

As editor of the *Journal of American History*, author of a number of books on nineteenth-century America, and professor of history at Vanderbilt University, Lewis Perry has been a leading historian of United States intellectual life for more than two decades. Now, in this highly original look at American culture in the decades between the War of 1812 and the Civil War, he paints a vivid portrait of our tumultuous society as it veered toward modernity. *Boats Against the Current* provides a fascinating account of how American culture emerged from the sheltered, elitist world of the eighteenth century into the dynamic, turbulent civilization that reached full bloom after the Civil War. The antebellum years were times of flux and change, years of a society rushing into the western wilds, muscular and ambitious, yet haunted by uncertainty about its future and its past. Perry begins with a fresh look at Andrew Jackson--who personally linked the revolutionary period to the era that bears his name--vividly recreating a time when Americans, feeling their ties to the past disintegrating, fostered a new fascination with history. Then Perry introduces us to the observations of such articulate foreign travelers as Alexis de Tocqueville and Fredrika Bremer. He deftly weaves together these writers perspectives to provide a fascinating look at our emergent nation. Here, too, are the women of the cities and frontier, the peddlers, preachers, and showmen, along with such writers as Hawthorne, Emerson, Whittier, and Parker. Perry brings these personalities and writings together to show us how early nineteenth century America saw itself, in both its promise and its fears. Gracefully written and filled with fresh insights, *Boats Against the Current* offers a brilliant portrait of a society in the midst of change, expansion, and reflection about its own future and past. Written by one of our leading intellectual historians, it makes a major contribution to our understanding of the emergence of modern American culture.

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