

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

This collection of chapters is an invaluable companion for understanding the composition, reception, and contemporary legacy of Alexis de Tocqueville's classic work *Democracy in America*. Chapters by political theorists, intellectual historians, economists, political scientists, and community organizers explore the major intellectual influences on Tocqueville's thought, the book's reception in its own day and by subsequent political thinkers, and its enduring relevance for some of today's most pressing issues. Chapters tackle Tocqueville's insights into liberal democracy, civil society and civic engagement, social reform, religion and politics, free markets, constitutional interpretation, the history of slavery and race relations, gender, literature, and foreign policy. The many ways in which Tocqueville's ideas have been taken up – sometimes at cross-purposes – by subsequent thinkers and political actors around the world are also examined. This volume demonstrates the enduring global significance of one of the most perceptive accounts ever written about American democracy and the future prospects for self-government.

RICHARD BOYD is Associate Professor in the Department of Government at Georgetown University.

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Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-18981-2 — The Cambridge Companion to Democracy in America
Edited by Richard Boyd
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The Cambridge Companion to
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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
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103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107189812
DOI: 10.1017/9781316995761

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First published 2022

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-107-18981-2 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-316-63943-6 Paperback

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Wollstonecraft, Burke, and Rousseau on the Transformation of the Family (2006); *Wollstonecraft, Mill, and Women's Human Rights* (2016); *Mary Shelley and the Rights of the Child: Political Philosophy in Frankenstein* (2017); and *Artificial Life after Frankenstein* (2020). She is also an editor of several academic volumes and scholarly editions, including *Feminist Interpretations of Alexis de Tocqueville* (coedited with Jill Locke for Penn State University Press's Feminist Interpretations series, 2009).

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978-1-107-18981-2 — The Cambridge Companion to Democracy in America
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Culture of Markets (2012); *Community Revival in the Wake of Disaster: Lessons in Local Entrepreneurship* (2015, with Stefanie Haeffele-Balch and Laura E. Grube); and *Do Markets Corrupt Our Morals?* (2019, with Ginny Seung Choi).

Acknowledgments

Collaborative projects rely on the generosity of many people, and this is an imperfect reckoning of all those who so kindly lent their assistance along the way. Thanks especially to fellow contributors for their professionalism and patience as the book came together. Insofar as this volume inspires future generations of scholars, students, and citizens, it is a tribute to their outstanding scholarship.

I am grateful to Robert Dreesen of Cambridge University Press, who first conceived the idea for a series Companion on Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. His confidence made the book possible. Linsey Hague, Mathivathini Mareesan, Claire Sissen, and Erika Walsh at Cambridge University Press were all a pleasure to work with during copyediting and production. It was both an invaluable resource and at moments a daunting challenge to have as a model Cheryl Welch's superb *Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville*. While the present volume differs greatly in scope and organization, that predecessor guided its composition in many ways.

Early versions of several chapters were first presented at Georgetown University under the auspices of the Tocqueville Forum for Political Understanding, and I would like to thank panelists, attendees, Associate Director Thomas Kerch, and the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation for organizing those events and stimulating conversations about Tocqueville's relevance. More generally, I am appreciative of colleagues, current and former PhD students, and undergraduates who have made the Government Department at Georgetown such a congenial place for teaching and studying political theory.

Ewa Atanassow, Richard Avramenko, Joshua Cherniss, Aurelian Craiutu, Gianna Englert, Steven Grosby, Christine Dunn

xvi ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Henderson, and Joshua Mitchell all kindly commented on drafts in progress or discussed topics of general concern. My own contributions – not to mention the book as a whole – are immeasurably better for their incisive feedback and suggestions.

The project benefited from the able research assistance of Nicholas Barden, who caught a myriad of typos, standardized all the translations and references, and compiled the References list. All remaining errors and oversights are mine alone, of course.

Many close friends and loved ones offered personal encouragement throughout this process, and for their friendship I am eternally grateful. To my children, Liliane and Louis, I dedicate this volume with love.

Chronology

1805

July 29, 1805 Alexis Charles-Henri Clérel de Tocqueville is born in Paris, the third son of Hervé and Louise-Madeleine de Tocqueville. Elder siblings Hippolyte and Édouard were born in 1797 and 1800, respectively. Several immediate members of this old and distinguished Norman family were killed during the Reign of Terror, with Tocqueville's mother and father imprisoned and barely escaping the guillotine.

1820–1821

During his childhood Tocqueville is tutored by Abbé Christian Lesueur, a conservative Jansenist priest, until being summoned by his father to Metz in the French Lorraine in 1820. There he reads the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment, reportedly loses his religious faith, and enrolls in the *lycée* in 1821.

1824–1827

Tocqueville studies law at the University of Paris, receives his degree in 1826, and in 1827 is appointed *juge auditeur* (apprentice judge) in Versailles.

1828

Tocqueville meets his wife-to-be, Mary ("Marie") Mottley, an Englishwoman of middle-class background and six years his elder of whom his Catholic aristocratic family disapproves.

1829–1830

Attends lectures at the Sorbonne by François Guizot on the history of civilization in France and Europe. Later during his visit to the United

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States Tocqueville writes to a friend asking that volumes of Guizot be sent to help him understand and analyze American society.

1830

In July the Restoration monarchy of Charles X collapses in the face of popular protests against his illiberal ordinances. This marks the end of the reign of the Bourbon kings whose rule had been reestablished as a constitutional monarchy by the Charter of 1814 and gives rise to the July or “bourgeois” Monarchy led by Louis-Phillipe, Duke of Orléans. At least in part because of their political discomfort serving under this new regime, Tocqueville and his friend Gustave de Beaumont contrive a visit to America, ostensibly to study the US penitentiary system.

1831–1832

Tocqueville and Beaumont set sail from Le Havre, France on April 2, 1831 bound for Newport, Rhode Island, arriving in the United States on May 9. This launches their nine-month journey throughout the United States. Starting in New York City they head west through upstate New York, Ohio, Michigan, and north into Canada before returning to Boston in September. After touring various cities on the East Coast and mid-Atlantic, in November the two head southwest from Philadelphia by stagecoach and steamboat down to New Orleans. They arrive in January and spend just a few days in the city before turning back northeastward to Philadelphia and New York, by way of Washington, DC. While in the US capital the two have a brief interview with President Andrew Jackson in late January. They depart New York City for Le Havre on February 20, 1832 and are back in Paris by at least early April.

1832

Publication of Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (London, 1832).

1833

Publication of Gustave de Beaumont and Alexis de Tocqueville, *Du Système pénitentiaire aux États-Unis et de son application en France, suivi d'un appendice sur les colonies pénales et de notes statistique* (Paris, 1833).

1835

First volume of *De la démocratie en Amérique* published by Charles Gosselin in Paris on January 23, 1835. First print run of 500 copies instantly sells out, and numerous printings follow over the next few years.

Publication of Gustave de Beaumont, *Marie, ou l'esclavage aux États-Unis: Tableau de mœurs américaines* (Paris, 1835).

Henry Reeve undertakes the first English-language translation of the 1835 *Démocratie*, which is published in England later in 1835 with a revised version following shortly thereafter in 1836.

Marriage to Marie Mottley on October 26 during a trip to England, where he also visits the industrial cities of Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester.

John Stuart Mill reviews the first *Democracy* in the October 1835 *London Review*.

Publication of Tocqueville's essay *Mémoire sur le paupérisme*.

1836

Publication of Michel Chevalier, *Lettres sur l'Amérique du Nord* (Paris, 1836).

At the request of John Stuart Mill, Tocqueville publishes *L'État social et politique de la France avant et après 1789* in the *London and Westminster Review*.

1837

Publication of Édouard Alletz, *De la démocratie nouvelle, ou Des mœurs et de la puissance des classes moyenne en France* (Paris, 1837).

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Tocqueville narrowly loses his first campaign for election to the Chamber of Deputies.

1838

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

First American edition of Henry Reeve's English translation of *Democracy in America* is published in the United States.

1839

After his first failed effort Tocqueville is successful in his second campaign to win a seat in the Chamber of Deputies representing the commune of Valognes in the Manche region of Normandy.

1840

Second volume of *Démocratie* is published in 1840 by Gosselin on April 20, but this time with a disappointing reception.

John Stuart Mill reviews both volumes as well as the Reeve translation in the October 1840 issue of the *Edinburgh Review*.

1841

Tocqueville travels with Beaumont and his brother Hippolyte to Algeria where he investigates the prospects for colonization, contracts dysentery, and writes a lengthy essay *Travail sur l'Algérie* that remains unpublished until 1962.

Tocqueville is elected to the *Académie Française* in December.

1843

Tocqueville increasingly opposes the actions of François Guizot, Adolphe Thiers, and other leaders of the July Monarchy as scheming and "unprincipled."

1844

Tocqueville is one of several investors in the journal *Le Commerce*, which he envisions as a vehicle for centrist liberal opposition. The journal shortly fails and he loses his entire investment.

1847

In the face of rising popular discontent Tocqueville cautiously supports modest electoral reforms against steadfast resistance by Guizot and Louis-Phillipe.

1848

The February Revolution overturns the July Monarchy of Louis-Phillipe and gives rise to the elected government of the Second Republic.

Tocqueville and Beaumont are part of a committee tasked with drafting a new constitution.

In June the provisional government closes down the public workshops established in March to support the working classes. During the “June Days” of the 23–26, mobs of angry workers engage in a violent insurrection throughout Paris with thousands killed. Tocqueville is in the midst of these events, supports their suppression by force, and his firsthand account of this tumultuous period and retrospective of the July Monarchy form the basis of his *Souvenirs*.

In December Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte is elected President of the Second Republic.

1849

Tocqueville appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs under Louis-Napoleon but serves only five months before the entire cabinet is dismissed and replaced by Bonaparte.

1850

Tocqueville begins writing the *Souvenirs*, which was first published posthumously in 1893.

He begins to conceive of a book on the French Revolution that will eventually become the *Ancien Régime*.

1851

Coup d'état staged by Louis-Napoleon, who shortly thereafter becomes Napoleon III under the Second Empire, which he declares in December 1852.

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1852

Tocqueville resigns from political life to avoid swearing an oath of loyalty to the new regime.

1853

After moving to the Loire Valley for health reasons Tocqueville begins archival research that will form the basis for the *Ancien Régime*.

1856

Publication of the *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* on June 16 in Paris by Michel Lévy. The book is widely heralded as another masterpiece.

The Old Regime and the Revolution translated by Henry Reeve is simultaneously published in London.

1859

Publication of John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (London, 1859).

After several years of declining health, Tocqueville passes away from tuberculosis on April 16, 1859 in Cannes, where he had moved with Marie in the hope that the climate would cure his terminal illness.

He is buried in the ancestral church cemetery in the village of Tocqueville.

Organizational scheme and certain basic historical information loosely adapted from the more detailed chronologies of Cheryl Welch (*Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville*, ed. Cheryl Welch [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], xix–xxvii) and Olivier Zunz (*Democracy in America*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer [New York: Modern Library of America, 2004], 878–906); as well as biographical details from André Jardin, *Tocqueville: A Biography* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1988); Lucien Jaume, *Tocqueville: Aristocratic Sources of Liberty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); Hugh Brogan, *Alexis de*

Tocqueville: A Life (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).
Publication information of contemporaneous travelogues derives
from René Rémond's comprehensive catalogue of annual
publications of French works on the United States (Rémond, *Les
États-Unis devant l'opinion française, 1815–1852*, 2 vols. [Paris:
Colin, 1962], 873–97).

Abbreviations of Tocqueville's Major Works

English Editions

- AR. *The Ancien Régime and the French Revolution*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge University Press, 2011. Citations are by book, chapter, and page numbers: e.g., AR I.2, 17–18.
- DIA (G). *Democracy in America*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. New York: Library of America, 2004. Cited by volume, part, chapter, and page numbers: e.g., DIA (G) I.2.vii, 290.
- DIA (L). *Democracy in America*. Translated by George Lawrence. Edited by J. P. Mayer. New York: Harper, 1961. Cited by volume, part, chapter, and page numbers: e.g., DIA (L) I.1.iv, 97.
- DIA (MW). *Democracy in America*. Translated and edited by Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. Cited by volume, part, chapter, and page numbers: e.g., DIA (MW) I.2.iii, 174–175.
- DIA (N). *Democracy in America*. Critical bilingual edition. Translated by James T. Schleifer, 4 vols. Edited by Eduardo Nolla. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2009. The pagination is identical to the English edition published in 2 volumes by Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2012. Citations are by page number: e.g., DIA (N) 1265.

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Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-18981-2 — The Cambridge Companion to Democracy in America
Edited by Richard Boyd
Frontmatter
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