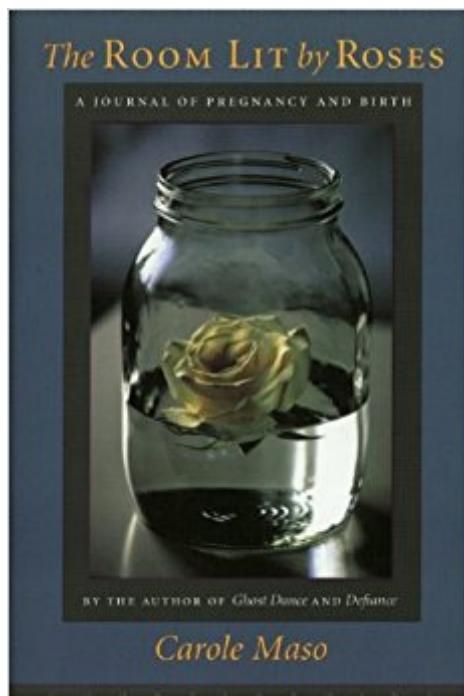


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# The Room Lit By Roses: A Journal Of Pregnancy And Birth



## **Synopsis**

From one of our most daring writers comes this intimate and seductive book: a working journal of pregnancy that was both a Lambda Literary Awards finalist and a Village Voice pick for Best Books of 2000. Maso chronicles with great tenderness and awe the months of her pregnancy, from its charmed conception through the auspicious arrival of Rose.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Carole Maso, an experimental novelist, brings all her imaginative gifts to bear on this fragmented but sparkling journal of her pregnancy and the first weeks after her daughter Rose's birth. Although she was over 40 when she decided to have a child, she and her partner Helen had prayed for one at the Church of St. Clare in Assisi, and in fact all across Tuscany and Umbria, as if the churches of Manhattan were further from God, or it was harder to hear prayer over the traffic. When the sign of a miracle arrives--in the form of a home pregnancy test--Maso is ready to meet it with words. Although she is a far more lyrical writer than Anne Lamott, there is a similar urge in them to tell the truth about themselves, even when it is less than flattering, and not to let a fear of sentimentality choke the expression of what are, after all, some of the most profound emotions a woman will ever feel. Not for nothing does Maso quote the brave and ferocious Virginia Woolf several times in this volume. Moving between the "glow" of pregnancy--a sense that for the first time she is truly alive, and not just advancing toward death--and the fears and depression that her ruminations have brought on, Maso tracks the beginnings of another life, one that will be connected to her, through her body, until

its own end. Any new mother of a literary bent will relish Maso's observations, from the tart to the sublime: "Doubt very much I am going to wear a scarf around my head during labor. The last thing I want is to look like David Foster Wallace, and, after the birth, "I'll start a baby book soon. For remembrance. Baby and book--the two most beautiful words in the language." She's forgotten the third, though: mother. --Regina Marler --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In lush, elliptical language, Maso (*The Art Lover*, etc.) charts her first experience with pregnancy and new motherhood in a journal that reads like prose poetry, couching the mysterious experience in surprising forms, syntaxes and imagery. She records the unexpected sense of well-being and faith that accompany her pregnancy: "I've got to say I'm really quite pleased with myself. I am no longer someone I entirely recognize. A kind of wayward haloDleast likely to become an angel or a chaliceDand yet.... To be myself and yet to be so much greater than myself." She also chronicles the fatigue: "Cannot even imagine getting up. How to get to school?... Everything small as if seen from a great distance. The fierce attachments to this world begin to loosen." Maso also explores how, by age 42, she had accepted that she wouldn't have a child, until she and Helen, her partner of 20 years, traveled to Italy and prayed for a baby in a series of chapels and cathedrals. After nights of planned passion with men (alluded to coyly, without specifics), Maso gets her wish. Her father wonders how they all will manageDthe subtext is, "What will people think?" At Brown University, where she teaches creative writing, students notice a radical change in her. Helen, who wanted the child most of all, remains stoic and supportive throughout Maso's prenatal and postpartum vagaries, even though Maso at times leaves her out of the loop. Though Maso's wide-eyed descriptions of the miracles of pregnancy can seem self-indulgent, her dreamlike treatment of pregnancy, birth, mothering and writing should enchant mothers, mothers-to-be and writers with a poetic bent. (Dec.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

What does a journal of a writer's pregnancy have for a male reader? Plenty, at least for this one. I read the book in one evening and came away thinking how lucky the child Rose is to have this beautiful letter from her mother. Portions of this book made me sad. Maso writes: "I think of my mother often these days. That she did not have a mother to talk with, to console her, to reassure her as she went through her pregnancies." I remembered my own mother whose mother died when my mother was twelve, just entering puberty. I cannot fathom her loss. But I do understand all too well

Maso's remembered grief over the death of her beloved friend Gary from AIDS. "That I had walked at 4 a.m., most terrible hour of the day, of the night, in utter fear and dread, in utter sorrow, scarcely breathing, to kiss my dead friend good-bye. . . The worst possible thing had already happened, so what else was there to fear?" Too many of us said too many unnecessary good-byes in that first onslaught of AIDS deaths in part because of a government that did not care about those of us who were different. More Maso: "Why shouldn't the old models, which are working with less and less success, be challenged--the world reimagined? Heterosexual privilege and power--and all its attendant rigmarole. Such a system, if it were to be taken seriously, would have precluded me from having a child. Luckily I have never taken it even the least bit seriously. But I have been outside of everything from the beginning--except the system of love." Passages like this one make this book wonderful. Besides the sorrow, there is so much joy, so much hope, so much honesty, so much love here. As always, Maso paints with words. She has created a beautiful book, from its title to the last sentence with the image of Rose's pointing a finger "upward toward the heavens, like the infant Christ, in the renaissance paintings." This book will not disappoint you.

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metaphor of Rose pointing a finger "upward toward the heavens, like the infant Christ, in the renaissance paintings." This book will not disappoint you.

To open any book by Carole Maso is to begin a journey of pleasure, and this book is a perfect example. While chronicling her pregnancy, and the birth of her daughter, Maso also ruminates on life and death, on literature and art, on every minute detail of living. Each word, each sentence is a flower in a garden of joy, and when the birth begins, the expansive field of flowers is breathtaking, moving, exhilarating, and we the readers are there with her, through the frightening, beautiful, expansive moments of childbirth. Her many lucid moments of whimsy, and the terror of bringing a child into this dangerous world, make this book so real, so endearing, so utterly felt. This is an experience like none other, a writer creating a new work within her body and birthing not a book, but a beautiful daughter named Rose, a beacon of beauty.

I mistakenly deleted the info for feedback to the seller. So I am placing it here. The book arrived in nearly perfect condition, and a day before the earliest scheduled delivery! I could not be more pleased, and use Mirage Best Buys for future orders. :) Sincerely, Rebecca Woods, Portland, OR  
The book is beautifully written, and shares with the reader some of the emotion and considerations one has when becoming a mother. I'm a fan of Maso already, but appreciate this thoughtful portrayal of the conflicting emotions and sensations of pregnancy. When she speaks of the wonder of seeing her daughter for the first time, it reminds us all how precious and awe worthy that moment truly is.

To read Carole Maso is to endure and survive much- passion, love, loss, anguish, doubt, and pain. Readers will bear witness to one of the most marvelous, daring writers of our age. This memoir is a celebration of the universe's most profound mystery- the brewing of a human life and the phenomenal vessel that brings forth this magnificence with ferocity and might. Maso's words dance, pulverize, and enlighten. A bold mixture of sweet delirium and mind-shaking realities. Reads like a prayer.

This book did not meet my expectations- I found it very pretentious and hard to tolerate.

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