

Autobiography of Red

By Anne Carson

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Autobiography of Red By Anne Carson

The award-winning poet reinvents a genre in a stunning work that is both a novel and a poem, both an unconventional re-creation of an ancient Greek myth and a wholly original coming-of-age story set in the present.

Geryon, a young boy who is also a winged red monster, reveals the volcanic terrain of his fragile, tormented soul in an autobiography he begins at the age of five. As he grows older, Geryon escapes his abusive brother and affectionate but ineffectual mother, finding solace behind the lens of his camera and in the arms of a young man named Herakles, a cavalier drifter who leaves him at the peak of infatuation. When Herakles reappears years later, Geryon confronts again the pain of his desire and embarks on a journey that will unleash his creative imagination to its fullest extent. By turns whimsical and haunting, erudite and accessible, richly layered and deceptively simple, *Autobiography of Red* is a profoundly moving portrait of an artist coming to terms with the fantastic accident of who he is.

A NEW YORK TIMES NOTABLE BOOK OF THE YEAR

National Book Critics Circle Award Finalist

"Anne Carson is, for me, the most exciting poet writing in English today." --
Michael Ondaatje

"This book is amazing--I haven't discovered any writing in years so marvelously disturbing." --Alice Munro

"A profound love story . . . sensuous and funny, poignant, musical and tender." --
The New York Times Book Review

"A deeply odd and immensely engaging book. . . . [Carson] exposes with passionate force the mythic underlying the explosive everyday." --The Village Voice

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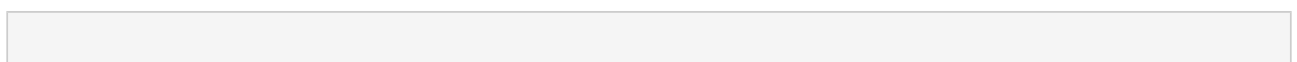
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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red* is a novel in verse, the author's first. A classicist by profession as well as a poet, Carson has drawn on antiquity for her cast, updating the myth of Geryon and Herakles. In the original version, of course, Herakles killed the red-skinned, winged Geryon. In Carson's very contemporary retelling, he merely inspires, but does not return, the monster's passion. By choosing Geryon as her central character, Carson can bring up the questions of existence as if they hadn't been asked before. After all, the monster's instincts have not been numbed by civilization. Fires twist through him. We feel the pain of learning the most elementary things, and then the volcanic intensity that comes with that more advanced thing, love. Yet Carson doesn't so much tell the story of Geryon's love as mediate his very being through semiological surfaces: cafes, video stores, lipstick, a library where he shelves government documents with a "forlorn austerity, / tall and hushed in their ranges as veterans of a forgotten war." Carson seldom satisfies herself with an image of the world. Instead she atomizes the world, leaving it broken down, refracted, and glinting. At times her verbal pyrotechnics manage to render pure *energy*:

A little button at the end of each range activated the fluorescent track above it.
A yellowing 5 x 7 index card
Scotch-taped below each button said EXTINGUISH LIGHT WHEN NOT IN USE.
Geryon went flickering
through the ranges like a bit of mercury flipping the switches on and off.
The librarians thought him
a talented boy with a shadow side.

No novelist could have gotten away with that last line. Yet it's very much to the point: Carson's Geryon is, among other things, a camera freak who doesn't understand that an observer must inevitably alter the nature of the thing observed. Here is Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, cheek-by-jowl with the ancients! And indeed, Carson's achievement is to interweave the archaic and the modern so seamlessly that by the time we finish reading *Autobiography of Red*, the entire landscape looks inside out. --Mark Rudman

From Library Journal

Is it poetry? Is it a novel in verse? A fable? A myth? However you define Carson's distinctive and wildly inventive new work, it is riveting reading. At the center of the narrative is a winged red monster named Geryon; throughout, we see him struggling with his family, falling for the indifferent Herakles, and discovering photography as a means of comfort and escape. Wistful yet whimsical, offhand yet intense, funky yet erudite (Carson, a classics professor at McGill, grounds this work in ancient Greek myth), this is a reading experience like no other.

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From [Booklist](#)

The title says *autobiography*; the subtitle, *novel*; and an inner title page reads "A Romance." Go with the last, for Carson recasts the Greek legend of Geryon, the red, winged monster that Herakles killed during his tenth labor. Names, wings, and some mythical details remain, but the setting is contemporary. Geryon, 14, meets Herakles, 16, and it's love at first sight. Life separates them, but they meet again when Geryon, now 22, literally runs into Herakles in Buenos Aires. Herakles and a colleague (and lover), scouting volcanoes for a film, whisk Geryon to the Andes, where his wings may cause him to be taken for an immortal. There the story breaks off. The start of another fantasy trilogy? Hardly, for although we know the story's end, it is not

in the source, an ancient poem that now exists only in fragments. Instead, Carson interviews the poet, Stesichoros (*circa* 630[^]-555 B.C.), about his vision (he may have been blinded by Helen of Troy). Narratively, philosophically, humorously, a dazzling performance. Oh, yes: it's a poem. *Ray Olson*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sandra Yunker:

What do you ponder on book? It is just for students since they're still students or that for all people in the world, exactly what the best subject for that? Only you can be answered for that problem above. Every person has various personality and hobby for each and every other. Don't to be pushed someone or something that they don't desire do that. You must know how great along with important the book *Autobiography of Red*. All type of book would you see on many solutions. You can look for the internet solutions or other social media.

Latoya Brown:

Autobiography of Red can be one of your beginner books that are good idea. Many of us recommend that straight away because this publication has good vocabulary that will increase your knowledge in vocab, easy to understand, bit entertaining however delivering the information. The author giving his/her effort to put every word into delight arrangement in writing *Autobiography of Red* but doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource facts that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information can drawn you into fresh stage of crucial pondering.

Ann Foley:

Many people spending their time by playing outside with friends, fun activity having family or just watching TV the whole day. You can have new activity to shell out your whole day by reading through a book. Ugh, do you think reading a book really can hard because you have to take the book everywhere? It okay you can have the e-book, delivering everywhere you want in your Smart phone. Like *Autobiography of Red* which is finding the e-book version. So , try out this book? Let's find.

Jaime McKenney:

What is your hobby? Have you heard in which question when you got college students? We believe that that concern was given by teacher on their students. Many kinds of hobby, Every person has different hobby. And you know that little person such as reading or as reading through become their hobby. You must know that reading is very important as well as book as to be the thing. Book is important thing to add you knowledge, except your own teacher or lecturer. You see good news or update with regards to something by book. Amount types of books that can you choose to use be your object. One of them is this *Autobiography of Red*.

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