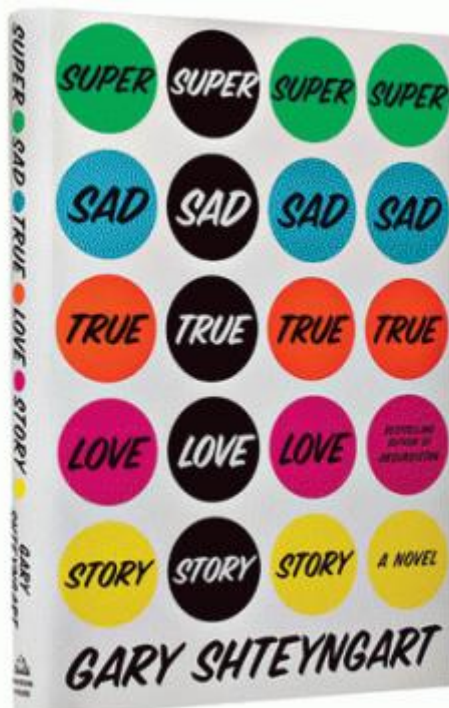


The Verge

Pop Culture

Welcome to Dystopia

On August 25, 2010 at 10:41 AM



In Gary Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story*, life in Future Manhattan is governed by corporations; real estate causes warfare; books are laughable artifacts for the sentimental, the introspective, the meek. Feelings are replaced by snap judgments. Cell-phone apps replace intuition. People no longer need to know what to make of one another, since personality is merely a collection of statistics you stream to a device. As a city and a nation, we are profoundly fucked. America has invaded Venezuela while forfeiting economic autonomy to China. Central Park is Hooverville all over again. The waiting list to move to Canada is 23 million people long. We experience this profound, hilarious, and plausible shitstorm through the diary entries of Shteyngart's proxy, Leonard Abramov, and through the electronic correspondences of Leonard's much younger love interest, Eunice Park. Through their varied missives, it becomes very clear that what's at stake going forward is actually everything. Altogether, it's as sobering as a slap in the face. But it's also as illuminating, as gut-busting, and as purely entertaining as any piece of literature will be this year.

— *Howie Kahn* photo: Random House

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