

Where Two Worlds Touch: An Outsider's Memoir in England

River Faire

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River Faire's charming and spiritual memoir *Where Two Worlds Touch* is about creating a new life with his partner in the United Kingdom.

Faire, an American, didn't expect to find himself back in England, especially not as a carer for his ex-partner, Robert. But fate brought him back, both to a country he was somewhat uneasy in and to an estranged partner who was now unwell. In addition to these challenges, he negotiated his spiritual nature in an environment that didn't often feel natural to him.

Composed with immediacy and with an old-fashioned whimsical tone, the narrative is underpinned with passion—as where Faire describes his struggles with writing, or revels in his love for southern British accents, which are “how English *should* sound”:

Our language can be beautiful, it deserves elegance and elocution, with nuances of expression. What a pleasure words such as dulcet, cossetting, and detritus—terms most Americans don't even know—are sprinkled throughout everyday conversations in England. I speak more deliberately now, closer attention paid to my vocabulary.

Likewise, Faire's descriptions of the natural world are powerful and sensual, evoking his desire to “rediscover [his] wild, barefoot nature hiding behind hedgerows along a winding lane in the verdant English countryside”—a place where “the sodden ground moans, slurps, and belches with too much water.” Sensuality follows Faire indoors, too, where he delights in descriptions of food and cooking.

With Faire concentrating on Robert and having little to do with the communities around him, the gritty realities of life as a queer person in contemporary Britain are an infrequent topic. Instead, Britain and its people are presented as quaint; stereotypes about them arise throughout the book, impeding its sense of authentic connection to its setting. Faire, his partner, and the earth consume all; each page represents an escape from dreary realities. And the book is sometimes too deliberate about these presentations, too, masking Faire's and Robert's personalities behind ornamental lines.

Still, the book is encouraging when it comes to recording Faire's work to follow an intuitive path in his life and to claim nature even when it felt distant. Throughout the book, he navigates the chasm between the modern world and natural life forces well, reaching to refine what it means to be human.

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SARAH FRIDESWIDE (November 13, 2023)

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