

Laura Janara, *Democracy Growing Up: Authority, Autonomy and Passion in Tocqueville's Democracy in America* (State University of New York Press: New York, 2002), x + 256 pp., \$25.95, ISBN 07914 5442 8 (pbk.).

Is there anything left to be said about *Democracy in America*? Laura Janara's *Democracy Growing Up* shows that there is. Its theme, the human passions and how they shape and are shaped by the political order, has by no means been exhausted by previous scholars. This Canadian author's attention to detail is nicely indicated by her tacit rebuke of Tocqueville's readers, if not Tocqueville himself: the subject of his book and of her own is 'US democracy', not 'American' democracy. For the most part, her readings of Tocqueville's text are fair, if not always as original as she claims. As she proceeds, she makes us acutely aware of his use of analogy and metaphor and of how his style reflects and reveals the substance of thought. In her interpretation of this substance, she gets many big points right. She correctly reminds us that for Tocqueville, '*mores*' are decisive for democracy's prospects. In keeping with this observation, she focuses on women and family, not political institutions. And she always has in mind his goal in writing: to make democracy worthy of our attachment to it.

Janara's chief concern seems to be demonstrating that her way of reading *Democracy* brings to light aspects of the book that would otherwise be missed. This reading is guided especially by mid-twentieth century object-relations psychoanalytical theory. According to the theory, human passion and behaviour are decisively affected by whether or not children have been reared in a maternally dominated environment, where growing up means turning first to a father to escape maternal control, then attempting to assert one's independence *vis-à-vis* both parents. For Janara's Tocqueville, this dynamic structures not only the lives of the individuals he describes, but democracy itself as a political form. Other scholars have recognized that Tocqueville gives the traditional family, which women influence but do not rule, the task of moderating democratic excesses. But her Tocqueville conceives of democracy itself as emerging from a maternal upbringing. Democratic men struggle to realize its principles of freedom and equality, attempting to shed the forms of mother aristocracy and to avoid new tyrannical excesses of republican 'manliness', all the while relying on the essential, albeit subordinate, contributions of women. Yet reliance on the traditional family as democracy's 'foundation', she argues, in fact precludes the maturation of all citizens. So here is the cause of the failure of Tocqueville's enterprise in theory as well as practice.

Janara relies on a plausible, though curious reading of the second chapter of *Democracy*, 'On the Point of Departure and Its Importance for the Future of the Anglo-Americans'. This chapter, Tocqueville announces, contains 'the seed of what is to follow and the key to almost the whole work'. In it, he

analogizes that each nation was once like an infant 'in the arms of his mother'. The circumstances of a nation's 'birth', and the ways of feeling and acting that it unconsciously develops early on, make intelligible aspects of its character that could not be accounted for by looking simply at its consciously articulated principles and laws. Most readers understand Tocqueville to be calling attention to the peculiarities of America's point of departure in contrast to those of other democracies, especially post-Revolutionary France. Janara, however, takes him to mean that the key to the work is not so much the *content* of America's colonial period as the fact that every nation has had such a beginning. So she notes, but does not make thematic, America's uniquely 'marvellous' combination of 'the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom'.

Janara may leave some unconvinced. She is right to take an analogy seriously, if not to treat it as an identity. Tocqueville does say that a *man* should be seen as once having been a babe in his mother's arms. When referring to England, he often uses the feminine *patrie* (a most implausible feminine noun), and consequently the phrase *la mere patrie*, where he could conceivably use a masculine or otherwise less suggestive feminine term. Does he therefore consciously or unconsciously intend to mark the feminine character of democracy's forebear? As Janara herself notes, it might make more sense to think of aristocracy, with its rigid patriarchal forms, as a father- rather than a mother-figure. And, *pace* Janara, Tocqueville would not confuse *noblesse oblige* with maternal instinct. The same doubt might be raised about other terms featured in the analysis: 'Equality' and 'liberty' may be feminine nouns and the 'charms' of the one and the 'sublime pleasures' of the other may arouse the passions of democratic men. But sometimes a gendered noun is just a gendered noun, not an object of sexual desire. If so, perhaps modern democracy's difficulties can be appreciated without feminist sensibilities, and an argument that only new familial and gender arrangements would ameliorate these difficulties must be made on other grounds.

Tocqueville, in the aftermath of the socialist Revolution of 1848, wondered whether the seemingly necessary institutions of modern society (in that instance, property rights) were not in fact mere conventions, which could be replaced. In *Democracy*, he concedes that the structure of the family is subject to political variation. So he might well have been willing to engage in the consideration of alternatives to the bourgeois family that Janara's work is intended to promote. But her book is exceedingly repetitious, quotation-laden and insufficiently probing. She notes that 'the human pleasure in enterprise and inventiveness and the desire for mastery' 'intersects' or 'combines' with passions shaped in childhood (p. 24). Then can and should it not be analysed without the exclusive lens of gender issues? Similarly, is the human inclination to religion merely psychosexual, or is it one that no alternative gender arrangements could substantially alter? In addition, how, precisely and concretely, would democratic theories that did not take for granted the

female-dominated family or binary sex-gender identities be more likely to produce and sustain more mature democratic citizens?

Finally, more needs to be said about the goal Janara claims Tocqueville shares with her: a world in which ‘mature’ democrats ‘act well amid flux’ (p. 70). Perhaps by ‘flux’ she means just change and uncertainty — for which Tocqueville allowed. But ‘flux’ (not Tocqueville’s term) suggests an inexorable flow of possibilities, devoid of human meaning. Tocqueville emphatically denied that human beings could live and act well with a belief in such a reality, even if true. Why else would he have so admired the Americans’ combination of liberty and religion? Janara, Tocqueville might have surmised, exhibits democracy’s characteristic error — excessive confidence in the power of each individual’s capacity for ‘indefinite perfectibility’, or what she calls ‘maturity’. One is left to wonder whether Janara takes either passion or authority as seriously as she does autonomy.

Delba Winthrop
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

New Essays on Fichte’s Later Jena Wissenschaftslehre, ed. **Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore** (Northwestern University Press: Evanston, IL, 2002), xviii + 360 pp., £60.50/\$89.95, ISBN 0 8101 1864 5 (boards); £24.99/\$29.95, ISBN 0 8101 1865 3 (pbk.).

Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, ed. **Jane Kneller** (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2003), xlii + 197 pp., £40.00, ISBN 0 521 64353 8 (boards); £15.99, ISBN 0 521 64392 9 (pbk.).

The *New Essays* are useful contributions to Fichte studies, some by well-established authorities, all from North American and German institutions. Critical, concise and well-documented, they investigate how Fichte’s ideas developed from his 1794 *Grundelage* to his *Rechtslehre*, *Sittenlehre*, and his later *Wissenschaftslehre* and are based on two recently-discovered student manuscripts (translated and published as *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy (1796–9)* by Daniel Breazeale).

The main discussion concerns the development of Fichte’s efforts to ground the theoretical in the practical reason. He felt it necessary to explain the subject’s finite-infinite drive for knowledge and its practical obligation to operate within the legal and moral world consistent with the ethical demand. Through introducing his ‘new natural’ method, knowledge and action were