

TRASH!

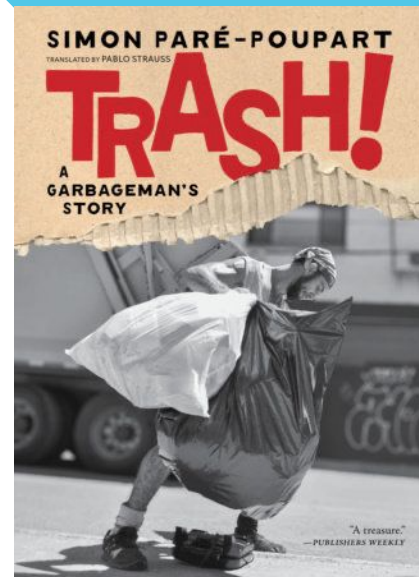
A Garbageman's Story

Simon Paré-Poupard

Translated by Pablo Strauss

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- “Raffish and spirited . . . a nonconformist cri de coeur . . . Usually, comparisons to Bourdain are fatuous. This time it’s accurate . . . It’s been a long time since I’ve read so good and rowdy a memoir about blue-collar work.” — **Dwight Garner, *The New York Times***
- “... a sparkling little gem of a book about the lives of men who wallow in a city’s muck and “scrub clean the stains of our consumer society.” — **Tunku Varadarajan, *The Wall Street Journal***
- “Imagine if Anthony Bourdain were your garbage man.” — ***The LA Times***

ABOUT THIS BOOK...

A Montreal garbageman's sharp and funny memoir/exposé, in which he attempts to convince people to "stop imagining that your garbage magically disappears" . . .

This fascinating no-bullshit account of twenty years in waste management paints a vivid portrait of the heroic labor, anarchic spirit, and violent conditions of the people who keep our cities clean.

Paré-Poupard's story is atypical: he started working as a garbageman to pay for school, and after earning graduate degrees and working in more “respectable” fields, he is still on a truck — out of love for the physical rush, for his rough-and-tumble colleagues, and for an honesty and freedom that no other job has yet given him.

Includes eight black and white photographs of the author on the job.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Paré-Poupard love this work? Is his attachment primarily economic, physical, social, or emotional? Which explanation did you find the most convincing?
2. What does the book suggest about dignity and manual labor? Does dignity come from the work itself, from competence, from camaraderie, or from something else entirely?
3. Paré-Poupard repeatedly rejects mainstream consumer culture. Is his freeganism presented as a coherent philosophy or as a personal response to what he has witnessed?

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4. What role does humor play in the memoir? Is the dark humor merely a coping mechanism, or is it part of what makes the work subtly meaningful?
5. The book is heavily peopled with eccentric characters. Which figures remained with you most strongly, and why? Are these people portrayed as individuals, symbols, or both?
6. Does the memoir romanticize garbage collection? Where does it seem most honest? Where, if anywhere, does it seem to mythologize the profession?
7. Paré-Poupard frequently describes chaos, danger, exhaustion, and injury. Why do these hardships seem to deepen rather than diminish his attachment to the work?
8. The author earned advanced degrees yet remained a garbageman. How does this complicate common assumptions about education and social mobility; what does it say about social perceptions?
9. Why do you think Paré-Poupard fills the memoir with references to writers and thinkers such as Victor Hugo, Pierre Bourdieu, and George Bataille?
10. What effect does the book's blunt, profane voice have on its credibility? What is the difference between being discarded by society and choosing to live outside of it?
11. The book argues that society ignores people who handle its waste. What other forms of labor/profession do we similarly render invisible?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Simon Paré-Poupard became a garbageman in Montreal to pay for his college education. After graduate studies in sociology and international business, and work experience as a journalist and social worker, he returned to the job, and has been a garbageman for twenty years. He lives in Montreal, Quebec.

Pablo Strauss has translated numerous books from Quebec French into English, and is a three-time finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award for translation. He lives in Quebec City.

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