

Stefan Jonsson, *Crowds and Democracy: The Idea and Image of the Masses from Revolution to Fascism* (New York: Columbia University Press 2013). 312 s.

The Weimar period was not only an era of the masses but, above all, an era of intellectual and artistic fascination with them. Stefan Jonsson has presented us with an intellectual history of often angst-ridden representations of the masses ranging from Gustave Le Bon's *Psychologie des Foules* to fascism and beyond. The author's great strength is his breadth, seldom found even among historians of ideas. He freely moves between the fields of cinematography (e.g. Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*), fine arts, theatre and literature studies as well as *fin de siècle*, Weimar and contemporary (mostly post-structural) social and psychological theory. In all these areas he is able to provide equally revealing and intriguing interpretations of novels, works of art and architecture, social thinkers and concrete historical predicaments without overburdening his text with jargon or long theoretical discussions. Jonsson instead writes in a conceptually stringent and clearly stated prose – his essayistic background (e.g. *Världen i vitögat, Tre revolutioner*) is the safeguard for the brilliance of his style – while his immense erudition shines through.

Hence, in the interwar era – just as today, for that matter – masses constituted a political rem(a)inder: on the one hand, they were a residual or excessive form of political subjectivity which no political order could contain or fully represent. On the other hand, their occasional presence in the moments of political disruption was a reminder of the violent and popular foundations of every social order. It was only through art, theatre, and photography that the masses could be expressed or represented (also for themselves), though not always in an emancipatory manner.

As a result, Jonsson is able to show that optics, inasmuch as it is a subdiscipline of physics, belongs to the core repertoire of political aesthetics. Who is made (in)visible in the political field of vision; who is framed and how; at what distance do the dominant operate when representing the dominated; who deserves to be shown with his individual face and who is part of the amorphous mob all become fundamental questions of both democracy and the depiction of society.

*Crowds & Democracy* reveals a very strong affinity with Jonsson's dissertation, *Subject without Nation* (2000). It was here that Jonsson argued that Ulrich – Robert Musil's main protagonist – should be seen as a new type of subjectivity of limitless possibilities emergent in modernity rather than simply as a *Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (with no moral spine or humanistic core). According to Georg Simmel and Sigmund Freud, modern masses and city life offered new forms of individuation inasmuch as they shattered the

old myth of the Cartesian, self-contained subject. We therefore find the same insistence on potentiality and an ineradicable polyvalence of collective subjects in *Crowds & Democracy*, although Jonsson now puts far more stress on their political implications.

The historical balance of this book is perhaps debatable. As its subtitle indicates, the book's main historical span roughly translates to 1918/19–1933. It is therefore surprising how little space is devoted to the images of masses which appeared in the wake of German defeat in WWI. Jonsson convincingly shows how and why the attack on the Viennese *Justizpalast* in July of 1927 became formative for a whole generation of Austrian interwar intellectuals such as Elias Canetti (fundamental *Masse und Macht*), Heimito v. Doderer and Karl Kraus. He also thoroughly and fascinatingly reconstructs the way the revolting masses of July 1927 were represented in both right-wing and socialistic press in Vienna and Berlin at the time. But the prolonged and at least equally dramatic German experience of 1918/19 (apart from Herman Broch's *Die Schlafwandler* and Ernst Tollers's *Masse Mensch*) does not receive equal coverage, especially at press level. After all, from January to May of 1919 the worker and military masses and councils were already confronted with semi-organized masses of the returning front soldiers (*Freikorps*). In 1930s, the memory of the Berlin revolutionary crowd from November 1918 were to constitute an equally important element in the radical right's mythology, if *à rebours*.

The second imbalance regards the question whose imaginings are reconstructed here. These renditions of the masses were, generally speaking, produced by bourgeois intelligentsia – mainly liberal, left-wing and conservative. Such focus is fully justified since it had the greatest impact on the public discourse in the Weimar era. But without diving into the radical right's visions of masses as strictly ordered and submissive blocs (apart from Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph des Willens* and several writings by Ernst Jünger), it is difficult to explicate why the latter became dominant and popular enough in the mid-1930s that they erased the revolutionary potential of the masses from the earlier period. Explaining historical change in this regard is certainly not Jonsson's primary ambition, but it would be fascinating to see his framework applied to a greater extent to the products of the Nazi propaganda. In other words, this book could have been expanded analytically with one more chapter; half of it focusing on the very beginning of the Weimar era and the other at its end.

Still, it is nitpicking on a historian's part asking for transformations and causal explanations. What we got is a remarkably rich, accessible and extremely topical historical book (sic!) tracing the centrality and heterogeneity of representations of the masses while asking fundamental questions about

our current political predicament. It is Rancièran politics of aesthetics at its best!

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Henrik Arnstad, *Ålskade fascism: De svartbruna rörelsernas ideologi och historia* (Stockholm: Norstedts 2013). 452 s.

Ett spöke går runt i Europa – fascismens spöke. Från norr till söder, från Sverigedemokrater till Jobbik och Gyllene gryning. Få eller ingen vill kalla sig fascist efter 1945, men fascister är just vad de är. Detta är i huvudsak budskapet i journalisten Henrik Arnstads uppmärksammade bok *Ålskade fascism: De svartbruna rörelsernas ideologi och historia*. Boken är indelad i nio övergripande delar. Historiografi och tillkomst, väg till makten, spridning, förhållande till övriga delar av det ideologiska spektrat, rasismens roll, kvinnosyn och genusaspekter och inte minst dagens "neofascistiska rörelser" bereds plats i genomgången.

Just det sistnämnda – att beslå en ofta välpolerad europeisk högerpopulism med fascistiska ideologiska rötter – framstår som det kanske allra viktigaste för författaren. "Jag har inga problem med att kalla dessa extrema former av efterkrigstida europeisk xenofobi och nationalism för neofascistiska. Åtminstone upptar de samma position på det politiska spektrumet och anfaller samma fiender", skriver han i inledningen till sitt avslutningskapitel. Antifascismen har på goda grunder varit efterkrigseuropas ideologiska underström *par excellence*, och det är lätt att dela Arnstads oro inför ett antal av dessa politiska organisationers framfart. Från en vetenskaplig horisont finns det emellertid ett par problem med framställningen.

Inledningsvis menar Arnstad att ordet fascism kan användas på två skilda sätt; antingen som ett analytiskt begrepp avseende en samling idéer vilka identifieras som "fascistiska", eller som ett pejorativ – ett allmänt skällsord att använda om det man tycker illa om, helt enkelt. Han konstaterar vidare att gränssnittet mellan de båda sätten att använda begreppet är vagt, att även den mest objektivistiskt strävande forskaren av nödtvång är subjektiv och att forskningen därför alltid är mer eller mindre ideologiskt kontaminerad. Även forskaren kan i denna bemärkelse ligga pejorativet nära. Icke desto mindre är författarens ambition analytisk: en idé eller rörelse kan definieras som fascistisk, medan andra inte fyller begreppets fordringar. I själva verket lyckas denna ambition inte alltid särskilt väl. Arnstad återkommer ofta till fascismforskaren Roger Griffin och hans tanke om en generisk, mer