



## The Salaried Masses: Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany

By *Siegfried Kracauer*

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### **The Salaried Masses: Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany** By Siegfried Kracauer

First published in 1930, Siegfried Kracauer's work was greeted with great acclaim and soon attained the status of a classic. The object of his inquiry was the new class of salaried employees who populated the cities of Weimar Germany.

Spiritually homeless, divorced from all custom and tradition, these white-collar workers sought refuge in entertainment—or the “distraction industries,” as Kracauer put it—but, only three years later, were to flee into the arms of Adolf Hitler. Eschewing the instruments of traditional sociological scholarship, but without collapsing into mere journalistic reportage, Kracauer explores the contradictions of this caste. Drawing on conversations, newspapers, adverts and personal correspondence, he charts the bland horror of the everyday. In the process he succeeds in writing not just a prescient account of the declining days of the Weimar Republic, but also a path-breaking exercise in the sociology of culture which has sharp relevance for today.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Well before the current vogue of cultural studies, Siegfried Kracauer pioneered a method of ethnographic critique that allowed him to reveal his society's deepest secrets by decoding its surface manifestations. Perhaps its most stunning fruit was his classic study of the spiritual and material crisis of Weimar Republic's salaried employees, now happily available in English for the first time. It was this work that earned Kracauer the celebrated sobriquet "a ragpicker at daybreak" from his friend Walter Benjamin, who may have been wrong about the revolutionary day he thought was dawning, but who correctly saw the value in sifting through the remains of the long night that came before and was, alas, to darken still further in the years to come." - Martin Jay

#### Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

Original Language: German

#### About the Author

**Siegfried Kracauer** (1889–1966) was one of Germany's leading cultural commentators and essayists.

**Quintin Hoare** is the director of the Bosnian Institute and has translated numerous works by Sartre, Antonio Gramsci, and other French authors. He lives in the United Kingdom.

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