On January 29, 1931, the feuilleton of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* published the following short text—a rebuttal to antisemitic outbursts at a recent nationalist celebration in Berlin. While the text appeared anonymously, it was likely penned by a noted feuilleton editor, the journalist, philosopher, sociologist, and later film theorist, Siegfried Kracauer. At the time, Kracauer was the *Frankfurter Zeitung* feuilleton’s Berlin correspondent, responsible for covering political and cultural events in the capital. The sarcastic tone of the text also matches the style of Kracauer’s polemics against his intellectual and political opponents, if not also the humor of his novels such as *Georg* (written at the time, published posthumously in 1973). The text reads:

“In ‘Throw out the Jews’

This is what criers, aware of their goals, called out at the Berlin *Reichsgrünungsfeier* (Celebration of the Proclamation of the German Empire Anniversary) at the *Sportpalast*. The German Nationals gathered on this evening their pure Aryan team, [Alfred] Hugenberg and Court Chaplain [Bruno] Doehring spoke, the excitement was great, not a Marxist bacillus was in attendance, not a Roman [e.g., papal], and, of course, not a Jewish. And yet: the assembly was not totally free of Jews (*judenrein*). We all know how they do it: somewhere in the back they push their way in. This time they contaminated the brain of Mr. Doehring. It so happened that, with grand pathos, he proclaimed in the ecstasy of his speech exalting Wilhelm II:
My Emperor then will ride over my grave,
While the swords glitter brightly and rattle;
Then armed to the teeth will I rise from the grave,
For my Emperor hasting to battle!¹

The audience was exuberant. Heine smiled on Mount Olympus. The execrable bacillus had once again done its job and, in this case, infected an entire assembly.”

This brief text, “‘Schmeißt die Juden raus,’” fits into the larger context of Kracauer’s and the Frankfurter Zeitung feuilleton’s cultural-political fight against the rising tides of nationalism, antisemitism, and antidemocratic politics in the Weimar Republic. The text participates in the emergent practice of Kulturpolitik (“cultural politics”) in Germany, which, I argue, took on a specific and more modern meaning in the 1920s and 1930s. Until the early twentieth century, the term cultural politics signified efforts of the state to foster culture (such as religion, the arts, and sciences) as an important branch of domestic politics.² Between the two world wars, however, cultural politics started to refer as well to the use of cultural products by the general public as a means of procuring and exercising political power.³ The Frankfurter Zeitung was itself political, a liberal-democratic newspaper founded by Leopold Sonnemann in the wake of 1848. Kracauer’s essays and editorial work in its feuilleton of the 1930s sought to conduct politics through culture, citing it as “an existential concern” for him as a Jew and Marxist.⁴ His polemics, like “Revolt of the Middle Classes” (1931), diagnose the popularity of the rightwing, völkisch intellectual group the “Action Circle” (Tatkreis) as a result of troublesome economic position of Germany’s middle class. But, as with the anonymous text above, these efforts also included Kracauer’s behind-the-scenes work as an editor who arranged the feuilletons in order to achieve a pedagogical effect. For him, the feuilleton accomplished the most politically when it avoided “general articles” and

³ Meyers Lexikon, ed. 7, vol. 7 (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1927), 306.
⁴ Here I summarize Kracauer’s unpublished correspondence with the Frankfurter Zeitung’s main feuilleton editor, Friedrich T. Gubler, held in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach.
articles that directly addressed political issues (such as National Socialism), because such texts were either too vague or too conspicuous (and, hence, dangerous). Instead, Kracauer promoted a type of analysis that interpreted a concrete cultural object (from new films to the architecture of unemployment offices) in order to render its political consequences legible.

While “‘Schmeißt die Juden raus’” engages directly with rightwing politics, it unfolds a critique of the right through an exposition of the contradictory nature of their celebration for the anniversary of the Proclamation of the German Empire (January 18, 1931). The celebration was thrown by the German National People’s Party—a once competitor of the National Socialists for the conservative vote turned collaborator after 1929 that supported the Hitler government in 1933. As was reported in other outlets of the Jewish press in the German-speaking world, the event included a number of antisemitic outbursts from the crowd.5 These outbursts, as well as the antisemitism of the party platform and members, stood in stark contradiction, as the text shows, to Bruno Doering’s citation of the final verse of Heinrich Heine’s poem “The Grenadiers” (“Die Grenadiere,” 1922) and the crowd’s seeming approval. The phenomenon is well-known from the Nazi period: Heine’s poems (the infamous example being “The Lorelei”) were often republished because of their importance to the German national mythos but as “anonymous” to cover up the fact that it was written by a Jewish poet. By calling attention to this contradiction, the text seeks to conduct politics through culture on two interrelated levels.

The first level is literary, expressed in the biological metaphors of bacteria and contagion that run throughout the piece. These metaphors elevate “‘Schmeißt die Juden raus’” beyond just a simple retelling of the crowd’s antisemitic outbursts and suggest an implicit criticism. It first satirizes the nationalist (and antisemitic) rhetoric of purity by using terms like “free of Jews” and claiming that the event assembled a “pure Arian team” at the Berlin Sportpalast. Second, it takes to the extreme the purity-cleanliness rhetoric and the antisemitic trope of Jewish “infection,” by

5 See “Die Deutschnationalen als Heine-Verehrer” in Jüdische Presszentrale Zürich, nr. 634 (February 13, 1931), 2.
claiming a “Jewish” or “Marxist bacterium” had “pushed its way in” and “contaminated the brain of Mr. Doehring,” causing him to recite the stanza from Heine. Through the exaggeration of the German Nationals’ own terminology, the text is able to depict the absurdity of the antisemitism and völkisch-nationalism of the party’s platform (and the Weimar-era right in general).

The second level of “‘Schmeißt die Juden raus’” is argumentative and relates to the text’s implied criticism: there is a contradiction in the German Nationals’ antisemitism and their use of cultural figures associated with Jewishness. The text implies that either the conversative cultural platform is contradictory (and hence incorrect) or the German Nationals (and, in particular, the crowd) are uncultured and uneducated. The text thus seeks to embarrass the right in the political battle over culture—and questions like who can lay claim to Germany’s literary past—at the end of the Weimar Republic. But it also betrays what we might call a politics of enlightenment that places its faith in the political efficacy of “truth” and the demasking of lies, contradictions, and superstitions in the cultural realm. This politics of enlightenment, based on a belief in the power of reason, characterizes much of Kracauer’s cultural-political work at the Frankfurter Zeitung’s feuilleton and, one could say, it also animates the political discourse over mass media today. As institutions continue to invoke a rhetoric of “truth,” it may be worth discussing the effectiveness of a cultural politics of enlightenment, when it was the contradiction and illusion of the National Socialist propaganda that, at least during the Weimar Republic, ultimately prevailed.

“‘Schmeißt die Juden raus’” also demonstrates the afterlives of feuilleton texts, but not in that it was printed in a book of collected feuilletons. Rather, it was picked up by the JTA (Jewish Telegraphic Agency) and reprinted in Das Jüdische Echo in a report on “Jewishness in the Third Reich” (“Das Judentum im Dritten Reich”) the next month. The report makes the severity of the Nazi’s official antisemitism clear, suggesting that, before Hitler’s rise to power was inevitable, the cultural-political work of the feuilleton was of the utmost importance.

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6 “Das Judentum im Dritten Reich,” in Das Jüdische Echo, nr. 6 (February 6, 1931), 88–89.