



Doom Patrols: A Theoretical Fiction about Postmodernism (Serpent's Tail High Risk Books)

By Steven Shaviro

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In *Doom Patrols*, Shaviro (The Cinematic Body) is out to prove that he is not just a nerdy literature-and-film professor at the University of Washington, he is also a member of the hip-oisie who (gasp!) goes to rock concerts, reads comics and uses the word fuck. Through 17 loosely defined personal essays on subjects ranging from Bill Gates to Truddi Chase (of 92-personalities fame), Shaviro expounds on postmodernism. He applies the idea that essence is obsolete to examples from American culture (many already overanalyzed) including Kathy Acker and Cindy Sherman. Shaver's style is at times self-consciously smart ("This ability to deceive ourselves and to be sincere... is the defining characteristic of what it means to be American, or to be human") at other times embarrassingly confessional ("I needed your wound, but since that night you've withheld it from me"), always deliberately quotable ("war is menstruation envy"). Oddly, race has virtually no significance in his version of the postmodern universe. While Shaviro draws some interesting connections between the theory of natural selection and postmodernism, his book is still a party gathering the same tired, talked-out guests: Warhol, Burroughs, Baudrillard, Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Foucault. One gets the sense that Shaviro is trying way too hard to impress a readership of the converted?people who are easily wowed by ponderous statements such as: "When you open your mouth?or your ass, or your cunt?there's no way of knowing what 'foreign particles' will enter." That may be true, but some of us have a pretty good idea.

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From Kirkus Reviews

Ranging everywhere, going nowhere, this is a posturing collection of essays on postmodernism. Like those strange, fearsome fish that live in the ocean's deepest depths, Shaviro's prose and his ideas may thrive in their own confined milieu, but brought to the surface world where the rest of us live, they explode and die. Shaviro (Literature and Film/Univ. of Washington) tries to conceal the basic unoriginality of his thought behind a dense patter of quotation, citation, and jargon. And so we are treated to the recycled thoughts of such postmodern sages as Baudrillard and Deleuze, as well as the usual, trite reflections on rock 'n' roll (it induces disorientation, the quintessential postmodern experience) and Disney World (where excess blurs the boundary between reality and unreality and the postmodern world's fetish of the object is fully realized). Shaviro also spends an inordinate amount of time analyzing the comic book series *Doom Patrol*, whose main virtue, apparently, is its deliberate engagement with postmodern themes. But the subject matter is really unimportant. With tautological criticism like this, subjects exist only to confirm a theory. Hence, postmodern critics adore such fabulistic novelists as Pynchon but almost never acknowledge the existence of such doughty realists as Mailer or Bellow. Shaviro jettisons such concepts as theme and coherence, rambling wherever whims and his borrowings take him, perhaps trying to demonstrate tautologically the confusions of a postmodern universe. In short, these essays aren't really about anything at all. If, as seems possible, the death rattle of postmodernism has already begun to sound, Shaviro is happily oblivious to its imminent end. - *Copyright ©1996, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

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