*My House Gathers Desires*, by Adam McOmber rev. by Paige Bullock

BOA Editions

*My House Gathers Desires*, by Adam McOmber is a collection of short stories that puts the questioning of sexuality and gender through different situations like paranoia and supernatural along with types of literature. McOmber expresses sexuality in not only heterosexuality but also homosexuality. With using modes of historical fiction along with Biblically inspired stories, he dives right into the discussion of the complexity of sexuality in this collection.

Many of the stories’ themes have to do with gender and sexuality. Several feature the women central to the story becomes a casualty because of male characters; for example in the story “History of a Saint,” the Fribourg Saint, while alive, was murdered by a man who claimed the Holy Ghost incarnated to only later suffer at the hands of Magnus. In terms of sexuality, thematic aspects include men sacrificing women to give into their sexual desires. The story, “Sodom and Gomorrah” supports the prior claim.

More than that, McOmber has a way of melding death, sexuality and spirituality into hypnotizing tales. His imagery creates a picture that you cannot keep out of your mind. For instance, in the first story of the collection “Hydrophobia*”*, one of the main character goes into great detail of his story about the Miner’s Wife:“What had been making the blanket move up and down were animals. They’d made nests in her body -- in her hollowed out chest and in her guts”(16). Each word is placed in such of a way that the image sticks with you like a vivid nightmare. Not only does McOmber perfect his imagery but also the amount of tension in each story is of intense magnitude. One example of this is in the story “Hydrophobia”:

“You live at the house near the end of the path, don’t you?” he said, pointing in the direction of the rental house. “That’s right,” Jane said. He nodded “That’s called the Miner’s House.” “No one’s ever told us that,” “A miner and his wife used to live there. She got sick.” “Oh?” “She died,” the boy said. He paused. “I have to go”(13).

The boy in the story grows this suspense and drives the story. McOmber also shows range in his storytelling. Most of these stories are in third person but McOmber takes creative liberties such as the story “Petit Trianon”, where the audience reads the story through the eyes of another reader in a sort of diary/ journal form and shifts between the writer and narrator/reader: ““If only Eleanor and I had remained in Paris that day,” Anna Moberly writes in an unsent letter to her sister, dated October 3, 1901,” (23). In “Sodom and Gomorrah”, he also takes this chance to test his abilities. With this short story, the “I” is turned to a “We” and makes the work seem like narrator is a group that share the same mind:

“On the marble bier near the pool, we come together, clinging to each other’s backs. And using all our strength, we begin to form a single body. It’s difficult at first. We wrestle and climb. But soon, we are a giant, composed of innumerable, heaving men. There are those of us who act as the body’s great arms, and others are its bracing legs”(31).

This shows how McOmber is able place a wall between the story and the audience.

Those who are seeking for a collection that observes sexuality and gender through multiple lenses such as history, religion and science fiction just to name a few. This book may also be appealing to those who enjoys the eeriness of horror-like stories with a flare of eroticism, *My House Gathers Desires* would be perfect for them.