The Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville is a collection of critical interpretive essays by internationally renowned scholars of the work of Alexis de Tocqueville. The essays cover Tocqueville’s principal themes – liberty, equality, democracy, despotism, civil society, religion – and his major texts (Democracy in America, Recollections, Old Regime and the Revolution, and other important reports, speeches, and letters).

The authors analyze both Tocqueville’s contributions as a theorist of modern democracy and his craft as a writer. Collections of secondary work on Tocqueville have generally fallen into camps, either bringing together only scholars from one point of view or discipline or dealing with only one major text.

This Companion crosses national, ideological, disciplinary, and textual boundaries to bring together the best in recent Tocqueville scholarship. The essays not only introduce Tocqueville’s major themes and texts but also put forward provocative arguments intended to advance the field of Tocqueville studies.

Cheryl B. Welch received her M.A. and Ph.D. from Columbia University. She is the author of Liberty and Utility: The French Idéologues and the Transformation of Liberalism and De Tocqueville and editor, with Murray Milgate, of Critical Issues in Social Thought. She has also written numerous articles in journals such as the American Political Science Review, Political Theory, History of Political Thought, and History of European Ideas. She has received research grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Mellon Foundation, and she has been a Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute, at Harvard Law School, and at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at the Kennedy School of Government.
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I am happy to acknowledge the friends and colleagues who have nurtured The Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville and sustained me along the way. My first debt is to the Tocqueville scholars published here – their professionalism and responsiveness made the task of assembling the volume a pleasure. Particular thanks for advice about essay assignments and the editorial process are due to Seymour Drescher, Françoise Mélonio, Mel Richter, Jim Schleifer, Dana Villa, and Olivier Zunz.

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TEXTS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

TOCQUEVILLE’S MAJOR WORKS

AR                      L’ancien régime et la révolution
DAI                     De la démocratie en Amérique (1835)
DAII                    De la démocratie en Amérique (1840)
S                       Souvenirs

FRENCH EDITIONS OF TOCQUEVILLE’S WORKS


xvi  Texts and Abbreviations


TA  Tocqueville Archives.

TA [Beinecke]  Tocqueville Archives for Democracy in America at Yale University’s Beinecke Library.

MAJOR ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS


Texts and Abbreviations  xvii

DAI or DAI [trans. Mansfield and Winthrop]  

DAI or DAI [trans. Reeve-Bowen-Bradley]  

S [trans. Lawrence]  

**SELECTED ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF OTHER WORKS**

*Journey to America* [trans. Lawrence]  

*Journey in Ireland* [trans. Larkin]  

*Journeys to E and I* [trans. Lawrence]  

*Memoir on Pauperism* [trans. Drescher]  
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CHRONOLOGY

1805  Alexis Charles-Henri Clérel de Tocqueville is born in Paris on July 29, the third son of Hervé and Louise-Madeleine de Tocqueville.

1805–13  Tocqueville is tutored by Abbé Christian Lesueur, a conservative priest with Jansenist leaning who had been Hervé de Tocqueville’s tutor.

1820  Tocqueville joins his father in Metz and enters the Lycée.

1824–26  Tocqueville studies Roman law, the Napoleonic civil code, civil and criminal procedure, and criminal law, receiving his degree in 1826.

1827  In April, Tocqueville is appointed a juge auditeur [apprentice judge] at the tribunal in Versailles.

1828  Tocqueville moves into an apartment in Versailles with Gustave de Beaumont, a lawyer at the tribunal of Versailles. During the year, he meets and falls in love with Mary (“Marie”) Mottley, an English woman of middle-class origin.

1829  Tocqueville attends, along with Beaumont, the course on the history of French civilization taught at the Sorbonne by François Guizot, whose lectures he finds “extraordinary.” (Guizot was a leader of the...
A liberal opposition to the Bourbons, as well as one of the most influential historians of the nineteenth century. Along with the political philosopher and famous orator Pierre-Paul Royer-Collard, Guizot was a major figure in the “Doctrinaires,” a group of political thinkers who had reconciled the liberal principles of the Revolution of 1789 with the legitimacy of the monarch.

Tocqueville closely follows the French expedition against Algiers.

Protests against the July ordinances in Paris lead to three days of street fighting (“les trois glorieuses”) from July 27 to July 29.

Tocqueville takes the oath of loyalty required of public officials on August 16 and repeats it in October, chilling relations with some members of his pro-Bourbon family.

In October, he and Beaumont petition the minister of the interior to send them to the United States to study the American penitentiary system.

On April 2, 1831, they sail from Le Havre on an American ship, and on May 9 they land at Newport, Rhode Island. Tocqueville and Beaumont remain in America for nine months. They travel to New York City, upstate New York, the Great Lakes, Canada, New England, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. By steamboat, they traverse the Ohio and the Mississippi to New Orleans, by chance witnessing the removal of the Choctaw to Arkansas. From New Orleans they travel by stagecoach across Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina, to Norfolk, Virginia, where they again take a boat to Washington, DC. Returning to New York by way of Philadelphia, they embark for Le Havre on February 20.
1833

Du système pénitentiaire aux États-Unis et de son application en France, their joint report on prisons written mostly by Beaumont, appears in January. (An American edition, translated and edited by Francis Lieber, is published in Philadelphia later in the year.) In August, Tocqueville travels to England to witness what he describes as “the last performance of a beautiful play” as English society moves away from aristocratic dominance.

In September, Tocqueville returns to Paris to work on his book on America.

1835

Volume One of De la démocratie en Amérique is published in Paris on January 23.

Beaumont publishes Marie ou l’esclavage aux États-Unis, tableau de moeurs américaines, a novel about the doomed love affair of a French immigrant and a white American woman with a distant mulatto ancestor.

Tocqueville writes Mémoire sur le paupérisme, an essay published later in the year by the Academic Society of Cherbourg.

In March, Tocqueville meets Henry Reeve, a young Englishman who agrees, after some hesitation, to translate De la démocratie en Amérique. [Democracy in America is published in England later in the year, an American edition of the Reeve translation, edited by John Canfield Spencer, is published in 1838.]

Tocqueville and Beaumont travel to London. Tocqueville meets again with Nassau Senior, Lord Radnor, and Henry Reeve; is introduced to the Whig politicians Lord Lansdowne and Lord Brougham; and begins a friendship with John Stuart Mill, who is one year his junior. In late June, he and Beaumont leave London and visit Coventry,
Birmingham, Manchester, and Liverpool, investigating the growth of industrialization and urban poverty, before traveling to Ireland in early July.

On October 26, he marries Marie Mottley. As a commoner and a foreigner, and a woman nine years older than her husband, Marie is never fully accepted by the Tocqueville family, although she has formally abjured Protestantism and fervently embraced Catholicism.

1836

After his mother’s death, Tocqueville is given the château de Tocqueville, uninhabited since the Revolution, and also the title of Comte, which he will never use. With the château he also receives land that will provide most of his income.

At the request of John Stuart Mill, Tocqueville writes *L’État social et politique de la France avant et après 1789*, his first study of the Old Regime.

1837

Tocqueville publishes two unsigned letters on Algeria in the newspaper *La Presse de Seine-et-Oise*, June 23 and August 22, expressing the hope that French colonists will be able to coexist peacefully with the Arabs in Algeria.

He runs for election to the Chamber of Deputies, but on November 4 loses in the second round of voting.

1838

Tocqueville is elected to the Académie des sciences morales et politiques on January 6.

1839

On March 2, Tocqueville takes his seat in the Chamber of Deputies as deputy for Valognes.

He gives his first major speech on foreign affairs on July 2, outlining the diverging interests of France, Russia, and Great Britain in the Middle East.

On July 23, he submits a report to the Chamber on slavery in the French colonies of Martinique,
Guadeloupe, French Guiana, and the Isle of Bourbon (Réunion), calling for the immediate emancipation of all slaves, the payment of an indemnity to the slave owners, and a state-guaranteed wage for the freedmen during a transitional period.

1840

The second volume of *De la démocratie en Amérique* is published by Gosselin on April 20. [A translation by Reeve appears in London simultaneously, and is published in New York with a preface by Spencer later in the year.]

1841

Tocqueville travels to Algeria with his brother Hippolyte and friend Gustave de Beaumont.

1842

In his inaugural speech at the Académie Française, Tocqueville denounces Napoleonic legend. On July 9, he is reelected to the Chamber.

1843

In January, Tocqueville publishes in *Le Siècle* six unsigned letters in which he accuses “unprincipled” politicians of killing liberty while speaking in its name. Tocqueville has increasingly come to see Guizot as the leader of a centralizing, manipulative, and corrupt ministry and believes former prime minister Thiers to be equally unscrupulous.

From October to December, Tocqueville publishes another series of six unsigned articles in *Le Siècle* calling for slave emancipation in the French colonies.

During the fall, he works on a study of British rule in India begun in 1840 (it is never finished).

1844

During a debate in the Chamber over state control of Catholic secondary education, Tocqueville defends the independence of Church schools. Tocqueville joins with a group of friends in buying *Le Commerce* and establishing it on July 24 as an independent
opposition newspaper. In June 1845, Tocqueville ends his involvement with the failing paper.

1846

During a debate in the Chamber in June, Tocqueville criticizes Bugeaud and the Guizot ministry for failing to effectively promote agrarian colonization in Algeria. He easily wins reelection to the Chamber on August 1. In October, he makes a second trip to Algeria, this time accompanied by his wife Marie.

1847

In the winter session of the Chamber, Tocqueville and a few parliamentary friends fail in their attempt to create a “young left” party of “the really honest men” with a program to end corruption and reduce the burden of taxation on the poor. Tocqueville submits two reports on Algeria to the Chamber in late May criticizing the failure of the government to establish effective political, legal, and administrative institutions in the colony.

1848

In a speech to the Chamber on January 27, Tocqueville warns of growing popular discontent.

After the government prohibits a political banquet, demonstrations begin in Paris on February 22 that quickly turn into a popular revolution. The Second Republic is proclaimed at the Hôtel de Ville on the evening of February 24. On March 5, elections are called for a Constituent Assembly to be chosen by universal male suffrage, and Tocqueville becomes a successful candidate in his department of the Manche. The Constituent Assembly meets on May 4 with moderate republicans in the majority.

Tocqueville, Beaumont, and sixteen other members are elected from May 17 to 19 to serve on a commission charged with drafting a new constitution. In the constitutional commission, Tocqueville cites American examples and proposes creating a bicameral legislature in order to strengthen the
power of local elites, but the commission rejects bicameralism, as well as his repeated attempts to lessen its plans for centralized rule.

Tocqueville supports Cavaignac in the presidential campaign, while Thiers backs Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, whom he describes as “this imbecile we will manipulate.” On December 10, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte is elected with 74 percent of the vote.

1849

On May 13, Tocqueville is elected to the Legislative Assembly.

On June 2, Tocqueville is appointed minister of foreign affairs in a cabinet presided over by Odilon Barrot. Tocqueville’s major diplomatic challenge is the restoration to temporal power of Pope Pius IX, who had been forced to flee Rome in 1848 by the republican coalition led by Giuseppe Mazzini. In Europe, Tocqueville seeks to support moderate republican regimes throughout the continent while maintaining friendly relations with the reactionary powers of Prussia, Austria, and Russia.

Tocqueville serves as minister of foreign affairs for only five months. On October 31, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte dismisses the entire cabinet and replaces them with subservient ministers.

1850

In March, Tocqueville is seriously ill, showing symptoms of tuberculosis.

During the summer in Normandy, he begins writing *Souvenirs*, his memoir of the 1848 revolution (published posthumously in 1893).

In December, the Tocquevilles, seeking a warm climate, rent a house in Sorrento in southern Italy. He continues working on *Souvenirs* and begins conceptualizing a major book on the French Revolution.
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<th>Events</th>
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<td>1851</td>
<td>In September, he writes the third part of <em>Souvenirs</em> in Versailles. Prohibited by the constitution from seeking a second term, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte stages a military coup d'état on December 2. Tocqueville is arrested, along with more than 200 protesting members of the Assembly, and is held in jail until December 4.</td>
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<td>1852</td>
<td>Tocqueville resigns from the Conseil général de la Manche to avoid having to swear allegiance to the new regime and retires from political life. On December 2, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte becomes Napoleon III as the Second Empire is proclaimed.</td>
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<td>1853</td>
<td>With his health failing, Tocqueville settles in the Loire Valley, and in nearby Tours he reads the files of the royal administration of the province of Touraine.</td>
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<td>1854</td>
<td>Tocqueville decides to devote a full volume to the causes of the Revolution. After learning German, he goes with Marie to Bonn in June to research feudalism in Germany.</td>
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<td>1858</td>
<td>Tocqueville goes to Paris in April planning to do extensive research in the libraries for a second</td>
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volume on the unfolding of the Revolution and the creation of the Empire. By the middle of May, he falls ill.

1859  John Stuart Mill sends Tocqueville a copy of his *On Liberty*. After a brief remission in February, Tocqueville continues to decline as his tuberculosis worsens. Marie convinces her husband to confess and receive Holy Communion, but it is not known whether he recovers his faith. Tocqueville dies on the evening of April 16.
