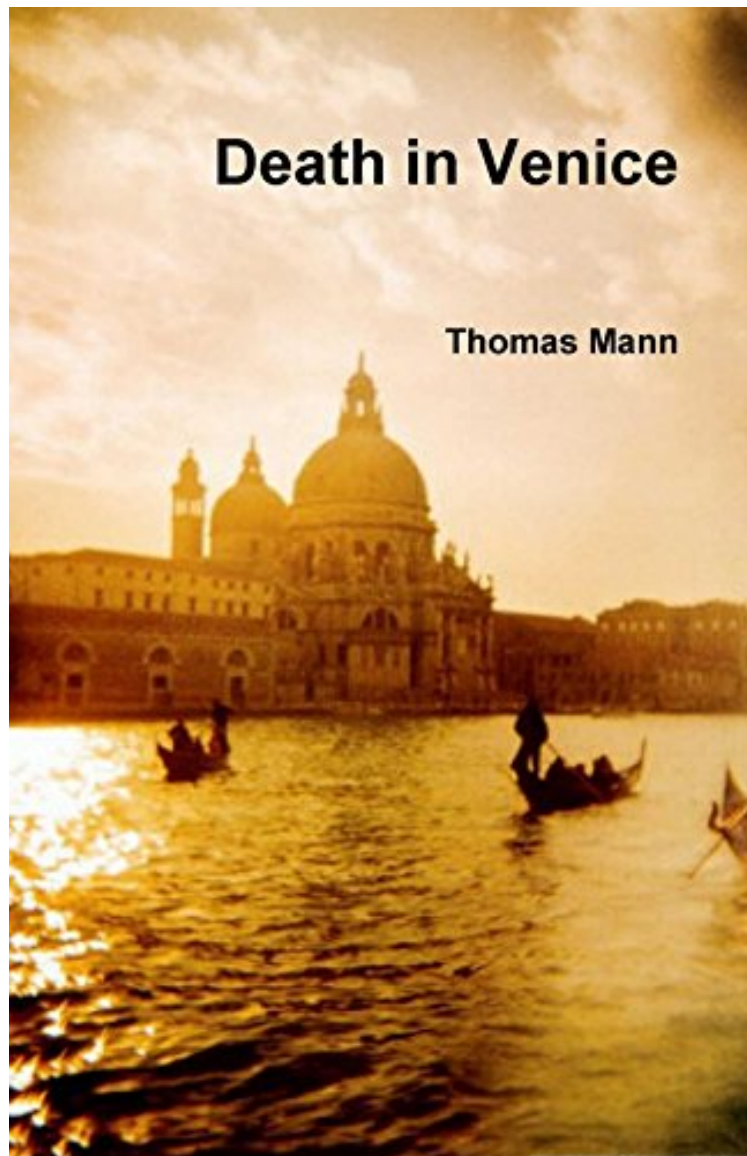


(Free) Death in Venice

Death in Venice

Von Thomas Mann

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Von Thomas Mann : Death in Venice before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Death in Venice:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen2 von 2 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. The Self Destructive Potential of LoveVon Ein KundeDeath in Venice is the first serious study of homoerotic love in the modern novel although many precedents do exist: the ambiguous sonnets of Michelangelo or Shakespeare, Marlowe's tortured Edward II, the androgynous aesthetics of Winckelmann, the lyrical allegories of Rimbaud and the dark

insinuations of Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* or Wilde's *Dorian Gray*. E.M. Forester's posthumously published *Maurice* is exactly contemporary with *Death in Venice*. *Death in Venice* tells the story of Gustave von Aschenbach, a writer living in Munich. One May afternoon, while strolling through that city's famed English Gardens, von Aschenbach encounters the Wandervogel (hiker); an apparition of an angular, hawklike man, who returns von Aschenbach's gaze before disappearing. A true ascetic, von Aschenbach has never known the sweet idleness and freedom of youth, but after viewing the Wandervogel he is seized by the desire to travel and leave his labors behind. Finally obeying the urges of his long-repressed, primeval, exotic side, von Aschenbach sets out for Trieste, however after only ten days he decides he dislikes that city and take a boat to Venice instead. While making the short trip, von Aschenbach encounters yet another apparition--that of an old man, who, through the artifice of makeup and a wig, has attempted to make himself appear young again--to no avail. Disgusted, von Aschenbach promptly hires a gondolier and checks into his hotel on the Lido. Later that evening, von Aschenbach's attention is hypnotically drawn to a Polish boy of fourteen who is dining at the next table with his family. Pale, with long hair and chiseled features and full of the exuberant charm and sweetness of youth, von Aschenbach silently acknowledges the fact that he has never witnessed anyone or anything, in nature or in art, that exhibits the perfection of this Polish youth. Although as yet unaware of its significance, this is the moment that seals von Aschenbach's fate. The next morning, after experiencing revulsion at the sight and smell of the city's lagoons, von Aschenbach decides to leave Venice, but a mixup with his luggage compels him to remain. When he once again encounters the Polish youth, whose name he has learned is Tadzio, he comes to a partial realization of his heretofore subconscious desires and gives himself over to contemplation of "every line and pose" of Tadzio's exquisite form. Though aware that an outbreak of cholera in Venice is being suppressed and concerned with a series of premonitions (reminiscent of the Wandervogel in the English Gardens) von Aschenbach chooses not to flee and even seeks to win Tadzio's attention by making himself up to appear younger than his true age, a sight which, only a short time ago, he had found revolting. The days pass in a dreamlike state for von Aschenbach, caught in the trap of Tadzio's youth and beauty. When Tadzio catches von Aschenbach staring at him, he returns the stare with a smile. Tormented, as well as exhilarated, von Aschenbach flees into the shadows of the park where he utters what he has known all along, "I love you." von Aschenbach's confession of love for Tadzio brings about the tragic climax of *Death in Venice*. The once dignified and distinguished von Aschenbach has allowed his passion for Tadzio to engulf him, pulling him into the vortex of a whirlpool of sensuality that can only lead to death and destruction. Mann, himself, described the theme of *Death in Venice* as that most Wagnerian of ideas, the *Liebested* (love-death), or fascination with death. Everything about this book has been crafted to illustrate the triumph of despair over discipline, destruction over restoration. The complex, figurative prose of *Death in Venice* is different from everything else written by Mann. Even in translation, the contrast is instantly apparent between *Death in Venice*'s elevated and elegiac tone and the more conversational idiom of *A Man and His Dog*, *Disorder and Early Sorrow* or even the more serious *Mario and the Magician*. Mann wisely chose to write *Death in Venice* in rich, almost over-elaborate images. While this could (and should) be denounced as artifice when employed by an author of lesser talent, Mann knew that elaboration was necessary if we were to believe a man of dignity and ethics, such as von Aschenbach, falling in love with Tadzio. In describing Tadzio, Mann writes: "His face recalled the noblest moment of Greek sculpture--pale, with a sweet reserve, with clustering honey-colored ringlets, the brow and nose descending in one line, the winning mouth, the expression of pure and godlike serenity." *Death in Venice* is a highly symbolic novella, with the symbolism centered around death. While some of it is readily apparent, much is more elusive. The Wandervogel encountered by von Aschenbach in the opening is only the first of many portents of death. Even Mann's description of the Wandervogel is evocative of a skeleton or a ghoul: "His chin was up, so that the Adam's apple looked very bald in the lean neck rising from the loose shirt; and he stood there sharply peering up into space out of colorless red-lashed eyes... At any rate, standing there as though at survey, the man had a bold and domineering, even a ruthless air, and his lips completed the picture by seeming to curl back, either by reason of some deformity or else because he grimaced, being blinded by the sun in his face; they laid bare the long, white, glistening teeth to the gums." Once the story moves to Venice, Mann introduces other images of death in the form of the gondolas and discerning readers will quickly realize that the gondolier, the "despotic boatman," embodies Charon, ferryman of the Styx in Hades. By the book's climax, Tadzio, essentially a two-dimensional character, takes on the characteristics of Hermes, who, with his smile, which becomes the kiss of death, summons von Aschenbach to his ultimate destruction. Much in *Death in Venice* reflects Mann's own life, although the work is by no means autobiographical. Nevertheless, much in von Aschenbach can be found in Mann. von Aschenbach, though is an extreme example of the imperfections Mann did battle with during his own lifetime. If we only look closely, we can see that von Aschenbach is a symbol of the frailties and fallacies that plague us all. 0 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Blood of the Walsungs Von Ein Kunde The incestuous love between Siegmund and Sieglinde in Thomas Mann's "The Blood of the Walsungs" is based on a self-centered narcissism. The twins love each other because each reminds the other of themselves: "They were very like each other, with the same slightly drooping nose, the same full lips lying softly together, the same prominent cheek-bones and black, bright eyes. Liked of all were their long slim hands, his no more masculine than hers . . ." Yet, their physical resemblance is just one aspect of their similarity. Perhaps more important is the ennui they both share,

made worse by the luxury that surrounds them ('Dinner clothes in the afternoon!' Sieglinde said, making a face. It isn't even human!'). Siegmund and Sieglinde suffer the woes of wealthy children: they have everything, yet that having everything become hated because it reminds them of their own emptiness -- that they have yet to achieve on their own. Trying something, like Siegmund's painting, can even be worse than doing nothing. Because trying and failing only confirms the dread that one doesn't deserve what one has. It's no wonder the twins' inner fear and insecurity manifests as resentment, the desire for revenge, and attraction to one's mirror image. Resentment and revenge are projections of inner hatred, and attraction to one's double perhaps provides a desperate hope that each is not so bad since another is similar. And who best to understand one's inner turmoil but another who is virtually the same? It is also not surprising the twins consummate their attraction after the opera. After all, what's more dramatic, heroic, and conducive to the surrendering of one's passion than Wagnerian opera? In thunder and storm anything goes, and perhaps all is forgiven. I'm surprised they didn't go at it right there in the opera box. But, such an atmosphere surely gave artistic backdrop to each's depressive self-loathing. In that arena, each could cease being themselves and become heroic. How easy it must have been to ride that feeling all the way to the bedroom. And, illicit passion now gives each meaning. An affair is so much more than an affair; it's drama in which one is the central figure, just like the opera. Because of the resentment each had for Beckerath, they now too have a perfect foil, a villain in whom they can portray to each other all the vile characteristics Hunding possesses. In its own sick way it all makes sense. I wonder then, does each of us carry a little of that in the person we carry the torch for? Are we attracted to certain persons because they remind us of ourselves? Or who we wish to be? Or who we hope they will help us become? Or who we hope they see us as? Is love really that narcissistic or self-aggrandizing? Anybody else tempted to sleep with their brother or sister after a good opera? 0 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A good novella, but far from perfect Von Frank-Tommy Olsen (ramsund@xtra.co.nz) Death in Venice has at times a spellbinding atmosphere. At times it is also displaying Mann's magnificent register of using the language, actually more often than rare, that alone enough to make the book worth reading. But I don't find the story strong and gripping enough. That the main character with the mind and soul of an artist is falling in love with a pretty boy is an interesting angle of approach, and would have been even more chocking to the reader in 1911 when Mann wrote the novella. To me the weakest parts seem to be the beginning of the book, before he is approaching Venice by sea, and the ending of it. On those crucial parts of the book I find Mann as the author and creator too much present, while the fifty pages in the middle are superb craftsmanship, where one is taken away by the atmosphere and his wonderful descriptions. Still, the book is a classic and well worth the reading.

Kurzbeschreibung Thomas Mann (1875 - 1955) was a German novelist, short story writer, social critic, philanthropist, essayist, and 1929 Nobel Prize laureate, known for his series of highly symbolic and ironic epic novels and novellas, noted for their insight into the psychology of the artist and the intellectual. Death in Venice, this tale of forbidden love which has long intrigued the reading public, was his early masterpiece. From Kirkus s New versions of 12 celebrated stories, including the famous title novella, many previously collected in Mann's seminal *Stories of Three Decades*. Neugroschel's persuasive "Preface" makes a strong case for fresh translations, given both this century's inevitable linguistic shifts and Mann's employment within individual works of specific vocabularies and styles (e.g., those of Wagnerian opera in the hair-raising "The Blood of the Walsungs"). And Neugroschel essentially finesses the issue of revealing the stories' inherent sexuality; their author was, after all, a master of elegant indirection dedicated to muted presentations of matters that were anathema to both his public and his own sedulously respectable persona. That said, it's wonderful to have vivid, lucid English versions of Mann's sophisticated portrayals of sexual obsession and humiliation ("Little Herr Friedemann"), illness-as-metaphor in a tale ("Tristan") that concisely prefigures *The Magic Mountain*, and the transfiguring intersection of artistic with homosexual passion (*Death in Venice*, Tonio Krger). Brilliant work, in any case, from one of the century's great writers. -- Copyright 1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. From *Library Journal* Mann's classic here gets a fresh interpretation from PEN Award-winning translator Neugroschel, who brings out more of the work's sensuality. Along with the title story, this edition includes "The Will for Happiness," "Tobias Mindernickel," "Tristan," "The Starvelings," and "Harsh Hour," among others. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.