

## Excerpt from *Arioso*, by Carol Adler

arioso      bells

sepia

moon-beams

an afternoon sun blanked by rain

and the mountains rising nowhere

the sound returns

the sound and the silence    chimes

## STARTING OUT

anywhere is wide enough  
as long as you find it  
already reserved by  
readiness

a leaping clear  
to the feel of it  
reassurance  
that this is you

any space  
even God  
will do

## ETUDE

And are we not after all  
pinned to our destiny  
to some sense of ourselves  
that has been carefully laid out

that will eventually slip over us  
with the same surety  
as tomorrow's past –

Offered this consciousness  
as the only one  
and forced to accept it  
as something earned or  
bargained for  
before we were born

and for which  
no words  
will let us express  
exactly what it is to be here  
at this moment

and the fact that  
we are that  
very miracle

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**in the dawn's first opening**

**images  
must be learned**

**by rows of eyes  
reciting**

## DAWN

He falls to his knees  
burying his head  
in her lap

promising her  
a gold crown  
the moon  
anything –

and she believes  
learning too late

how naïve she was  
how trusting:

that what she is asked  
to give in  
return

after consenting

is what he has used  
for his coins.

Oh she bleeds  
she bleeds . . .

## OUR AMAZEMENT

our amazement was the dawn to play with  
how we pulled and tousled with it  
each of us in our separateness each of us  
bound to this beginning  
devil to the one we tried to do away with  
as we did away with ourselves

what were we afraid of what ceremony  
did we expect to witness  
as we stared into the future  
refusing this image yet bound to it as  
if to some awareness was it  
Thanatopsis longing for the Great Deliverer

or was it adolescence  
the first defiant kiss

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**why shouldn't  
the lightning take lovers the hills  
stop repeating themselves**

## ELEMENTAL AIR

Over thirty years ago  
when I was a poet  
I used to spend my days  
contemplating daily occurrences  
of Inexplicable Phenomena:

For example  
The Setting Sun.

Perched outside  
on a slab of pale pink cement  
heavily fortified against  
mosquitoes and ticks  
I would lift my eyes  
to the Heavens and rivet them  
on the vast Cosmogony of  
Plethoric Sound

Raging Plenaries that could  
easily with a Master's touch  
my own  
be trapped and tamed  
until seemingly emerging  
from the pores of my Being  
as Being Itself  
becomes prismic emanations:

glittering jewels of *mot juste*  
that would greedily be  
gobbled up  
published and praised  
in leading journals . . .

Chewing on the tip of my pen  
I pondered  
how to begin.



Similes or metaphors  
fables . . . myths . . .  
analogies of rivers and streams  
references to forgotten dreams . . .

or maybe just with water itself  
or elemental air  
parts of the body  
fingers eyes cheeks hair

gestures intimations  
significant conversations

And as I sat there  
Shivering for it was early  
June and my soul laid bare  
had only a cotton tee shirt  
and cutoffs  
to cover it

as I sat there Communing  
suddenly I felt  
somewhere in the vicinity of hunger  
a hollowness  
and in my head a loosening.

Then I felt myself lifting  
and yes now recklessly taking off  
soaring at incalculable velocities  
West in the direction  
of the disappearing sun.

But the faster I traveled  
the faster ahead of me  
the scene receded

and the more urgently I pushed on

the greater the distance between  
what was supposed to be  
described and what was  
already dying

the tongue the flame  
the ruby tip of tingling pain  
drowning in confused consummation  
of what was already done  
before I'd even begun

blank pad growing pink  
pink slab growing black  
black to white white  
to black the blackest night  
that any poet has ever  
attempted to write about  
now  
and then

## BLUEBERRIES

While God is in His heaven  
eating just-picked blueberries

I am in the Adirondacks  
with my father  
wading through the grass  
searching for ripened patches.

Each day before breakfast  
the two of us  
working the field  
until in no time  
we're swinging back to the  
cabin our brimming buckets  
weightless.

I think we could have picked  
forever and still  
there would be more  
as if we were not taking  
from the mountains  
but giving.

For now even though it's  
September  
as I set the table for  
one and heap my dish with  
frozen berries

I see in my mirror  
the fields  
still full  
and the sun  
just risen.