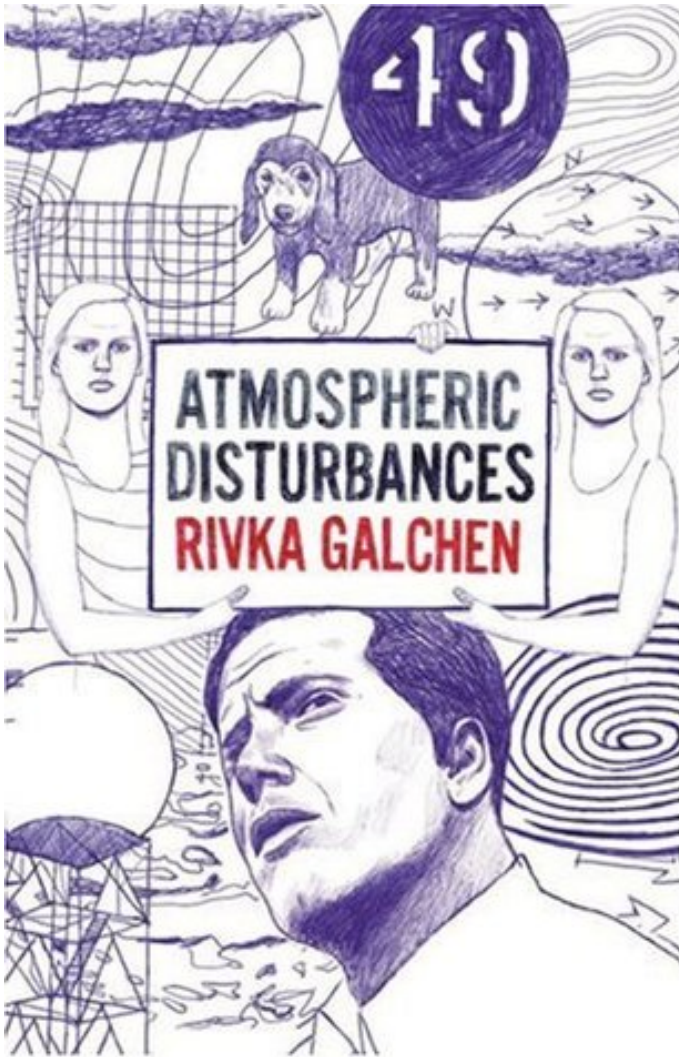

Rivka Galchen

Atmospheric Disturbances



Title: Atmospheric Disturbances

Author: Rivka Galchen

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Description

When Dr. Leo Liebenstein's wife disappears, she leaves behind a single, confounding clue: a woman who looks, talks, and behaves exactly like her--or "almost "exactly like her--and even audaciously claims to be her. While everyone else is fooled by this imposter, Leo knows better than to trust his senses in matters of the heart. Certain that the original Rema is alive and in hiding, Leo embarks on a quixotic journey to reclaim his lost love. With the help of his psychiatric patient Harvey--who believes himself to be a secret agent who can control the weather--Leo attempts to unravel the mystery of the spousal switch. His investigation leads him to the enigmatic guidance of the meteorologist Dr. Tzvi Gal-Chen, the secret workings of the Royal Academy of Meteorology in their cosmic conflict with the 49 Quantum Fathers, and the unwelcome conviction that somehow he--or maybe his wife, or maybe even Harvey--lies at the center of all these unfathomables. From the streets of New York to the southernmost reaches of Patagonia, Leo's erratic quest becomes a test of how far he is willing to take his struggle against the seemingly uncontested truth he knows in his heart to be false. "Atmospheric Disturbances" is at once a moving love story, a dark comedy, a psychological thriller, and a deeply disturbing portrait of a fracturing mind. With tremendous compassion and dazzling literary sophistication, Rivka Galchen investigates the moment of crisis when you suddenly realize that the reality you insist upon is no longer one you can accept, and the person you love has become merely the person you live with. This highly inventive debut explores the mysterious nature of human relationships, and how we spend our lives trying to weather the storms of our own making.

Insightful reviews

M. Hornbuckle: This is Rivka Galchen's first novel, and it's the most impressive first novel I've read in I don't know how long. In a way, it's a novel about weather, but really it's about perceptions of reality. She's exploring some of the same themes that I'm currently writing about and doing it so well, it makes me question my own work, but it also reinforces the idea that these themes are floating around in the zeitgeist, and perhaps they are even important.

Anyway, this is a great fucking book, and Rivka Galchen is a great fucking writer. I only regret that I missed her recent reading in NYC because I had to rehearse with my stupid rock band.

Selena: I began reading *Atmospheric Disturbances* on a whim. It was one of the books featured at my library, vetted for by a librarian. Her book stood out to me because of her psychiatric background and the various awards this debut novel had received or been nominated for.

As a reader, it was clear that Rivka Galchen is an incredibly intelligent woman. Her novel is ambitious, tying together meteorology, mathematics, psychology and love. For Rivka, this novel was also a foray into family history; one of the most spoken about characters in the book is Tzvi Gal-chen, a family member of Rivka's.

Essentially, it is the novel of Leo Liebenstein and his wife Rema, who he believes has disappeared and been replaced with a simulacrum. This, he believes, has something to do with his psychiatric patient Harvey who believes he is being sent to control the weather. The novel is

the hunt for Rema as much as the hunt for the mysterious man Tzvi Gal-chen who somehow ties in to all of this.

The novel begins on a promising note: "Last December a woman entered my apartment who looked exactly like my wife." However, after the first twenty-five or so pages, it is clear to the reader that Rema is a very normal and fine individual. Instead, it is the proud Dr. Leo Liebenstein who is going insane. What I had hoped would come of the novel indeed did not. I had hoped it would be a science-fiction or experimental fiction piece.

Rivka uses really refreshing short sentences and while beautiful, they kept me an arm's length from all of the characters. Rema was the closest I came to having emotions, and she was mostly left to the wayside, brought up only as she related to the larger story. But even with her compelling phrasing and masterful sentences, I forgot about this book when I put it down. It was interesting enough when I got back into it but nothing really compelled me to not put it down or to pick it back up whenever I had a free moment.

It took me ages to finish what I would classify as a short book.

In a way, the novel over-reached and left me with no clear direction of where to turn. Clearly, the main character was delusional and going down his own rabbit hole. It seems that if one figures this out early in the novel, it ruins most of the experience.

Anna Savage: It took me nearly a year to finish this book, which I should have been able to read in two hours. I could not emotionally connect to anyone or anything in it for a single second, so I'd repeatedly pick it up, read two pages, and set it back down, never having engaged. Everything about this book, from the misuse of scientific catchphrases for quirk to the untrustworthy narrator to the smug, look-how-creative-I-am tone each sentence was soaked in, made me want nothing to do with it or anything else by this author. I will give her this: the last 25 pages started to be about something, something real-world that we can all relate to, and when Galchen dropped the too-cool-for-school attitude to explore this, using the mental condition of the protagonist as a device to explore the difficulties of human connection, I finally bought it. I think she was trying to achieve this same thing throughout the novel, she just got in her own way for the first 90% of it, the language so affected and the characters treated with such lack of compassion that it wasn't until she was deep enough into her own writing to drop the act that she could produce something truly reflective of her talent as a writer.

Jimmy: [On the doppler effect...] Being conscious of this distortion of conception permits scientists to exploit the distortion itself on the way to assemble exact facts concerning the actual, and never simply the perceived, world. ... those distortions [when] safely understood permit an extra exact knowing of the genuine world. p 45 Obviously Galchen isn't just pertaining to the doppler influence here, but in addition to different sorts of distorting effects. just like the one she is using--the unreliable narrator. The challenge with unreliable narrators is that there needs to be a fact worthy of getting to know past the distortion. In Atmospheric Disturbances the reality past that distortion is totally dull and trivial. The characters have been flat and gave the look of exaggerations. beautiful quickly the distortion itself (which within the first 50 pages was once a minimum of a bit attention-grabbing and funny) additionally loses its steam. The

unreliable narrator additionally poses one other challenge. one among mapping. In a few sense, every thing the narrator says has to be mapped onto a fact that's at odds with the narrator's worldview. yet that mapping must never turn into predictable or obvious, must never develop into 1:1. There cannot be a feeling of the writer winking at the back of each line. the artificial needs to appear real, as though it have been an unreality latest just for itself. Because it failed in this moment aspect as well, the ebook simply came upon as particularly contrived. And lastly, to not be too negative, however the finishing sucked. i do not desire resolutions or anything, i am getting the open endedness thing. yet this booklet simply outfitted up these kind of questions after which petered the fuck out. The final a hundred pages have been all the comparable frequency. it will possibly have petered out a hundred pages previous and never a lot may have replaced when it comes to total book-ness... there has been no edition to the plot or characters, no turbulence whatever that may have even made issues extra interesting. However, I nonetheless controlled to take pleasure in this e-book often because: 1. I imagined it as a Haruki Murakami ebook if Murakami had the great experience to chuckle at himself as soon as in a while. we've got a disappearance and a seek and canines rather than cats. even if there's a annoying loss of breasts and no cooking of spaghetti. possibly that's its major flaw. it really is truly extra clever than (some of) Murakami's novels, even though it's much less attention-grabbing plot-wise. 2. i actually loved using technological know-how and medical theories as a metaphor for different general-life things. a private weak point of mine. honestly I most likely gave this e-book an additional big name only for that. (Rest assured, my ranking approach is differently scientifically sound and fully objective!). I loved the highbrow gymnastics Galchen was once checking out here. I simply want it labored with a precise novel rather than a chain of skits.

Dina Roberts: i assumed this e-book was once very well-written and clever. I imagine might be i might have cherished it extra if it have been shorter. lately I learn a brief tale i needed to be a novel. it is a novel that I want was once a brief story...or a novella. The e-book is narrated via a psychiatrist who starts to have his personal event with psychological illness. He turns into delusional...maybe schizophrenic? He believes his spouse has been changed by means of an impostor, and he believes they are all consists of with a few form of climate thing. i assume it is a type of conspiracy. What i presumed used to be smart concerning the publication is you spot the fear of the spouse via his eyes. you notice how she's attempting to get via to him. but considering the fact that we are seeing the tale via his delusional eyes, it is not like he says "My spouse is concerned approximately me. She thinks i am wasting my mind." He does not doubt his sanity and does not appear to decide up at the proven fact that folks are frightened for him. i did not particularly like this e-book much. perhaps simply because it really is relatively sad...someone wasting their brain that way. it isn't like i do not learn unhappy and miserable book. and i've learn and loved different books approximately psychological illness. might be there is simply whatever approximately being within the head of somebody who is at the moment experiencing severe delusions. For me...I felt very uneasy. i needed to get out of the story.

Molly: Atmospheric Disturbances is adorably intriguing; it belongs to a practice of the literary amazing at the top ranks of which we discover Bruno Schulz, Leo Pertuz, Alexander Lernet-Holenia, a few Nabokov, and of course, Kafka. "Authenticity" is an idea that has haunted and tortured Jewish intellectuals (almost literally, in its political anti-Semitic and Nazi guise) for a few

centuries. Galchen's story of a guy who's confident his spouse has been changed via the same changeling, an imposter, remembers the "problem" of inauthenticity because it has been meditated -- irrationally and infrequently maliciously-- from Chamisso's Schlemihl via Freud to Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Galchen's remedy turns the established scheme assisting discussions of authenticity inside of out once or twice - scheme which is still unchanged via superficial adjustments of expression: the Wagerian, the Nietzschean, the Heideggerian, the Freudian, the Lacanian, Derrida's, no matter if "for" or "against" Authenticity all repeat the fundamental institutions of truth or the genuine with the womb, with childhood, with place, nation, purity, naivety, the countryside, the irrational and emotional. the target because the subject matter is placed via its paces seems to reveal the misplaced wholeness/truth/Real/Authenticity, for which a category of anti-modern intellectuals ostentatiously and eternally mourned and mourns, as an phantasm extruded by way of those discontent moderns' personal alienation, and hence one of those neurotic projection. The production of a degraded and primitive different of cause -- the spurious and superstitious which the scientifically rational can disdain - is right here expected as an act of scapegoating nature and truth (and Woman) for the imperious male's personal eventually mystical convictions and unease within the world. Galchen is indicting the dangerously heedless loss of self-doubt and conceitedness linked to clinical modernity and the Enlightenment for accusing what's (or most likely is) a real different -- fact itself -- of its personal profound estrangement, cynicism, and untruth. the result's a meditation on undesirable epistemology consequent to that tragicomic difficulty of residing in time with which psychoanalytically inflected litfic is frequently concerned: Galchen superimposes on a essentially realist/ic story, which invitations psychoanalytic interpretations not just of the full yet of the protagonist, a philosophical conte staging the authenticity/inauthenticity, reason/irrationality distinctions, in an effort to disclose how the together defining pairs tangle: within the Critique of Judgement, Kant defines "fanaticism" as "the myth of eager to SEE anything past all bounds of sensibility, i.e. of dreaming in keeping with rules (raving with reason)." Atmospheric Disturbances has a protagonist who's raving with reason. Its writer juggles its antimony in assorted medical and pseudo-scientific idioms (e.g. meteorology, psychoanalysis, continental philosophy). it really is tough to claim if the publication arrives at any preferred slump at the mysteries underlying its experiments; its element (besides entertaining, which it does) looks to bare psychological, ideological, cosmological and literary (though, disappointingly, no longer ancient and political) stipulations in their visual appeal

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