



Autobiography of Red (Vintage Contemporaries)

By Anne Carson

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Autobiography of Red (Vintage Contemporaries) 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 Ondatje

"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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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:

Carol Castaneda:

Do you certainly one of people who can't read enjoyable if the sentence chained in the straightway, hold on guys this particular aren't like that. This Autobiography of Red (Vintage Contemporaries) book is readable simply by you who hate the perfect word style. You will find the facts here are arrange for enjoyable reading experience without leaving also decrease the knowledge that want to offer to you. The writer associated with Autobiography of Red (Vintage Contemporaries) content conveys prospect easily to understand by most people. The printed and e-book are not different in the written content but it just different in the form of it. So , do you still thinking Autobiography of Red (Vintage Contemporaries) is not loveable to be your top checklist reading book?

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