



This New & Poisonous Air (American Readers Series)

Adam McOmber

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She admits she is pleased when the new placard is raised, "Madame Tussaud's House of Wax." She stands in the crowd with François at her side. He leans close enough to touch her ear with the fringe of his mustache and whispers, "What part of the museum would the famous Madame Tussaud like to survey on her inaugural visit?"

"The Chamber of Horrors, I think," she says softly.

"Really, my dear? All that grim fantasy and blood?"

"There is no fantasy about it, François. It is an embryo, a showing of what is to come."

Blending historical fiction with fantasy and the macabre, Adam McOmber's debut short story collection brings the influence of Angela Carter, Isak Dinesen, and Edgar Allan Poe to the next generation. In "The Automatic Garden," a solitary architect from the court at Versailles builds a water-powered pleasure garden; in "There Are No Bodies Such as This," we read a haunted and romantic fiction about the creation of Madame Tussaud's wax museum; in "Fall, Orpheum," a small town movie palace becomes the temple for an entire town's devotion and sacrifice. McOmber seamlessly blends history, artifice, and desire to create a dream of the past that intertwines with our own notions of modern life.

Adam McOmber's stories appear in *Conjunctions*, *StoryQuarterly*, *Third Coast*, *The Greensboro Review*, *Arts & Letters*, and *Quarterly West*. He is assistant director of creative nonfiction at Columbia College Chicago and associate editor of the literary magazine *Hotel Amerika*.

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