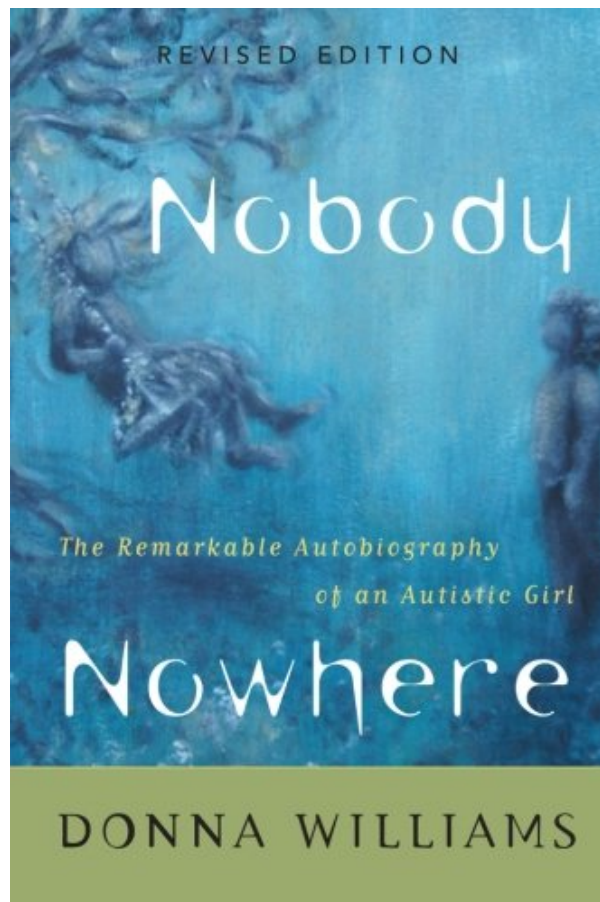
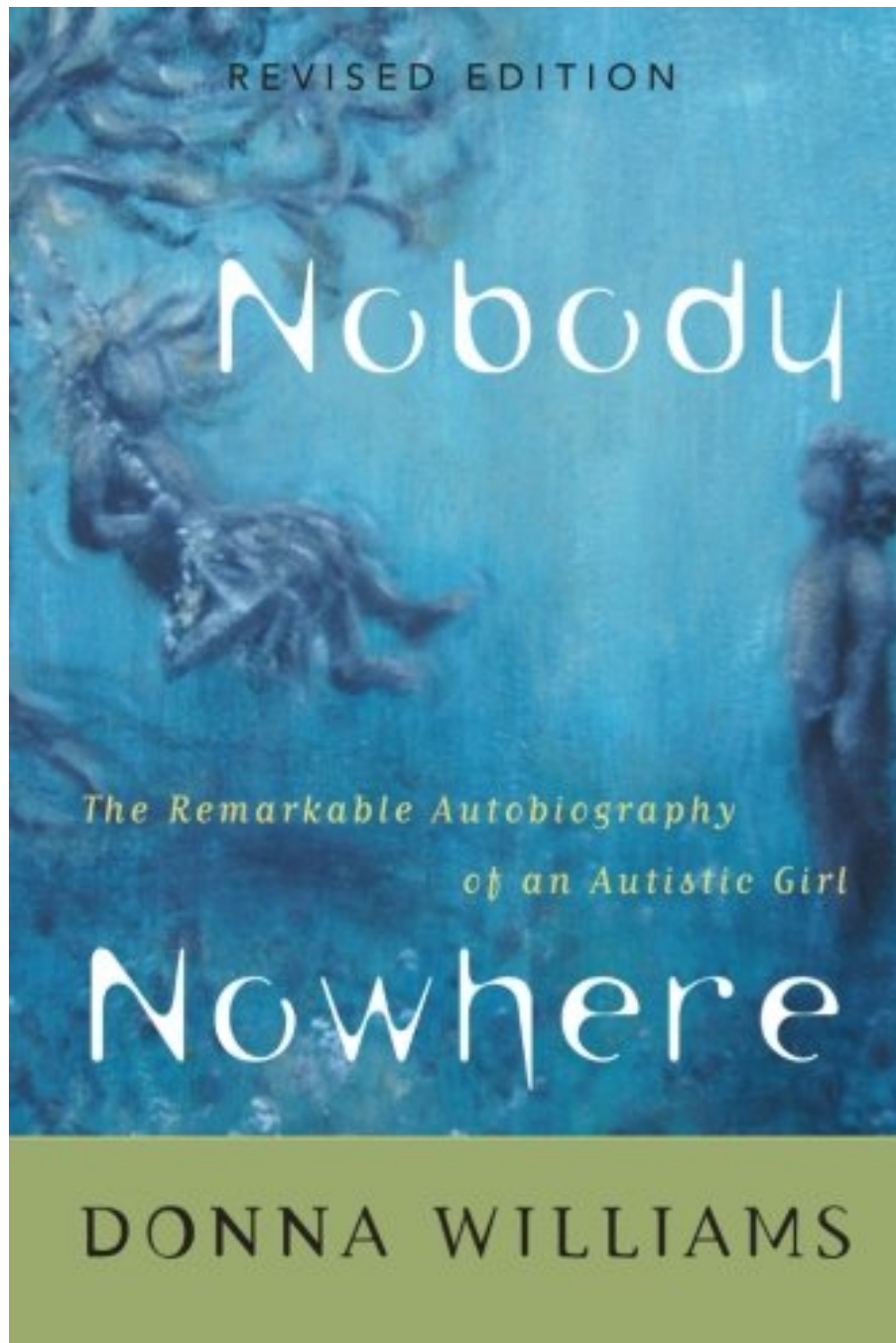


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AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN AUTISTIC GIRL
BY DONNA WILLIAMS**



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Donna Williams was a child with more labels than a jam-jar: deaf, wild disturbed, stupid insane...She lived within herself, her own world her foreground, ours a background she only visited. Isolated from her self and from the outside world, Donna was, in her words, a Nobody Nowhere. She swung violently between these two worlds, battling to join our world and, simultaneously, to keep it out. Abandoned from all connection to the self within her, she lived as a ghost with a body, a patchwork of the images which bombarded her. Intact but detached from the seemingly incomprehensible world around her, she lived in what she called `a world under glass`.

After twenty-five years of being misunderstood, and unable to understand herself, Donna stumbled upon the word `autism`: a label, but one which held up a mirror and made sense of her life and struggles, and gave her a chance to finally forgive both herself and those around her.

Nobody Nowhere is disturbing, eloquent and ticklishly funny: it is an account of the soul of someone who lived the word `autism` and survived in an unsympathetic environment despite intense inner chaos and incomprehension. It describes how, against the odds, Donna came to live independently, achieve a place at university, and write this remarkable autobiography. It is now an international bestseller, sold in over 14 languages throughout the world. This is a book that will stay with you as one of the most exceptional works you will ever read.

- Sales Rank: #435649 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Jessica Kingsley Pub
- Published on: 1998-12-15
- Released on: 1998-12-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.21" h x .44" w x 6.14" l, .67 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 192 pages

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Nobody Nowhere to a Somebody Somewhere

By Daniel L. Berek

From a Nobody Nowhere to a Somebody Somewhere

Part I. Nobody Nowhere

There is no typical person with autism; yet, like many people on the spectrum, Donna Williams was distant from the world. That was her world. A gifted writer, Donna sought to reconcile her world with the world around her.

Donna, like many people with autism, often had difficulty in perceiving and understanding other people's speech and facial expressions. Yet, she felt extremely motivated to try—and be like them. And she drew upon one of her marked strengths: communicating in writing. In *Nobody Nowhere* and its follow-up, *Somebody Somewhere*, Donna was able to tell her story and express her feelings in an intensely personal and poignant way.

Even Donna's first dream was nothingness—spots of “fluffy color” surrounded her in a sea of whiteness. She rubbed her eyes until a loud slap from her mother's hand landed on her, interrupting her attempt to understand her world. She resumed rubbing her eyes, which ended with yet another slap—it was time for her to learn about “the world.”

Donna writes extensively of her troubled childhood, a world characterized by abuse, ridicule, lack of support and, eventually, rejection. However, as painful as it was, her dysfunctional childhood that gave her the impetus and “freedom to find emotionally detached corners of the world from which to study and teach myself things through my two characters.” Donna conceived two characters, Willie and Carol, with whom she could relay her emotions and eventually communicate with the world. In a strange twist, Donna is thankful for her “bad” parents; without her, Donna claims she would not be able to live independently and, worse, be confined to an institution.

Oftentimes, Donna was besieged with illogical emotions, such as that affection and kindness could incapacitate her—or at least cause pain. Ignoring such a deluge of sensations often left her “without emotional feeling and with a purely robotic mental response—if that.” Then, again, losing all awareness of the world—of all things usually considered real—and ultimately losing all sense of self offered Donna her only dependable security. People who practice Zen meditation and yoga do the very same to achieve inner peace and tranquility.

Donna developed a close relationship with Bryn, who introduced her to the poetry of T.S. Eliot, who wrote “In my beginning is my end” and “in my end is my beginning.” From the paintings of Vincent van Gogh, Donna learned that beauty can be found in simplicity, and one needs to look beyond the surface of things often dismissed as ugly.

Donna's tumultuous childhood consisted of the adults of her family and school to impose the complexities of the world, when she sought simplicity to make sense of her world, which she expresses in heartfelt poetry:

Shattered dreams, broken glass,
Echoes of a shattered past,
Too many names strewn about,
The kind that one can live without.
They're the shadows here, within,
That tears apart personality.

After a particularly difficult spell, Donna decided it was time to say good-bye to Willie. She took a boy doll, placed him in a shiny black box, and buried it. “Let go, I say, my tear-soaked stranger.... I'm afraid that you

have drowned beneath the many dreams which did evade you and the many stars so out of reach. Let go, I say. I must take over ... and perish in a past of shadows, so that I may walk a stronger path.

Dealing with Carol, however, was much more challenging. She smiled, but it was one in which “you can see the fear in the grimace-like smile.” It took rekindling an old friendship with Mary to undo the spell.

“As always, my motivation to interact was to prove my sanity and avoid getting locked in an institution,” she writes. Over the years, Donna’s school career would take her through many schools. As an adolescent, anxiety and pain tormented her. Sometimes, Donna thought she was going mad. She had her share of destructive spells and tantrums and could scream out, “I’m not &#**\$ mad!” Art and music were her favorite classes. Other times, she would go out and wonder, to “make my own classes.” Donna’s journey was a perilous one.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

A magnificent write..

By ruby

As the parent of an autistic, I have searched near 30 years for answers of my sons strange self. Medical persons were unable to help and autistic Eli had no speech. Donnas book is an unusual write as she gives depth and reason to many autistics traits with reasoning and feeling. Her journey is one of incredible strength and she is brilliant in her words and talents today. Her childhood was tragic but she managed to find her way..on her own. To combat and bring herself to a level of functioning acceptance. I shall read this again and would like to recommend- Nobody Nowhere-to each person searching for answers about autism or any person looking to experience a wonderful read. Thank you Donna for sharing your life. it certainly has helped mine. Carol

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

It is one of my favorite books

By Alice Levine

I loved it because Donna Williams did a great job explaining what her life was like with undiagnosed autism and living with her alcoholic mother. There was nothing I didn't like about it. If you enjoy autism and autobiographies about autism than this is a great book for you to read because it takes place in a time before autism was recognized as a spectrum disorder meaning that people with it had different symptoms.

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