



Glory Hole: Stephen Beachy

Stephen Beachy

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This exploratory powerhouse mixes perversion and purity in perfect symmetry.

Mystically prescient, *Glory Hole*, by Stephen Beachy, is a dark, witty romp through the recesses of creative, troubled minds.

Set in 2006 San Francisco, the book follows a disparate group of lovable miscreants—writers, drug dealers, social workers, and street kids—as they float between circumstance and opportunity, with leads like Philip investigating Amish shootings and dubious media sensations along the way. Instead of resolution, however, the coterie unveil more questions about the nature of existence and the unrecognizable culture in which they live.

Situated before the Great Recession, characters both lambaste and revere the dot-com boom and other technological advances. This delicate relationship fantastically illustrates the real problem with connectivity: though many markedly distinct groups have been brought together, the nature of such media systematically keeps people apart. Within Beachy's novel, characters are left to grapple with the disconnect.

Language is sprightly, setting vivid scenes and establishing characters that beautifully toe the line between delightful and repugnant. Despite featuring an ever-growing cast, no one is ever lost in the mix. Syntax is carefully chosen, creating a cerebral, ethereal landscape.

Akin in style to the great Beat literature of the 1950s, Beachy's prose is winding and lyrical. The text is transformative, exhibiting both everyday and outlandish situations as performance art, characters always deeply aware of their role in the spectacle.

Biting and darkly funny, the novel purposefully and expertly skewers common notions of perception and meaning, instead focusing on the disarray caused by an ever-adapting world. This is seen especially through Philip's investigation of a gruesome school shooting in the Amish heartland. Gory details pair with Philip's own Amish heritage to illustrate the deep lack of engagement he feels, when it comes to both his memories and his relationships.

Large in scope, yet inherently relatable, *Glory Hole* is an exploratory powerhouse, mixing the perverse and the pure in perfect symmetry.

AMANDA ADAMS (University Press 2017)

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