



Whispers Through a Megaphone

Rachel Elliott

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Miriam hasn't left her house in three years, and cannot raise her voice above a whisper. But today she has had enough, and is finally ready to rejoin the outside world.

Meanwhile, Ralph has made the mistake of opening a closet door, only to discover with a shock that his wife Sadie doesn't love him, and never has. And so he decides to run away.

Miriam and Ralph's chance meeting in a wood during stormy weather marks the beginning of an amusing, restorative friendship, while Sadie takes a break from Twitter to embark on an intriguing adventure of her own. As their collective story unfolds, each of them seeks to better understand the objects of their affection, and their own hearts, timidly refusing to stand still and accept the chaos life throws at them. Filled with wit and sparkling prose, Whispers Through a Megaphone explores our attempts to meaningfully connect with ourselves and others, in an often deafening world - when sometimes all we need is a bit of silence.

Whispers Through a Megaphone Details

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Author : Rachel Elliott

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From Reader Review Whispers Through a Megaphone for online ebook

Alina says

3.5 stars, really. I had a hard time getting into this one, but towards the end it grew on me.

Simon says

Quirky novel of two people. A recluse who has not left her house for three years after the tyranny of her mother and an incident we discover over time. A psychiatrist who is lost in his marriage and family and one day walks out. This novel tells this two tales and then the tales of both the moment these two meet, those who are around them and what follows. Interesting. Made me laugh a lot, got a little overdramatic on occasion. Very enjoyable though.

Judy says

Intriguing and quirky, sometimes charming novel of dysfunctional families. Miriam, at 35, speaks only in whispers - a product of an abusive mother. She hasn't left her house in three years and has decided to go outside. Ralph, who used to be a gardener and is now a psychotherapist, has decided his marriage is not what he wanted. Ralph's wife Sadie is addicted to tweeting and tweets everything in her life. Sadie has mixed emotions about her sexuality. A very interesting and thought-provoking read! Congratulations to Rachel Elliott for her first novel!

Many thanks to Rachel Elliott, Steerforth Press ONE / Pushkin through NetGalley for an advance copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Hayal Perest says

2018'in ilk yorumu ile geldim. Gönül isterdi iç aç?c? bir yorumla geleyim ama öyle olmad? maalesef. Kitab? büyük bir hevesle alm??t?m. Zira kurgusu çok ho?uma gitmi?ti. Ama beklentilerimi kar??lamad? ne yaz?k ki..

Yazar?n kaleminden midir yoksa çeviriden midir bilmem cümleler bir acayıptı. Bir kaç cümleyi birden fazla kez okumam gerekti. ?imdiki zaman ile anlat?l?yor kurgu. Ve ben bu tarz anlat?mlar? okurken zorlan?yorum. Anlat?m bozukluklar? da vard?. Hal böyle olunca sürekli dikkatim da??ld? ve okuma hevesimi kaç?rd?.

Karakterler ise saçma sapan yani.. Elle tutulur bir karakter yok. Ayr?ca Mirriam ile Ralph'i shiplemi?tim ama olmad?. ?Zal?mmm yazar. ?

Sonlara do?ru biraz güzel?ir gibi oldu ama yine olmad? benim için. Kitab? kurtarmaya yetmedi bu durum.

Beklentilerimin altındadır olan bir kitap oldu. ?

TL says

"The main problem? Other people. They have always been the problem. Other people seem to know things. They know what a life should contain, all the simple and complicated things like shopping and Zumba and being physically intimate with another body. They know the rules, the way it's supposed to go. "

"You have to be bionic, supersonic, virtually histrionic, in ten places at once and forever full of comment: I am here, are you listening? I am sharing the minutiae of my everyday life. Please reply with a comment, whoever you are. The air is thick with opinion. Audible smog. But what if you have nothing to say?"

We're all something in particular, but how is it possible to know what that something is? That's the question."

It's a question, Miriam thinks. Not the question. And being with another person is so complicated and difficult and maybe it's not worth the effort.

~~~~~

One of those quiet, slowly unravelling novels that is more of a character study of sorts... there's not a whole lot of plot/story but it draws you into the lives of these dysfunctional, ordinary people.

It's not one of those "Oh my god, I have to know what happens next" but it's compelling in its own way. Sometimes not all-together likeable but I grew to care about them and hoping things would work out for them somehow (though it isn't easy to see how anything could).

I wanted to give Miriam a hug many times and give her mother a nice verbal tirade... Sadie I wanted to shake many times and had no sympathy for her. Ralph was a sweet but sometimes naive guy, took me a bit to warm up to him.

A mini subplot with one of their sons I would have loved to see more about, kind of sweet in its own way.

It's a bit of bizarre novel at times and a couple thing had me raising my eyebrows (view spoiler) but still amusing in a weird way.

Only nitpick I have is that it was sometimes hard to see who was narrating, had to go back a couple times to make sure who was who. The POV changes were a bit abrupt, but sometimes it felt like she did that on purpose.

I would advise giving this a chance, it may surprise you :)  
Happy reading!

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### **Lee says**

I don't really remember what prompted me to request this book via net-galley. It has an ordinary cover, an

ordinary blurb, and I hadn't heard of the author. All I know now is, I'm certainly happy I did, because there is nothing ordinary about *Whispers through a Megaphone*.

Miriam has decided it's high time she starts her life afresh, and goes out into the world. There, she meets the 'hero' of the book, Ralph. Ralph (whose surname is rather unfortunately Swoon) has had a bit of a mental breakdown himself. He's left his wife and family behind and is living in a shed in the woods with a cat.

Can these two hurting misfits help each other heal enough to become what most of us would consider to be functioning members of society?

*Whispers* is a quirky piece. (Yes, I'm using that quirky word which sometimes makes me shudder, because it's a term that is bandied around just too much.)

Its leading lady, the lovely Miriam, is an adorable quirky character whose life up to the novel's opening has been an extremely sad tale. One of abuse and isolation and compulsive behaviour. In fact, if this was a thriller, Miriam's background would make her a prime candidate to be the next female literary serial killer. Instead, she's one of the funniest sweetest characters I've ever had the privilege to read.

Elliott handles Miriam's plot, characterisation, and all her related idiosyncrasies with the subtlest of touches. Each time I learnt something new about Miriam's life, I found it extremely disturbing, (I definitely don't want to think about them again by listing them or offering spoilers) but from the way they're presented, and the impeccable timing that they're introduced by Elliott, I never felt tempted to file this book under the 'depressing' tag. I'm in awe of Elliott's skill in making Miriam, and the book as a whole, so heartwarming and upbeat considering some of the content.

The book has a cast of colourful supporting characters including Ralph's wife, the addicted-to-Twitter Sadie, who I wanted to hate but couldn't find the heart to do so; Miriam's handyman neighbour, Boo; Ralph's sons; Ralph's first love; and the mysterious kids delivering inspirational postcards to Miriam.

The book is a brilliant piece of literature, touching on an array of themes without getting bogged down in giving us a lecture or heralding its own importance.

If I was a rich film producer I'd snap up the rights to this novel. In fact, I desperately want someone to film it now. Playing Miriam could be a BAFTA winning role. And I've already cast Ralph in my mind (I thought of Kevin Doyle from *Downton Abbey* the entire time I read).

*Whispers through a Megaphone* deserves to become a buzz book of the year. Highly recommend. 5/5

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### Fran says

This had some good writing and memorable (if unlikeable) characters. Some aspects felt a little too much or unnecessary, but overall, an ok read.

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## **Kirsty says**

Full review to follow.

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## **Melissa says**

I received an ARC of this book from Pushkin Press.

The two main characters in this book have allowed other people to influence their lives to the point of misery. When their stories finally intersect, they serve as a comfort for each other and form a kind of unconditional friendship that both of them have desperately needed. Miriam hasn't left her house in three years because of a traumatic incident for which she wrongly blames herself. As we get to know Miriam we learn that her mental health issues have stemmed from a lifetime of mental and physical abuse at the hands of her mother.

It is very difficult to read about Miriam's story and I usually avoid books that describe child or animal abuse because it is just too upsetting. But Miriam's resilient spirit and her drive to put the past behind her is uplifting. She is told when she is a very young child that her father died when she was an infant and the only other family member that she has any contact with is her maternal grandmother. But Miriam's mother has not allowed her to see her grandmother and so her only source of comfort are letters from her grandmother. But Miriam's mother is so cruel and jealous that she puts a stop to the letters which causes Miriam additional mental anguish. The crudest punishment that is imposed on Miriam is that she is never allowed to talk above a whisper because her mother can't stand any noise. The punishment for speaking above a whisper in her mother's presence is nothing short of torture. As an adult Miriam continues to speak at a whisper and cannot break this abusive habit forced on her by her mother.

Ralph is also unhappy when we first meet him, but the source of his anxiety is his bizarre, demanding and overpowering wife. Ralph and Sadie met while in college and if she didn't become pregnant with twins then the relationship would never have lasted. Sadie is bitter that she is forced to give up on her degree and the budding relationship with her roommate Allie. Sadie's questioning of her sexuality and her unhappiness in something that has always stood in the way of Ralph and Sadie's marriage. When Ralph accidentally uncovers this astounding secret, he flees his house and decides to live alone in the woods. It is in this woods that Miriam comes upon him during what is her first day out of her house in three years.

I have to admit that I was reading their separate stories at the beginning of the book, I wasn't convinced that these two people with such separate lives would meet in a way that was believable. But Elliott masterfully weaves together the story so that Ralph and Miriam encounter each other under just the right circumstances. They are both kindhearted people and their sincere compassion allows them to give each other honest and frank opinions. Miriam slowly comes back to the world of the living and gains the courage to get a job and even go on a date. Ralph finally decides to go home and face his teenage sons and the wreck of his marriage.

Whispers Through a Megaphone is an uplifting book that shows us it's never too late in life to form a friendship that is meaningful and gratifying. Great characters, an interesting plot and clever writing all make for a successful first book from Elliott.

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## Carolyn says

This intriguing story centres on two dysfunctional families, Miriam who has had a difficult childhood with her mentally ill single mother and hasn't left the house in the three years since she died and Ralph, father of 16 year old twin boys and husband of Sadie, a woman he doesn't really know. Sadie is too busy tweeting and blogging about her life to live it and realise that she and her husband really don't have much in common apart from their sons. One day, at his own birthday party Ralph opens a cupboard door to discover something that opens his eyes for the first time and he reacts by running away from home. Living in a shack in the nearby woods he later meets Miriam who has decided the time has come to leave the house.

In Miriam, Elliott has created a very original and singular character. Her mother, Frances is not only crazy (she once turned up at Miriam's school nude and started cleaning) but cold and not in the least maternal. She has kept Miriam from her father and grandmother out of pure spite and prevents her forming any social ties ensuring her profound social awkwardness. Her decree that Miriam keep quiet and not talk has resulted in Miriam only being able to talk in whispers.

But Miriam knows the true Miriam is lurking inside and ready to come out and face the world after three years on her own. And she is not entirely friendless. There is Boo her devoted neighbour, her only friend Fenella who never gives up on her, her developing friendship with Ralph and someone else out there who keeps pushing encouraging postcards through her letterbox.

The charm of this wonderful debut novel is in watching the characters change and develop as they find their true places in life. Not just Miriam who has the most growing to do, but also Ralph and his wife Sadie who is selfish but also yearning for her better self. The more minor characters, Boo and Ralph's son Stanley are also quietly finding their paths to where they want to be. The characters are often quirky and things don't always turn out as you would expect but is a lot of humour along the way as new connections, romance and friendships are found.

*"There was an unbroken stranger inside Miriam Delaney – the same age but louder, the same height but taller. That stranger is now a woman and she is still buried deep. She is a doll inside a doll. Pull a string on the outer doll and nothing happens. Pull a string on the inner doll and she speaks. Trouble is, no one can hear the inner doll. No one knows she's there."*

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*With many thanks to Netgalley and Penguin Australia for an ecopy of this wonderful book to read and review*

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## Jennifer says

as far as i can tell, and while the depths and degrees vary, everyone is broken in some way. sometimes in many ways. if we are lucky we have grit, a good sense of humour, and, maybe, support from others as we try and navigate our lives (while mitigating the damages as best we can). this all sounds very dark and heavy, i

know... but: remember the humour! and if you are tuned into these facts about those around you, there is a sensitivity and kindness about you so very much needed in this world.

so - that is what *whispers through a megaphone* is about. i found this to be a great read, and an impressive debut novel. the story is insightful, i enjoyed the quirk factor, and i think the character of miriam will stick with me for quite some time. there is a bit of a twist near the end, which was peculiar, (view spoiler). my only criticism, or disappointment, with the novel has to do with the character of sadie, and the storyline between her and ralph. it fairly dwindled off in regards to sadie's arc, which felt odd to me given she was an alternating voice for most of the book. but this is a minor quibble, really.

this is another novel that landed on my reading radar thanks to the 2016 baileys women's prize for fiction, and i am so glad it did!

interview with rachel elliott: <http://bookanista.com/rachel-elliott/>

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### **Karina Almeroth says**

Sharp. Observant. Witty. Heartbreaking. Whimsical, almost. I could identify with every character. So many lines I scribbled down madly to reread later...moments to do with love, mainly!! A beautiful book, I can't even do it justice...poignant would be another apt description. For a debut novel, it blows us all out of the water!! Can't wait to read her next novel. Very trendy, on-point with current times and issues - hence the sharply observed reviews. I feel both grateful for this sad, intoxicating world and slightly crushed and heartbroken after reading this book...which I kind of sense is the author's heart and soul coming through. Stunning!!! She's all heart and humanity ❤

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### **Peebee says**

Definitely a quirky little book with extra quirky characters. I wasn't sure I would enjoy it at first, given the depth of some of the challenges faced by the characters, but Miriam and Ralph grew on me after a while. It's also very British but still very accessible to others. I like that the ending was a little unpredictable yet still very heartwarming.

I received a free advance copy from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Clarabel says**

Cela fait trois ans que Miriam n'a plus franchi le seuil de sa maison mais la mort de sa mère vient enfin de la délivrer d'un poids. Elle ressent le besoin de sortir et court alors droit devant elle, jusque dans les bois, où elle croise Ralph, lui aussi en pleine crise existentielle. Son mariage est au bord de l'implosion, sa femme Sadie est une éternelle insatisfaite, qui regrette de n'avoir pas cédé à son attirance pour sa meilleure copine de fac. Leur rencontre est le déclencheur. À force de discuter, ils refont le monde en y insufflant une dose de fantaisie. Et c'est tout simplement incroyable, magique, insolite... mais fabuleux. ?

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**Teresa says**

3.5

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**Adrian Curcher says**

I don't even know where to begin in trying to review this incredible book. Miriam Delaney. She'll stay with me for a long time. A character like her doesn't come about very often. Reflecting so much humanity. Feeling so real. So full of sadness and tragedy, yet taking it all with such a humor and spirit. She feels like a friend I want to introduce to everyone. Such an incredible soul. I see so much of myself, so much of everyone I know in her. I cannot wait for this book to come out and to be able to sell it to people and have the great privilege of introducing people to the wonderful Miriam Delaney.

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**Liz says**

This is an excellent book.

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**Figgy says**

Miriam hasn't left her house in three years, and cannot raise her voice above a whisper. But today she has had enough, and is finally ready to rejoin the outside world.

There was an unbroken stranger inside Miriam Delaney – the same age but louder, the same height but taller.

That stranger is now a woman and she is still buried deep. She is a doll inside a doll. Pull a string on the outer doll and nothing happens. Pull a string on the inner doll and she speaks. Trouble is, no one can hear the inner doll. No one knows she's there.

Meanwhile, Ralph has made the mistake of opening a closet door, only to discover with a shock that his wife Sadie doesn't love him, and never has. And so he decides to run away.

Feline logic told her that he had dragged himself here to die. Why else would he have turned up in the woods at 11.30 p.m. on 4th August with no bag, no possessions, just a wallet, a phone, and a guitar?

But the cat was wrong.

He hadn't come here to die.

Miriam and Ralph's chance meeting in a wood during stormy weather marks the beginning of an amusing, restorative friendship, while Sadie takes a break from Twitter to embark on an intriguing adventure of her

own. As their collective story unfolds, each of them seeks to better understand the objects of their affection, and their own hearts, timidly refusing to stand still and accept the chaos life throws at them.

“My dad used to make people swoon, back in his heyday. Women used to stare at his bottom.”

“His bottom?”

“He had a nice one, apparently.”

“And did he?”

“What?”

“Have a nice bottom?”

“I couldn’t say.”

“Why?”

“Well, I’m his son. It would be really weird if I went around saying that my dad had a nice bottom.”

“Technically speaking you do go around saying that, otherwise we wouldn’t be having this conversation.”

**The rest of this review can be found [here!](#)**

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### **Bianca says**

Well, well, I’ll be damned: this was a good novel! I’m not sure I can come up with a half-decent way to articulate how good it was. It’s one of those slow-burning, slowly unravelling novels, where the main characters are ordinary yet exceptional. They’re people you know yet they’re like onions with layers that peel off slowly as the novel progresses.

Whispers through a Megaphone is charming, somewhat quirky but not in an obvious way. I loved the tone. I loved the writing. I didn’t mind the many flashbacks because they were seamless. There are lots of POVs, but in the end, they all make sense. While it’s very realistic, it’s not depressing nor is overly saccharin-y, with an over-the-top HEA.

The main heroine, Miriam, was brought up by a mentally unstable mother, who’s turned her into a shy, very quiet, whispering girl, who’s now a 35-year-old woman. For the past three years, Miriam has not left her home, with the exception of her back garden. She decides it’s time to try the outside world again.

Not far from where she lives, Ralph Swoon, 37 years old, psychotherapist, married father of two 16 year-old twin boys is having some sort of midlife crisis and takes off to the woods. That’s where he meets Miriam, on her first day out of the house. An unusual friendship ensues. Will they get together? Yes, they will. But in what capacity? You’ll have to read for yourself as I don’t want to spoil it for you. This novel surprised me, and I like that. You think you know what’s going to happen next, but it’s not exactly what you expected.

Ah, I was quite taken by the fact that all the musical pieces mentioned in this novel were not only known to me, but some of my favourites as well. What were the chances?

This is a novel about relationships, between children and parents, between partners, be it heterosexual or same-sex partners. It's about connecting, about belonging and about love. It's about finding yourself when you feel lost.

I for one was charmed, intrigued, pleasantly surprised and awed. What a fantastic novel!

*I've received this novel via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Thanks to Penguin Australia for the opportunity to read and review this novel.*

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**Cover:** 4 stars

### **Marianne says**

“She sits on the bench and tries to gather herself. She has heard this phrase a lot, gather yourself, but what does it mean? Is the self a collection of visible parts that can be pulled together in preparation for something or reassembled after a breakage? Miriam spends half an hour thinking about what it might be like to accidentally on purpose mix up the components of herself with those of another person - a woman, perhaps, who is also in the middle of gathering herself, a woman who has left the pieces of her character scattered on the grass in this small park...”

Whispers Through a Megaphone is the first novel by British author, Rachel Elliott. The story, told through a straight narrative interspersed with tweets from various people, throws together a myriad of very different characters and elements, a sample of which are: a thirty-five-year-old woman who speaks only in whispers, and has not left her home for three years; a gardener-turned-psychotherapist who discovers on his thirty-seventh birthday that his marriage is not what he thought it was; a wife who tweets her whole life.

Also important are: a red and white megaphone; a handful of cryptic postcards; a quirky but supportive friend; a young man who cannot ignore the family secret he has overheard; a boy with a Dr Who passion; a helpful neighbour in a red velour tracksuit; a couple of old flames; a pair of very different twins; a ginger cat named Treacle; a cruel and crazy mother, now deceased; an absent father; and a shack in the woods.

Elliott takes the reader on a slightly bizarre roller-coaster ride that involves quite a few twists and turns before ultimately coming to a heart-warming conclusion. Even though this novel is written by a British author, the narrative has a somewhat American feel to it. This outstanding debut novel is funny, clever and even a bit thought-provoking.

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