

approaches of Slovak communists to the idea of “national self-determination” from 1918 to the Prague Spring. While discussing intraparty debates about the place of the Slovak nation within the Czechoslovak project, they illustrate broader tensions, fuelled by Stalinist nationality politics, between proletarian internationalism and national emancipation. If the 1950s Stalinist-era campaigns against “bourgeois nationalists” impacted generations of Slovak communists who had advocated for greater Slovak autonomy, the post-Stalinist debates rehabilitated them and created a split between those advancing greater Slovak autonomy and those advocating greater equality within the Czechoslovakist project. In short, these discussions were shaped by ideas about the proper interpretation of Marxism (Benko and Hudek, Doskočil). The final two chapters analyze the return of the “Slovak question” around 1989. While Czech politicians kept referencing the (idealized) “golden age” of interwar Czechoslovakism, Slovak politicians focused on its critique and marginalized notions of Czechoslovakism altogether (Kmeť).

The publication is only partially successful in challenging the “methodological nationalism and national provincialism” of Czech and Slovak historical scholarship (29). While the volume provided an opportunity to foster collaborations across academic communities and brought often nationally separate scholarships into one publication, the almost exclusive focus on Czech-Slovak relations fails to engage broader discussions in the fields of Czechoslovak and East Central European history. The editors of the publication state that they are aware of its absences—deeper discussions of ethnicity and race, or transnational and postcolonial approaches to Czechoslovakism, to name but a few. However, the missed opportunity to engage historiography on racialized and gendered processes of nation-building—intersecting in, to take one of the most obvious examples, Czechoslovak assimilationist policies toward its Roma communities—is keenly felt. In this light, the claim that gender historians are “yet to be found” is entirely unconvincing (18). Relatedly, while the volume’s authors occasionally note Czech-German and Slovak-Hungarian relations, the publication could have been enriched by deeper engagement with minority politics throughout the twentieth century.

This criticism notwithstanding, scholars of Czechoslovak history will find exciting material in the publication. Its periodization allows authors to uncover continuities in the association of Czechness with Czechoslovakism, and continuous Slovak criticism of this association but it also reveals a diversity of conceptions of Czechoslovakism throughout the period that at times intersected or contradicted one another. Also, the very last chapter on Yugoslavism suggests potential for comparative projects. In short, historians have more than a solid springboard for new research projects.

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## Johnson, Stephen. *The Eighth: Mahler and the World in 1910*

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Perhaps once a subject of esoteric interest, Gustav Mahler’s life and work has by now been written about so often that he fits neatly into our understanding of the multiplicity of identities that enriched Central Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mahler too has become a touchstone for mental and cultural instability and so is certainly ripe for exploration by all those who feel unmoored in our modern world. Is this perhaps why his music, his artistic personality strike us as so interesting? After all, just last year this was reinforced by the release of *Tar*, an award-winning film that

held Gustav Mahler's Fifth Symphony as its emotional center, using it to punctuate the mental instability (and even the ghostlike appearances) of Cate Blanchett's lead character and her descent into madness.

These musings—however disjointed—lead us quite well into our review of Stephen Johnson's study of Mahler. In Johnson's intensely personal (indeed, in his introduction he admits to suffering from bipolar disorder and questions whether this may be why he loves Mahler so much) and at times poetic work, the author attempts to answer some of the enigmatic, perhaps even unanswerable questions long posed about Mahler. To do so, he foregrounds Mahler's Eighth Symphony, not only to engage only in its musicological analysis but also to situate it within the main strands of Mahler's thoughts and feelings in the year 1910. It is an exploration that revolves around but is not uniquely based upon a key motif: the *ewige weibliche* (eternal feminine). In so doing, Johnson explores how this concept (and the biographical elements that led to Mahler's fascination with it) drove Mahler's composition of the Eighth Symphony, the other works he created in 1910, and ultimately the way in which Mahler explored his meaning in the world in this critical year, so close to his death only one year later.

And here I must confess: I am no great fan of Mahler's Eighth Symphony. Each and every one of Mahler's other symphonies, his songs, his orchestrations I can appreciate and perhaps even adore. But the Eighth has never "worked," and I'm afraid that this book has done little to change that view. Yes, I completed the book more deeply aware of the musical and extramusical ideas that led to the shape of this work, but I am alas no more compelled to listen to the Eighth than I was before reading Johnson's book.

It is, however, as a cultural historian that I find this book most compelling and that I feel might also draw most of its readers in. True, much of the material Johnson discusses will be familiar to those already conversant with the contours of Mahler's life. Yet the key lies in how he weaves this material together and the unexpected connections he creates. Refreshing and deserving of special note is Johnson's ability to shed new light on what to some must be a tired old subject: Mahler's identity. Especially relevant is the one category Mahler himself may have held as supremely important and is yet overlooked in the famous apocryphal quote about his identity ("I am thrice homeless, as a native of Bohemia in Austria, as an Austrian among Germans, and as a Jew throughout the world. Everywhere an intruder, never welcomed."): Germanness. Here, Johnson positions Mahler's Eighth as the centerpiece of this identity, and his sonic "Gift to the Nation" is understood as its ultimate expression. Johnson even lingers for a considerable time on that other critical piece of Mahler's identity, the composer's Jewishness, cheekily noting that "some of his biographers have tended to play down this important facet of Mahler's sense of self" (147). Most significantly, Johnson playfully jumps back and forth between the discussion of these two critical identities, revelling in the discussion in a manner that many German Jews and perhaps Mahler himself might have appreciated.

My focus on Johnson's discussion of Mahler's identity does not, however, mean that the book has little else to offer. As befitting a work that includes a subtitle referencing the world, Johnson's book also explores the broader world, shedding light on the heart of numerous intellectual, cultural, and political debates, tensions, and rivalries circling at the time. In so doing, Johnson not only reveals the resistance of certain French composers (Debussy, Dukas, and Pierné among them) to Mahler's music but also connects this to a broader discussion of the interplay of Mahler's sonic world and empire. His discussion on the tensions of German political and cultural interplay (not only tensions with other people but also the tension between a crass idea of power and the humanistic tradition) is very well done, allowing us to think anew about Germanness in the period.

The final section of Johnson's book focuses anew on Mahler's world. Yet the focus here is no longer on the Eighth but on the other late compositions (the Ninth Symphony, *Das Lied von der Erde*, and the unfinished Tenth Symphony). Especially interesting is a lengthy discussion that positions the Tenth's completion as "an existential lifeline for Mahler through the Inferno of summer 1910" (276). This return to the personal allows Johnson to enter into a fascinating discussion of Mahler's unusual meeting with Sigmund Freud that is further developed in interesting psychological directions (albeit ones that to some might seem old-fashioned and outdated).

So, yes, the book is not perfect. While his sweeping narrative is certainly rich, one fears that Johnson might at times be speaking only to the reader with the musical wherewithal to follow his close

musicological analyses (indeed, the chapter titled “Approaching the Inexpressible” that fuses music and text is particularly difficult without a recording or score close at hand), while at other moments his more general discussion might be tiresome for the reader already familiar with some of these tales. As such it is difficult to imagine the reader who would remain engaged with the book from start to finish. Ultimately, the book reads like a love letter to Mahler, at once both enthralling and frustrating.

And yet, Stephen Johnson’s latest book presents us with a poetic and beautiful narrative that helps us see Mahler in new ways and simultaneously reminds us of why we fell in love with the composer’s music in the first place. Perhaps I too have over-sentimentalized, but this book—whatever its flaws—enriches our understanding of Mahler. Isn’t that wondrous in itself?

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## **Kochne, Ernst Rudolf. Die unbeabsichtigte Republik: Deutschösterreich 1918–1920**

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In October 1918, the Habsburg monarchy was nearing its military and political collapse. As a consequence, the young emperor Charles invited the individual national groups in the Austrian half of the monarchy to establish national councils. After other nationalities had pressed ahead, the German deputies of the Austrian parliament assembled on 21 October 1918 and initiated the establishment of their new state, thus exceeding the mandate given by the emperor. This revolutionary step was taken in a somber mood, especially among more conservative deputies. Prior to the final disintegration of the monarchy, the Social Democrats supported the creation of a German-Austrian state that would subsequently either unite with other Habsburg successor states in a voluntary confederation or join Germany. At that point, the conservative Christian Socials still hoped for the confederation model. A small independent German-speaking Austria was not among the desired options.

The emerging German-Austrian institutions still coexisted with their imperial counterparts in an indeterminate fashion, whereas corresponding bodies among other nationalities had assumed power more openly. Following the revolution in Germany, the mood began to shift in favor of a republic. On 12 November 1918, the deputies, despite remaining skepticism among individual conservatives, unanimously supported the law that established German-Austria as a democratic republic and simultaneously declared it to be a constituent part of the German republic. The question of the republic’s borders and its relationship to Germany proved to be subject to Allied decision making, however. The ambiguous position of Emperor Charles, who had withdrawn from government but not abdicated, was subsequently resolved by his not completely voluntary departure from Austria.

The Austrian republic defined itself as a new political entity. Foreign Secretary Otto Bauer complained bitterly that the victorious powers had imposed the hated designation Austria upon the new republic and had thus associated it with the defunct empire. Chancellor Karl Renner insisted that all successor states were equally heirs to the Habsburg monarchy, whose political decisions, moreover, had been taken by a small elite and not by the general population of any nationality. The Allies, however, insisted on treating the new republic as the legal successor to their defeated enemy. A particularly contentious issue was the allocation of the former monarchy’s territory and assets. Whereas many border questions ultimately were decided by the victorious Allies, the distribution of assets was usually resolved by negotiations between successor governments.