
Crushed Illusions

In New York City, as in many other American towns and cities, civic-minded souls carefully sort their recyclables and put them out for curbside collection. What happens next, writes *City Journal's* Roger Starr in the *Public Interest* (Spring 1995), would likely shock the virtuous recycler.

As one member of the two-person sanitation-truck team pulls levers, an immense jaw of steel reaches back over the trough into which one or more blue bags have been deposited, cramming them further into the body of the truck. There, a blade, rising from the bottom inside the truck body, presses the newly acquired bags against the rear face of an immense piston, crushing the bags and gradually forcing the piston to retract toward the inside front of the truck body.

In the process, most of the glass bottles, cans, and jars inside the bags are smashed or shattered. Glass shards and glass dust mix with the plastic containers, foodstuffs, and refuse that some less-conscientious householders forgot to wash out of their discards. Inevitably, the reuse value of the carefully saved containers is compressed with them, until the fragments are subject to a new, costly, and only partially effective process for restoring them to marketability.

When the truck reaches its MRF destination—the initials stand for Municipal Recycling Facil-

ity, in New York City always privately owned and operated—the rear wall of the truck body pivots upward. The piston, by now retracted toward or all the way against the front end of the truck body, is driven rearward, forcing the bags out of the truck into a pile on the floor of the MRF or into a large open-top container that can be lifted and moved by a front-end loader.

The privately owned MRF now gets to work, restoring what the truck mechanism put asunder. The natural question of a householder who discovers that the truck monster casually crushed the fruits of his, or, more likely, her, virtue, is "Why does the Sanitation Department countenance such a destructive operation?" The answer is simple. The cost of operating each truck with a two-person team is fixed, and thus, the larger the load that can be crammed into it, the fewer the loads. With fewer loads there are fewer trucks and crews, consequently, lower total waste-collection costs faced by the city.

health problems." This approach might turn "politically correct science into scientifically correct policy."

From Hackers To Crackers

"Hackers Taking a Byte Out of Computer Crime" by Wade Roush, in *Technology Review* (Apr. 1995), Bldg. W59, MIT, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

During the 1970s and '80s, rebellious young "hackers" found it thrilling to break into corporate and academic computer systems and commit electronic mischief. They formed

clubs with names such as "Masters of Deception" and "Legion of Doom" and reveled in their superiority over the slow-footed "Establishment" whose computer systems they so easily penetrated. A popular 1983 movie, *War Games*, portrayed young hackers as high-IQ superheroes.

Improved security measures and the threat of imprisonment, not to mention advancing age, brought the heyday of relatively innocent hacking to an end. But the volume of computer intrusions is apparently growing, says Roush, a reporter for *Science*. As more and more people have gotten on the Internet, the exclusive appeal of hacking has diminished, but the number of truly malicious hackers—

"crackers," in the jargon—seems to have increased.

The Pittsburgh-based Computer Emergency Response Team—formed in 1988 after an Internet "worm" (a self-replicating program) clogged academic computer systems throughout the nation—received reports of about 130 intrusions in 1990, 800 in 1992, and 2,300 last year. According to a 1992 study, the number of intrusions in U.S. workplace computers more than doubled between 1989 and 1991, from 339,000 to 684,000. In 42 percent of the cases studied, the intruders altered or destroyed data or software, at a cost of \$82 million in 1989 and \$164 million in 1991.

In "the battle for safety and order in the digital realm," Roush says, law enforcement agencies and information security specialists have begun to turn to hackers and ex-hackers for help. At Bolling Air Force Base in Wash-

ington, D.C., for example, investigators asked a young hacker who had pleaded guilty to breaking into a Pentagon computer system to attack as many Air Force systems as he could. Within 15 seconds, he broke into the same Pentagon computer system he had penetrated before, and during the next three weeks, he got into more than 200 Air Force computer systems. The Air Force then tried to patch the holes in its computer security.

"Nervous about exposing themselves to roving data thieves, many corporations are refusing to join their local networks to the Internet," Roush reports, "while others are spending millions installing 'firewalls'—gatekeeping computers that filter out all but a few authorized forms of data exchange." Necessary though they may be, such security measures seem to dim one of the bright promises of the Internet: easy access to information.

ARTS & LETTERS

Slumming with **T. S. Eliot**

"T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide" by David Chinitz, in *PMLA* (Mar. 1995), Modern Language Association, 10 Astor Place, New York, N.Y. 10003-6981.

T. S. Eliot (1888–1965), one of the high priests of literary modernism, is often seen as the fastidious and austere hero of a struggle to defend high art from the masses. Although Eliot in later life was more inclined to assume that role, observes Chinitz, an English professor at Loyola University, in Chicago, he was attracted all his life to "low" culture and even argued during the 1920s that all valid art must be rooted in the popular.

The poet's biographers, Chinitz notes, have made it clear that he was a fan of comic strips, boxing, street slang, melodrama, vaudeville, sensational news stories (especially about murders), the music of Broadway and Tin Pan Alley, bawdy comedy, crossword puzzles,

and Marx Brothers movies. "One of Eliot's lasting enthusiasms," Chinitz writes, "was for detective fiction, from Arthur Conan Doyle to Georges Simenon and Raymond Chandler." In a 1927 essay, he deplored the gulf that had opened between "high" literature and "popular" fiction, warning "serious" writers that the craving for melodrama "is perennial and must be satisfied" and that dull literature is doomed. "Fine art," he argued in a 1923 review, "is the *refinement*, not the antithesis, of popular art."

Eliot, however, did have a "modernist antagonism toward the middle class," the author notes. In a 1922 essay, he complained that "the respectable mob, the decent middle-class mob," had taken over high culture and made it averse to "adventure and experiment." Eliot saw the arts of the lower class, especially the music hall, as an ally in the struggle against gentility. He wanted, Chinitz says, "to wrest art away from 'the respectable mob' to reunite it with 'the people.'"