues on America. Some, he claims, were written to emphasize British superiority ("for the effect of ignorance" and "the effect of insolence" [1819a: ii]), while others idealized America ("painted the country as a perfect paradise" [ii]). He insists that his own account is based on personal experience rather than exaggeration. With a clear target audience, this three-part pamphlet was written for "persons intending to come to this country" (iii), particularly farmers. Unlike British farmers, whom Cobbett describes as "poor dependent wretch," American farmers "depend on nobody but *himself* and on his own proper means" (iii). In America, they could live sufficiently, free from government exploitation.[6] This superiority over Britain might, Cobbett acknowledges, "induce farmers to leave England for America" (viii). However, he denies any intention to encourage emigration, stating that his heart and mind remain in England, where he hopes to "assist in the restoration of her [Britain's] freedom and happiness" (viii).

Cobbett's call for Britain's "restoration of her freedom and happiness" reveals his continued advocacy for parliament reform. This rhetorical move signals Cobbett's ideological shift from defending residual culture in America to embracing emergent democratic ideals in Britain. One of Britain's major electoral issues was the unequal representation in the parliament. Industrial cities such as Birmingham and Manchester lacked parliamentary representation, while rotten boroughs, districts with few voters but with the ability to elect MPs, retained political influence. In some constituencies, aristocrats controlled small electorates, effectively selling parliamentary seats to the wealthy ("boroughmongers"). In addition, voting rights were restricted by property ownership, meaning working-class men and industrial workers had no political representation. By contrasting suffrage and electoral systems, Cobbett invokes emergent political models that seek to displace inherited privilege with broader representation.

In Chapter XIV of *A Year's Residence*, Cobbett subtly incorporates his political advocacies into his introduction to U.S. government, law, and religion, constructing a parallel between Britain and America. He contrasts the British parliamentary elections, which were held every seven years, with the annual elections for the House of Representatives in most U.S. states. In some states, he notes, even the three branches of government— the governor, senate, and representatives— are elected "ANNUALLY" (1819b: 389). This, he argues, demonstrates that political power is truly in the hands of the people, in contrast to British reformers, who were fighting for control over just "*one* branch out of the three" (392). Regarding voting rights ("suffrage" [391]), Cobbett highlights that American suffrage laws were widely inclusive, excluding only those proven to be of "bad moral character," such as individuals convicted of "bribery" or "forgery" (391-392). Adopting a sarcastic tone, he remarks that if Britain disqualified people for bribery, "what a nest of villains it would exclude in England!" (392). Because representatives in America were chosen through a fair electoral system, he concludes, Americans had succeeded in establishing "the *steadiest* community in the whole world" (392). He further asserts that with this system, "[t]he right of suffrage … guard[s] the people against any general and long-existing abuse of power," since those who do not govern well will not be re-elected (395).

In early 19th-century England, the laboring class was heavily burdened by wartime taxes and national debt, which demanded increased taxation from the working class. In contrast, Cobbett argues that in America, because there was no additional tax directly imposed on individuals, the revenue was insufficient "to satisfy the maw of *a single sinecure place-man* in England" (1819: 393). Despite having limited tax income, America was still able to sustain its government, because it did not support the "sinecure placemen and place women, grantees, [or] pensioners without services" in Britain, a group that "swallows the earnings of two or three thousand men each" (395). Additionally, he criticizes the British Church as the "fourth branch of the government" (395), which further extracted tithes from the working class. Cobbett contrasts British taxation, which extended to basic necessities such as salt, candles, and soap (411), with American taxes, which were mainly composed of custom duties on imported goods (408). He condemns Britain's system of taxation and governance: "England … is now disgraced and enslaved: it is trodden down by these tyrants, and we must free it" (410). As James Grande observes, Cobbett's American writings reflect a transatlantic political vision, particularly in their focus on the cultivated Atlantic states. Grande suggests that Cobbett's portrayal of America offers British emigrants a vision of a "displaced model of rural England, under more benign political conditions" (2014: 110). This portrayal suggests that transatlantic identities often take shape through ideological comparison, with America rendered as both reflection and critique of the British system.

Cobbett rejects negative portrayals of Americans found in some travelogues, which depicted them as "wicked, disorderly, criminal" (1819: 420). Instead, he claims the opposite is true: "They are the most orderly, sensible, and least criminal people in the whole world. A common labouring man has the feelings of a man of honour; he never thinks of violating the laws; he crawls to nobody; he will call every man *Sir*, but he will call no man *master*" (420). This enthusiastic praise for Americans, however, contradicts Cobbett's earlier private correspondence. In 1794, he wrote to Rachel Smither, stating that: "The people [in America] are … [a] cheating, sly, roguish gang …. The natives are by nature, idle, and seek to live by cheating" (Grande et al. 2013: 156-157). This contradiction suggests that Cobbett's idealized image of America was strategically constructed to serve his broader political agenda. His romanticized depiction of American society aligns with his argument for parliamentary reform in Britain, reinforcing his call for "the restoration of her [British] freedom and happiness." By depicting America as a land of opportunity, Cobbett sought to pressure the British government into addressing social inequality and political oppression, using America not as an ideal, but as a powerful rhetorical counterpoint.

*The Emigrant's Guide (*1829)

As if it were a spin-off of *A Year's Residence*, *The Emigrant's Guide* (1829) is a guidebook Cobbett published after returning to Britain, offering detailed information about emigration to America in the form of ten letters. It provides practical advice on whether to emigrate, where to go, how to prepare, and what to expect in the United States. However, beneath this seemingly objective guidance, Cobbett's discontent with the British political system and economic policies is evident.

In the first letter, Cobbett explains his motivation for writing the guidebook, reiterating his claim from *A Year's Residence* that he does not intend to persuade English people to leave their country. However, he argues that eleven years have passed (*A Year's Residence* was written in 1818 and published in 1819), yet "no change for the better" has occurred; instead, "things have gradually become worse and worse" (1829: 6). Given these worsening conditions, he insists that it is his duty to share his personal experiences with those considering emigration (6). As domestic conditions deteriorated, Cobbett claims that only the privileged could escape ruin— those who had "a share of the taxes." Meanwhile, for "the labouring classes," "hunger, and rags, and filth, are now become their uniform and inevitable lot" (7). According to Cobbett, the British working class could never escape poverty under a system of aristocratic land ownership and government policies that

favored the privileged. Consequently, he actively encourages the working class to emigrate, presenting America as their last refuge.

Contrasting Britain's bleak economic conditions, Cobbett portrays America as a land of opportunity where a better life is possible. His description of America in *The Emigrant's Guide* echoes themes from *A Year's Residence*:

> There is no other country where there is any room for numerous strangers; and, besides all these, there is no other country where the people have to pay so small a portion of taxes, and where kind and generous neighbours are to be found in abundance. To all these advantages add that of perfect civil and political liberty; and that, as to religion, the *law* knows nothing at all about it. (1829: 39)

America was a better destination for emigrates than Canada or Australia, because it is a vast country capable of absorbing large numbers of immigrants, has no heavy taxation, and provides civil and political liberty. Additionally, Cobbett emphasizes the fertility of American land: "[f]lour, beef, pork, and even fresh meat, are brought into these countries [the British colonies] from the United States: even *green peas* and many other vegetables are carried from the United States" (41). With these advantages, Cobbett concludes: "no sensible man will hesitate for a moment between that country and the United States," a nation where "[the] land is equally abundant," "the products are fine and of infinite variety." America is a country where "with a moderate portion of labour and care, every man may do well (41-42).

Cobbett presents land ownership as the key to economic independence. In *A Year's Residence*, he emphasizes universal suffrage, but in *The Emigrant's Guide*, he shifts his focus to the availability of land. Although he does not explicitly connect these two themes, it is clear that land ownership leads to political rights. For Cobbett, the ability to own land in America provides economic security and political rights, reinforcing his broader critique of Britain's aristocratic control over land and political power.

The Rural Rides (1822)

On October 30, 1821, during a journey to Berghclere, near Newbury, Cobbett recorded the fog he saw on the way from London to Newbury, which reminded him of "the fogs that sweep off the new settlers in the American Woods" and brought back memories of Pennsylvania:

> I remember a valley in Pennsylvania, in a part called *Wysihicken*. In looking from a hill, over this valley, early in the morning, in November,

> it presented one of the most beautiful sights that my eyes ever beheld. It was a sea bordered with beautifully formed trees of endless variety of colours. (2024: 1)

This Burkean description of beauty, variety in harmony, extends to another image in Cobbett's writing, where "the setting sun send[s] his horizontal beams through all the variety of reds and yellows of the branches of the trees in Long Island" (1). These scenes of Pennsylvania and Long Island from memory, however, are not merely aesthetic recollections— they carry a political undertone, evoking variety and harmony in governance as well. Through these natural landscapes, Cobbett implicitly compares Britain and America's political and economic systems, using the physical environment to reflect broader ideological contrasts. In *Rural Rides*, Cobbett documents many examples of the British countryside suffering under government policies. One such example appears in an entry from October 22, 1826, during his tour of Hambledon, Hampshire, where he emphasizes the deep connection between landscape and people's livelihoods. Before leaving Waltham Chase, a village in Hampshire, he criticizes the impact of the enclosure system, lamenting:

> I cannot quit Waltham Chase without observing, that I heard, last year, that a Bill was about to be petitioned for, to enclose that Chase! Never was so monstrous a proposition in this world …. If the Chase be enclosed, the timber must be cut down, young and old (2024: 382).

Cobbett argues that enclosure did not simply change the landscape by cutting down trees and fencing off land; it also destroyed homes and displaced communities. Once the Bill for Enclosure was passed, it led to "the sweeping away of two or three hundred cottages," "plunging into ruin and misery all these numerous families" (382). He denounces this action as being "for no earthly purpose but that of gratifying the stupid greediness of those who think that they must gain, if they add to the breadth of their private fields" (382). Through his comparison of British and American landscapes, Cobbett suggests that America represents economic and political freedom, whereas Britain is plagued by aristocratic greed and economic oppression. Therefore, His landscape descriptions serve as more than travel observations— they become another form of transatlantic discourse, reinforcing his broader critique of and resistance to British governance by drawing on American politics as an ideal for emergent structures and cultural forms.

Conclusion

INITIALLY skeptical of Jacobin influence in America, Cobbett gradually came to appreciate its universal suffrage and economic opportunities, particularly after witnessing the oppression and exploitation of the British laboring class. Throughout his career, he strategically contrasted Britain and America to express his political views. In his early works, he contrasts Britain's monarchy with what he perceived as American political instability, reinforcing a residual attachment to Britain in America. In his later writings, he contrasts America's economic independence and political freedom with Britain's economic injustice and lack of representation. These oppositions form the basis of two distinct transatlantic discourses: an anti-Jacobin discourse grounded in British conservatism and imperial loyalty, and a reformist discourse shaped by emergent democratic ideals.

Cobbett's writings on America circulated across national boundaries and influenced political developments on both sides of the Atlantic. His early works supported Federalist interests in the United States, contributing to debates over revolutionary ideology and foreign allegiance prior to Jefferson's election in 1800. His later writings helped shape the discourse around parliamentary reform in Britain, contributing to the passage of the Reform Act of 1832 and anticipating the demands of the Chartist movement. As Paul Giles argues, transatlantic political identity emerges through a relational structure of ideological contrast and exchange. Cobbett's writings exemplify this framework by engaging Britain and America not as fixed opposites, but as points of reference in a shifting dialogue. Through the act of comparing and repositioning political values across national boundaries, Cobbett reveals the limitations of both systems. The transatlantic perspective thus becomes a critical lens through which he questions authority, redefines allegiance, and contributes to broader debates about governance, representation, and reform.

Notes

1. At the age of twenty, Cobbett joined the British Army in 1783, serving for nine years. After being discharged in 1791, his disclosure of corruption in the army led to legal trouble and the threat of imprisonment. As a result, he fled to the United States in 1792. Two years after returning to Britain, in 1802, he began his weekly newspaper, the *Political Register*, initially adopting a conservative and pro-establishment stance. However, due to government policies during the war, such as the national debt and wartime taxation, he gradually changed his

political stance, making the newspaper increasingly radical and aligned with the lower classes. By 1816, his growing reputation made him a significant threat in the eyes of the government. Facing another libel charge, he left Britain for the United States in 1817, returning in 1819.

2. Raymond Williams defines dominant culture as "the effective" and "hegemonic" system of meanings and values that shapes and controls the present (121). The residual refers to cultural elements "effectively formed in the past, but … still active in the cultural process" (122), while the emergent consists of "new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship [that] are continually being created," some of which are "substantially alternative or oppositional to [the dominant]" (123-124).
3. The Jay Treaty ultimately led to the Quasi-War between the United States and France (1798-1800).
4. Cobbett's growing reputation in 1816 was demonstrated by the weekly circulation of 40,000 copies of the *Political Register*, attracting readers from both the upper and lower classes. As social discontent escalated to its highest level after the war, Cobbett's influence became a threat to the government.
5. The term "two-penny trash" originated from the Stamp Act of 1815, which was intended to increase newspaper prices, preventing the lower classes from accessing anti-government news. To circumvent the tax, Cobbett removed news reports from the *Political Register*, reducing it to a pamphlet format focused on commentary, thus avoiding newspaper taxation. This allowed him to sell it at a reduced price of two pence, making it affordable for laborers.
6. The suffering of the laboring class can be traced to the introduction and enforcement of the enclosure system in the 18th century. This system converted common land and open fields into large-scale private estates owned exclusively by landlords. Under the Enclosure Acts (1604-1914), landlords fenced off land previously shared by villagers for farming, grazing, and foraging. While landlords profited from this policy, rural communities lost their traditional land rights, and smallholders struggled to compete against large landowners. Furthermore, with the rise of capitalist agricultural systems, demand for long-term laborers declined, leading to unstable employment and lower wages for rural workers.

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從費城到長島

威廉· 科貝特的美國書寫

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摘　要

威廉・科貝特(William Cobbett)以其在英國議會改革上的激進立場而聞名。他曾於一七九二年至一八〇〇年居住在美國（賓夕法尼亞州），並於一八一七年至一八一九年再次移居美國（長島）。與大多數在戰爭時期改變立場的英國「變節者」不同的是，科貝特的政治轉變從保守走向激進，而這個轉變也體現在這兩個時期的著作之中。在他第一次旅居美國期間，科貝特使用「豪豬彼得」(Peter Porcupine)這個筆名出版了多本小冊子，如〈關於約瑟夫・普里斯特里博士移民的觀察〉(“Observations on the Emigration of Dr. Joseph Priestley”)、〈給民主黨人的一塊骨頭〉(“A Bone to Gnaw for the Democrats”)和〈一點簡單英語〉(“A Little Plain English”)。在這些著作中，他猛烈抨擊美國的親法派人士，包括約瑟夫・普里斯特里(Joseph Priestley)、詹姆斯・湯姆森・卡倫德(James Thomson Callender)以及民主共和黨人，將他們視為企圖破壞美國政府的雅各賓派。科貝特自視為英國的捍衛者，同時也是保護美國免受法國大革命影響的屏障。他的這些小冊子構成了一種植根於英國保守主義和留存文化的跨大西洋反雅各賓論述。在他第二次旅居美國的期間，科貝特轉變為激進改革派，與新興的民主理念相合，譴責英國政府的腐敗。他所撰寫的兩本旅行見聞《在美國的一年生活》(*A Year’s Residence in the United States of America*)與《移民指南》(*The Emigrant’s Guide*)將美國描繪成一個政治與經濟自由的國家。英國和美國作為相互的對比參照，形塑成為一個跨大西洋的意識形態對比架構。如同保羅・賈爾斯(Paul Giles)所論，政治認同是由國族體系之間的相互對立與映照所形成。科貝特在這兩個時期的著作皆促成了這樣的關聯性，藉此尋求跨大西洋的政經替代模式。

關鍵詞：威廉・科貝特、美國書寫、跨大西洋論述、反雅各賓主義、國會改革