



Tocqueville's Discovery of America

Leo Damrosch

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Alexis de Tocqueville is more quoted than read; commentators across the political spectrum invoke him as an oracle who defined America and its democracy for all times. But in fact his masterpiece, *Democracy in America*, was the product of a young man's open-minded experience of America at a time of rapid change. In *Tocqueville's Discovery of America*, the prizewinning biographer Leo Damrosch retraces Tocqueville's nine-month journey through the young nation in 1831–1832, illuminating how his enduring ideas were born of imaginative interchange with America and Americans, and painting a vivid picture of Jacksonian America.

Damrosch shows that Tocqueville found much to admire in the dynamism of American society and in its egalitarian ideals. But he was offended by the ethos of grasping materialism and was convinced that the institution of slavery was bound to give rise to a tragic civil war.

Drawing on documents and letters that have never before appeared in English, as well as on a wide range of scholarship, *Tocqueville's Discovery of America* brings the man, his ideas, and his world to startling life.

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