



## Death in Vancouver

*Garry Thomas Morse*

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Since the debut of Garry Thomas Morse's first collection deemed "experimental fiction," *Death in Vancouver* has drawn fervid enthusiasm from many West Coast writers and artists. Set in Vancouver, B.C., this gathering of stories superimposes aspects of literary classics on local urban space to express increasing dissonance and alienation in the groaning "necropolis" that is the contemporary global city.

"One Helen" is a woman subject to poetic idealization who reveals her own interior monologue on Bloomsday in "Another Helen" in this two-part romantic comedy where love may arrive too late. In "Nailed," an incident from *The Book of Judges* becomes *zagadka* without *razgadka*, or one of Gogol's riddles without resolution. "Salt Chip Boy" presents homogenized global jargon from an Orwellian vision of a future Vancouver where denizens controlled by implanted desiccants enter virtual worlds to enjoy vintage language and scenarios. In "Two Scoops," an attractive reporter investigates a government-funded project that involves supermarket products and sexual hallucinations. In "The Book," a Dostoyevskian drunkard contemplates Mallarmé's suggestion that everything exists to end up in a book while en route to "the stone that drives men mad" as described in Pauline Johnson's *Legends of Vancouver*. "Dry Gray," who takes his name from a burger chain receipt while trying to stay sober, grapples with lingering questions from an Asperger's test.

These stories culminate in the title novella, a restatement of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* in which a retired ballet dancer called Padam falls under the spell of a young man in the lounge of the Istorina (fictional double to the Sylvia Hotel). When a hotel renovation leads Padam to believe that cosmetic injections will resolve his unrequited passion, he finds himself suddenly face to face with an unslaked desire for historical vengeance in the beak of a First Nations bird monster.

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