

Red Flash On Black Field

by Chris Okum



Thanaton III

From *Gargantua: The Disintegration of the American Empire and the Creation of a Global Fourth Reich*, by Kevin Millar, 2019, Pomona College Press: "What do Americans dream about? Death. But a death in which one dies happy, fulfilled in the part they played to make sure that the Empire lives on. 'I do not want to die in vain,' says Tony Stark. 'I would love to perish on a hill of sacrifice for the

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Homeland. To bleed the blood of my heart for the Homeland. And heralds of victory descend. We have won the battle. Live on high, O Homeland. And do not count the dead! For you, sweet one! Not one too many has fallen' 'American cinema has created an artificially perfect world where there are no more auteurs, where the only real auteur is the Empire itself."

A Very Condensed Version Of *Gone With the Wind*

He was born. He had some kids. He died. In the meantime he had a Big Mac.

Shoes For Women

They met on a celebrity gossip site. He made a lewd comment about Jessica Simpson and she responded. He insulted her and she asked him if he really meant it. He said no and she said that's fine. They struck up a conversation about their boring lives and then agreed to message each other later, when their respective spouses were asleep, and engage in dirty talk. He lied about his height and she lied about her weight. He said he was into women's shoes and she described the shoes she was wearing. This went on for a week and both agreed it was the best sex they had ever had. She broke the spell by telling him that the only reason she wanted to speak with him was to get him to like her so that she could then break it off. She said this was his punishment for calling her a cooze when they had argued about Jessica Simpson. He said it was fine. She said it wasn't. He welcomed her to modern life and then insulted her again. She said she was going to figure out a way to contact his wife and provide evidence that he had been virtually cheating on her. He closed his computer and waited for something to happen. Everything he thought and said was forever. The products of his mind would outlive him. His love of women's shoes would hang in the air until the death of the sun.

Chop Suey

She seemed to have no purpose. She felt like an actor whose role had been given to someone else, and now, stuck in a blank space, she waited for heaven knows what. She felt forced to keep herself company. There was nowhere for her to go, no doors or windows to open, just an exceedingly clean pane of glass separating her from a world drained of every color except brown. She feared that the present had finally caught up to her, like one of those newfangled heat-seeking bullets, erasing both her past and her future in the blink of an eye. This, she thought, is what it must feel like to be inside of a painting no one has ever seen, stored in an attic, wrapped in newsprint, hidden behind six feet of boxed Christmas ornaments."

Another American Sex Comedy Without Any Sex Or Comedy

From *The Reality Bomb: Long Day's Journey to the End of the 20th Century*, by Gilles-Pierre Dumont, 2011, Bailleul Polytechnic University Press, Translated by Susan Bernofsky: "If the fall of the Soviet Empire in late 1989 served as the premature end to the 20th Century, then the Gulf War, which took place in 1991, served as its epilogue, and, as such, a preview of the prologue for the 21st Century, in which relativity was no longer an aberrant perspective from which to view events, but the normal state of things. Up until this point in history it could be argued that war, as an activity, with all its blood, panic, suffering, excitement, drama, and heroics, was immune to questions related to authenticity, for if anything was considered real, it was war. The Gulf War, however, seemed to put the reality of war into question, i.e., can an event that seems nothing more than a media-created spectacle really be considered real? It is the question itself which is most important in this instance, and not the answer, as if the discussion surrounding what constituted the actuality of the war was driving the war and not the other way around. Because of course the Gulf War happened. right? Bombs were really dropped, and people were really killed. But it also didn't

happen, at least not at all in the way it was presented by the media, and it is in this gap between what did and didn't happen that the importance of the Gulf War is revealed. Because the seeds of doubt had been sown. War, which had previously seemed impervious to the machinations of post-modernism, had finally become relativized. As such, the Gulf War primed the masses to accept the irreality of anything and everything. And then, ten years later, on September 11, 2001, an event (some would argue '*The Event*') occurred that seemed at once real beyond real (think of all the people who claim to have suffered PTSD that day from watching what happened from a distance, in the comfort of their own homes, while drinking their morning coffee) and yet was experienced as a televised spectacle (think of all the people who claim that the planes were actually empty, devoid of commercial signature and passengers, thus making them props, or, better yet, think of all the people who claim that the planes didn't even exist, that they were simply holograms), but unlike other televised spectacles in that it carried with it an apocalyptic charge that extended beyond the screen, thus turning the world, once and for all, inside out, with the produced image rendering the non-produced image (i.e., the material world of buildings and other people and mountains and clouds, etc., etc.) irrelevant and devoid of meaning. The hollowing out of the real, of making the organic subservient to the mechanical, was a project begun in the 19th Century and completed in the 21st. As such, 9/11 signaled the end of the Prologue of the 21st Century. Now the story of our time could finally begin. A story in which nothing becomes real, and the real becomes nothing."

