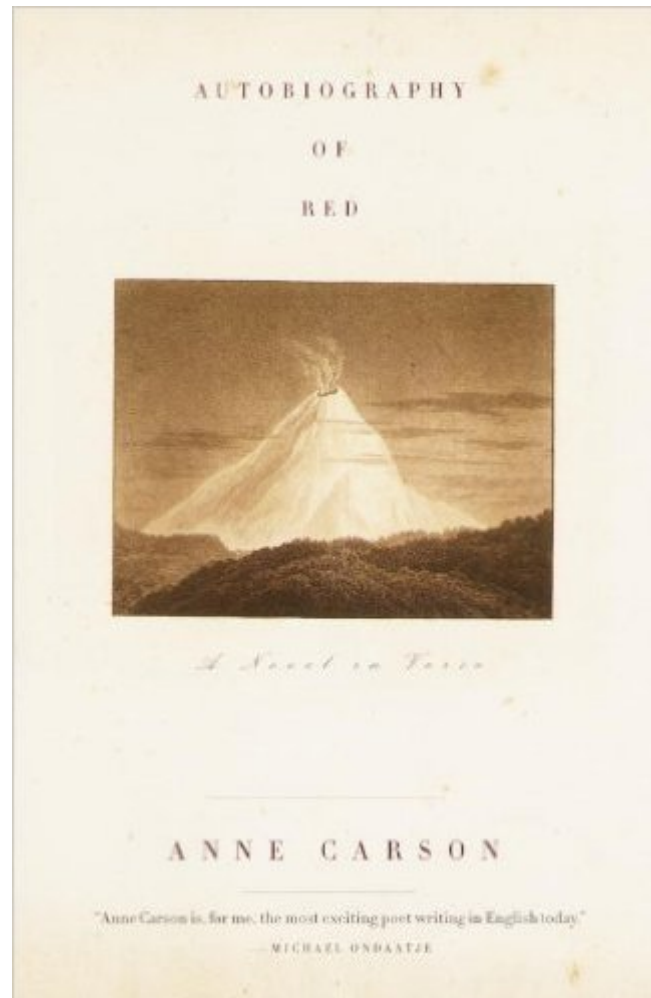


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Autobiography Of Red



Synopsis

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 The award-winning poet Anne Carson reinvents a genre in *Autobiography of Red*, 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 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

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Classicist and poet, Anne Carson, has created a playful-but-tragic, present-tense, postmodern fable of obsessive love in her retelling of Stesichoros' "Geryoneis." For those unfamiliar with the classics, Stesichoros was a Sicilian Greek of the early classical era. Although little of his poetry has survived, we do know it was famous for both its extreme sweetness and its grandeur. In Carson's modern version of the Geryon myth, Herakles doesn't murder Geryon and steal his magic red cattle; he steals his heart instead. And in Carson's version, the theft of the heart may be quite a bit worse than outright murder, for, rather than dying outright, Geryon dies a little each day and his suffering is thus prolonged and made all the more difficult to endure. Since this is a present-tense, postmodern tale, Geryon doesn't, however, suffer in silence. He attempts, instead, as a young school boy (though still red and still winged--he presents his teacher with the myth of Geryon as his own autobiography), to create a new world and a new life for himself through his camera lens and through the redemptive qualities of his art. In this way, Geryon's demons are transformed through eroticism and become, if not something of beauty, then something that is, at least, worthwhile. Although this prose/poetry work is witty and playful, Carson's Geryon is still quite sad. Herakles is so definitely male and he loves Geryon in a stereotypically male manner, i.e., without really knowing the object of his love. Herakles seems out to have a good time and that is that. Although Geryon is red to his core, Herakles knows him so little that he even dreams of him in yellow. This upsets Geryon to the point of torment, who thinks, "Even in dreams he doesn't know me at all."

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