



## **Aureole: An Erotic Sequence**

*Carole Maso*

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Two women leaf through a book of French slang, with its delicate and delicious mixing of food and sex. A man and a woman sit in a Parisian dive, caressing each other's hands. Two lovers take late-night refuge in a beach cabana, their lovemaking lit by the lights of his automobile. These are glimpses of some of the haunting scenes and characters that people this sometimes wild, sometimes elusive exploration of desire's magical and subversive qualities.

"The fragile space—in the place right before the heart breaks—this is the space Carole Maso explores brilliantly and sensuously in her astonishing new prose fiction. Whether she is writing about two women washing lentils or a man's desire for a woman's pair of ink-stained hands, Maso charges her very sentences with such sexual energy that form and content literally become one. Reading *Aureole* is pure pleasure."  
—Marjorie Perloff, *Edge of Irony*

"Carole Maso is that rare creature—an original! Her voice and vision are like no one else's." —Edmund White, *A Boy's Own Story*

Carole Maso is the author of *Ghost Dance*, *The Art Lover*, *Defiance*, and other novels. She has received many awards, most recently the Lannan Literary Fellowship for fiction.

## Aureole: An Erotic Sequence Details

Date : Published January 1st 2003 by City Lights Publishers (first published January 28th 1996)

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# From Reader Review Aureole: An Erotic Sequence for online ebook

## Melanie Sweeney Bowen says

This book captures a series of erotic moments on the verge of consummation. It is to be felt, not read and intellectualized. For what it sets out to do, it is successful, but it's not my favorite Maso text. It is somehow simpler than I have come to expect from her. Still, the language is, as always, gorgeous and sensual.

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## Isla McKetta says

I read this book because I expected it to teach me a lot about language and I expected it to be hot. I wasn't disappointed on either front. Find out how this book opened me up.

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## Nathan "N.R." Gaddis says

Bibliography ADD'd below.

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Well now that didn't go so well... Now to adjudicate blame.

Some folks are putters-inners ;; other folks are takers-outers. What we have here I think is a severe case of a taker-outer. Take this much out and what's left is a preponderance of white-space which either risks a case of snow-blindness or a threat of a prose turning into poetry. Or wishing that it rather be poetry. Which is not what I was going for.

White space works some times. In *AVA* it worked. There it worked like rests in music.

Maybe it's not the white space. Maybe it's the paucity of words. Even I thought maybe the paucity of prose. I mean there is here an outnumbering of syntax by just *mere* words. I thought.

Or really maybe it's the prose that would rather be poetry. You see how a directionality like that might allow these eyes of mine to just fall off the edge of the bottom of the page with nothing catching it.

And this is a) a literary erotics and b) a *lesbian* version of literary erotics. So, this should be really good.

And even Mr Moore thought this thing awesome like pyrotechnics are awesome. But he also liked that white space monster, *The Fifty Year Sword*. No accounting for that.

In other words, more words please!

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Texts and films upon which and within which these pieces were written ::

The Oysters of Locmariaquer by Eleanor Clark.

The Legend of Maya Deren: A Documentary Biography and Collected Works, Volume 1, Part II by Clark, Hodson and Neiman; Anthology Film Archives, 1988. (specifically, "At Land" and "Meshes of the Afternoon")

India Song by Marguerite Duras.

*Grimms Fairy Tales, Nine Stories* by J. & W. Grimm; Penguin, 1995. (specifically, "The Twelve Dancing Princesses")

The Case of Anna Kavan: A Biography.

Sappho.

Something from Gertrude Stein.

Maso's own *Ghost Dance* and *The American Woman in the Chinese Hat*.

"Exultation is the Going" by Emily Dickinson.

A letter from Bhanu Kapil.

[thanks to Friend Michael for pointing me to Maya Deren and putting in my head to provide this bibliographic nugget]

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### **Adam says**

Maso exhibits one of the most compelling attempts to fuse word and flesh, especially in the use of rhythm and repetition to evoke the feverish phenomenology of desire (qua hope, sense, loss, and LANGUAGE). It is unabashedly experimental (like good sex), which means (like sex) it doesn't always come without a hitch. I read this straight through and was pushing rope by the end, but that is most likely not any fault of the woman's talents and charms. Frequent and vigorous, a little at a time but often--perhaps that's the libidinal lesson of writing arousal.

yes, words were superior; they maintained a superior control; they touched without your touching; they were at once the bait, the hook, the line, the pole, and the water in between

-Gass

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### **Jonathan says**

Tedious and incoherent, like love.

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### **J.A. Carter-Winward says**

beautiful, wandering, erotic...lovely for drifting into sleep....

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### **amanda says**

years ago, i was searching for a jeanette winterson book when a boy in a bookstore came up to me, asked what i was looking for, then took me by the arm and led me to this book, placed it in my hands, saying, "you

will love this." i went back to that bookstore to thank him, only to find out he didn't even work there. aureole pulled at something inside me and had me swimming in its language by the first page, which had me in tears. this book validated the way i write--knowing the rules, and then breaking them. it is sensual and dreamlike and unlike anything else i've read.

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## **Charles says**

My copy of Aureole (first edition 1996) is not subtitled "An Erotic Sequence." The dust cover identifies it as "part novel, part poetic journal"--so I read it more as a novel. It is almost as though to describe the book, one must somehow be reductive. Maso focuses on the sensual and the experiential. Rarely if ever does she describe, but she offers us clues:

"In the sensuous lexicon of falling, where I write, where I like to write, more and more often now. Charting a motion and its many permutations, its many fallings into desire, language--waywardness and hope..."

At times Aureole refuses to be anything other than a poem, at times it is a shot list lifted from Maya Deren films. Maso's characters make love while reading from books--some of them her own (though I would never have known without her endnotes) without ever sounding self-satisfied or cleverly referential.

The table of contents reads like a poem:

The women wash lentils/her ink-stained hands/make me dazzle...

Aureole is not easy, and maybe it is not for everyone. At times I found its richness almost unbearable though always exquisite, corporeal, and deliciously voyeuristic.

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## **Dearwassily says**

No desire I have known.

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## **John says**

Mercy -- just choosing a shelf for this magnificent genre- & gender-bender is a task beyond the oversimplifications of agate type! Carole Maso has brought the baroque to American fiction, baroque to break your heart, in a number of splendid fictions, my other favorite among which might be, hmm, THE ART LOVER, perhaps her most Italian. Perhaps. But this may be her most American, in the sense of her most self-inventing & out in the wilds, & anyway who needs a nationality when the subject is sex? "Really f\*cking," as she puts it [she doesn't use an asterisk, but I don't want Goodreads to hiccup at my post:]? The syntax works like poetry, & not just because of the broken-line poetry-typography she uses throughout this story sequence, or is it a novella sequence -- or what do you call these episodes, anecdotes, dream-tales we all live w/, as we assemble & reassemble a sex life? Those episodes are Maso's subject in AUREOLE. The title's the penumbra around erectile tissue, yes, like the shards of our orgasms, spiraling away from the shattering pleasure at their center. Each story is a sex story, that is, mostly lesbian but hetero in healthy doses, & all possess some aspect of the chance encounter, the irresistible one-night or -afternoon stand that

then rocks out of bounds, just as the form of the prose itself rocks towards poetry, the line-breaks having less to do w/ sentence-structure than w/ rhythm & intensity, w/ the enhancement of image & moment. Not that there's anything precious about this emotion recollected in tranquillity -- that last phrase may be Wordsworth, but the spirit here is more Whitman: urge & urge & urge. I mean that Maso gets down to the glandular tug, including terminology like the one w/ the asterisk above, & the other FCC-forbidden as well (she knows exactly where & when to drop the word "clit"), yet she renders the sighing & heaving & coming through a fine scratch-&-go scrim, she combines indirection & the grind, brilliantly. In the end AUREOLE suggests, what's more, the emotional sweep of sexual sway & its dissolution. By the time we reach its greatest, longest fragment, "Anjou Flying Streamers After," we can, if this literary mind- & body-bending has done its job, experience anew the explosiveness of sexual awakening, & believe again, no matter our age or our distance from virginity. Thanks to literature like this, the next body we brush against may change us for good.

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### **Michael says**

love this little erotic text.

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### **Jenn says**

This collection reads like prose poetry - or often just poetry - and, while somewhat described as a collection of stories, has no narrative thread. The descriptions are incredible and the poetry is full of symbols and imagery that are visual, visceral, and sensual. This collection caused the most discomfort and disjointed discussion in my class. It can be seen as pretty graphic - certainly not for the faint of heart who may be bothered by the clear lesbian overtones.

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### **Peter says**

why am i not giving this 5 stars? don't know. maybe that would make me seem (to myself mostly) too much of a voyeur. but hell, lots of stories are more explicitly sexual than this fine work. it's so pleasing not to worry about understanding it in my head. it's such a fun read. pleasurable.

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### **Jb says**

Beautiful.

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### **Nicole says**

There's a lot to love here. The lush prose, which reads more like poetry is truly stunning. Knocking off a star mostly because the text is kind of repetitive (this is intentional but ineffective after a while) and the text

probably could've been about 40-50 pages shorter. Looking forward to reading more of Maso's work, however!

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