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At thirty, Aislinn Kelly is an occasional novelist with a near-morbid attunement to the motives of those around her. Isolated, restless and stuck, she decamps to America - a default recourse - this time to an attic room in Indianapolis, to attempt once again the definitive act of self-salvage.

There are sharp memories to contend with as the summer heats up, and not least regarding her family history, now revealed as so botched and pitiful it seems it might yet cancel her out. She's spent years evading the attentions of her unstable, bullying father, only to find her mother now cowering in a second rancid marriage. There are also friendships lost or ailing: with bibulous playwright Karl, sly poet Erwin, depressed bookshop-wallah Bronagh, and Aislinn's best friend Cathy, who has recently found God... Finally her thoughts turn to her last encounter with Jim Schmidt, a man she's loved for ten years, hasn't seen for five, yet still has to consider her opposite number in life.

Opposed Positions is a startlingly frank novel about the human predicament, about love and its substitutes, disgraceful or otherwise. Some of these people want to be free - of themselves, of each other - and some have darker imperatives. Wry, shocking, perfectly observed and utterly heart-breaking, the novel moves towards its troubling conclusion: a painful appreciation of what it is we've come from, and what we might be heading for.

Opposed Positions Details

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From Reader Review Opposed Positions for online ebook

Paul Fulcher says

Gwendoline Riley's *First Love* was my main discovery from this year's Bailey's Prize for Women's Fiction - my review <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...> - and sufficiently strong to make me seek out her earlier work.

I am therefore coming to this one - her previous novel *Opposed Positions* - perhaps from the wrong direction, since *First Love* feels a more developed work and this suffers a little by comparison.

Many of my comments in my previous review would also apply - in particular "This isn't a novel rich in plot. Indeed that is rather antithetical to Riley's approach. It is both a difficulty with but also a strength of the novel, that it is quite hard to piece together Neve (Aislinn in this novel) 's life, house moves and relationships, but that it also doesn't really matter."

Riley's books feel rooted in her own experience, but as she has said it would be wrong to read them too closely as autobiographical. Indeed it is fascinating to see the similarities and differences between Aislinn here and Neve in *First Love*:

Dazed & Confused: You seem incorrigibly drawn back again and again to your own life, or a life like yours, in all of your fiction. What's with that?

Gwendoline Riley: Well, in order to make statements like that you'd need to know the first thing about my life, which, unless you're one of my four friends, you don't. That aside, I will say, boringly, that I find you do have to write what you know, and that there has to be something real at stake in a book to make it worth writing, so maybe that answers the question. In *My Life as a Man* Philip Roth has a teacher put a sign up in his writing class: 'anyone in this class caught using his imagination will be shot'. I wouldn't reach for a gun, but I do hate that horrible corporate word 'imagination' and think it's a real blight on fiction. It makes me think of Terry Gilliam films or – yuck – magic realism. What's wrong with just – thoughts? If you mean my narrators are always writers, well, there's no getting away from that!

Source: <http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandcu...>

Philip Roth does seem an inspiration of sorts - even if Riley's young protagonists are rather different to Roth's. He is quoted in the book's epigraph (*Did fiction do this to me*), which does highlight one difference to *First Love* - there Neve happened to be a writer, but here the struggles of an author's life - and the reaction of others to that life - are more central to the novel. Her main romantic relationship - a periodic one with an itinerant American musician - founders when he accuses her of being "too literary" (an accusation both ridiculous but which hits the mark).

The novel starts with Aislinn playing back to her mother her account of her rather disastrous relationship with Aislinn's father, a man the Independent's review described as *one of the most convincingly monstrous fathers in contemporary novels*.

I know I felt sorry for him when we first met because he was telling me about a Chinese restaurant he liked because it did a very good set menu for *one*. I thought, *Ah...*

'Right,' I said. 'Very touching. And then, next thing you know: don't wear trousers, and he's thumping you if you look at him wrong.'

'Mm...' Mum said.

And then she said, 'Well it's a long time ago now isn't it? Not the most pleasant subject matter this, is it, Aislinn?'

'No.' I said.

Aislinn would happily have little to do with her father, but he seems to regard even her non-response as an aggressive action: she likens her situation to someone who, in the Hollywood movie cliché, has stepped on and activated a landmine:

This felt a useful metaphor to me back then, anyway; life seeming once again to be pretty well rigged; my ongoing existence being assessed again, apparently as an impiety, a de facto infarction. And similarly, too – it occurred to me – escape would require a substitutionary sleight, a well-weighted illusion left in my stead. Then everyone could be happy.

Another Roth quote from Aislinn directly has her reflect that, based on her father and ex-lover's approach to their relationship with her, *I cannot afford the luxury of a self*.

3.5 stars - rounded down to 3 simply because I would start with First Love and then am not convinced this adds much. However, I do expect to read more of Riley's past work in due course.

Danielle says

(Review written for Flows Book Club, Twitter; @BetweenTwoBooks)

Well, to start off I must say that even though I was extremely excited that 'Opposed Positions' by Gwendoline Riley was the first book to be read for Flows Book Club, I was apprehensive starting it. This book really isn't what I'd normally go for. Looking at my bookshelf was all I had to do to realise this (George R.R. Martin's Game of Thrones being the newest book I had added to my expansive collection). Even so, I welcomed the change from fantasy and magic, and to be completely honest I couldn't not read a book that Flo herself had recommended!

'Pleasantly surprised' is an understatement for the emotion I felt when I first began reading this book. I had braced myself for hours of re-reading sentences and flicking back and forth between chapters so that an understanding could be made, but yet I found myself not doing so at all. Actually, the first time I stopped reading I looked down and saw that I was on page 102 and an hour had passed.

Opposed Positions is one of those books in which you begin reading and cannot stop. The storyline is extremely compelling, so much so that at one am the night I began reading it almost pained me to stop knowing that I wouldn't possibly be able to get up the next morning if I kept going. I really loved the sense of mystery in the first few chapters. Riley doesn't give us a very vivid description of- well anything, really. Yet, she gives the reader enough. I found that the further I went, the more I wanted find out about Aislinn Kelly.

I also really liked how blunt Riley is with the reader, in the sense that everything she writes about Aislinn's background sounds harsh but yet it is a very true description of many people's upbringing and I think lots of people will be able to relate for different reasons- the broken home, failed relationships, the need to escape, loneliness and exclusion. I think it's amazing how even though very little of this is actually said, the author manages to communicate it almost casually in Aislinn's conversations or in her descriptions of her life. The last thing I really, really loved about this book is the fact that although it deals with quite serious and heavy themes, I found it to be a very easy, enjoyable read. The print is quite large in the book too, which makes the text a lot easier to read in general. Again as I said before, I was expecting a novel that would break my heart by leaving me confused and frustrated yet I am delighted to say it didn't. I've never read anything like this book before and I am really surprised that I enjoyed it so much. The story was very well thought out and I really felt that I could relate to Aislinn in some parts. This is, all round, a great novel which I will definitely re-read very soon and which I will be recommending to all of my friends.

Nanda says

"So I've been sitting here going over these same old questions: are we supposed to outpace these shadows, or not? And how do we do it? Because all of my attempts so far have been: blind, ghastly, savage, panicked..."

Peach Berry says

an interesting insight into the lives of a fictional, dysfunctional family. the book centres around a young author, Aislinn, as she debates her relationships with both parents, siblings and lovers.

well written in mostly dialogue, this was a rare insight into the intimacys of relationships and how they shape us and our own expectations. A fabulous, descriptive journey through tragedy, loss and indifference.

Sara Booklover says

La Riley non è un'autrice convenzionale, questo suo ultimo romanzo lo conferma. "Posizioni opposte" è un romanzo esistenziale, realistico, che vuole fare da portavoce di una generazione della periferia inglese, quella più rassegnata, disillusa e nichilista. L'autrice nel raccontare la storia sembra unificarsi in un tutt'uno con la protagonista, dando la sensazione che questo romanzo non sia un semplice romanzo, ma sia quasi un'autobiografia. Non se ne ha la certezza, perché l'autrice non racconta mai di sé sul web, ma nel leggere queste pagine scatta questo presentimento. Aislinn, la protagonista trentenne del libro, è una donna problematica, alla ricerca del proprio io, in fuga continua dal suo passato e anche dal suo presente. Ha alle spalle un'infanzia mediocre, tipica dei figli di genitori separati, quelli che devono passare tutti i weekend con il padre anche se non ne hanno voglia, in un turbine di tristi pomeriggi grigi, a fare la spola tra viaggi in macchina e appartamenti vari. Aislinn cresce con la voglia di evadere, con una rabbia repressa, sempre sull'orlo della depressione, tentando di dare la colpa ai genitori, tentando di giustificare la sua mancanza di obiettivi e i suoi continui tentativi di rompere i ponti con tutte le persone che conosce. Non è un piangersi addosso il suo, ma è solo un tentativo di vivere, cercando di farlo nell'unico modo che conosce. "Posizioni opposte" è un romanzo che, per quanto fuori dagli schemi e non facile da inquadrare, mi è piaciuto. Incredibilmente mi sono riconosciuta in molte, moltissime, delle caratteristiche della protagonista, i suoi comportamenti li ho trovati logici, per quanto invece nel pensiero comune saranno considerati assurdi.

Vi è un però un po' di difficoltà a seguire il filo dei suoi ragionamenti, perché partendo dalla sua infanzia va poi a raccontare del presente e ancora torna indietro, e avanti, varie volte, in un fermento di ricordi e aneddoti che si fondono l'uno dentro l'altro. Non è una storia che ha un inizio e una fine ben definita, non è una storia che allietta il lettore e lo rende soddisfatto, per questo credo che non sia un romanzo adatto a tutti, ma solo alle personalità un po' ombrose, solitarie e riflessive. Questo è il primo libro che leggo di Gwendoline Riley, ma adesso che ho capito che l'indole dei suoi personaggi si riflette molto sulla mia, andrò a leggere anche le sue pubblicazioni passate.

John Barnes Odonkor says

what us

Ben Dutton says

Gwendoline Riley has been working steadily for a decade now. Her first novel, *Cold Water*, set the tone for the work to come: young woman, adrift in their lives, stumbling between one romantic fling to another, drinking too much, and generally failing in life. Aislinn Kelly, like Carmel McKisco before, treads a similar path, but is more successful. She has published three novels – not too much acclaim or success it seems (unlike Riley, who has won the Betty Trask Award, a Somerset Maugham Award and been shortlisted for the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize) and is about to decamp to America, where she hopes to feel free once more. America featured prominently in Riley's last novel, *Joshua Spassky*, but here it seems nothing more than a country of false promises. Aislinn Kelly's life is failing, and so are her dreams.

Opposed Positions is a real maturation of Riley's talents. Though a slight novel (it is 230 pages with wide margins) it packs quite the emotional punch. The relationships at the heart of the novel – between Aislinn and her mother and her manipulative father, and between Aislinn and the men in her life – thrum with subtext and devastate emotionally. The whole work is considered, and really should elevate Riley into the big leagues of British letters – but I feel that its sheer intimacy, its desire to cling to the humdrum in her characters' lives might see her side-lined in a way a novel about the rich might not. This is a very British novel, and a very northern one too, and such qualities make it distinctive, like words coming from a different planet.

Riley's prose often sings, and there are moments of sheer dazzling brilliance here: the memories of a Morrissey concert that seem to be at once profound and yet not, the exchange of emails from her father that had me biting my fingers in tension. *Opposed Positions* comes highly recommended. It deserves to make her more than £5k.

Adam Stone says

Although there some lovely prose and similies from Miss Riley in this book there wasn't a great deal going on to keep my interest, and I didn't really like the lead character much either, and couldn't sympathise with her predicament.

I would have to say that this book was a bit of a disappointment, but the main reason being that it just didn't

click with me, rather than it being a badly written book.

Dor says

I'm having one of those moments where, having read the book, I've returned to the blurb to see if I can make sense of it. I'll settle for being able to remember what this one is about, or what happened, but I'm not having much luck there either.

To begin with, it's pretty good. The writing is immersive, the portrait of Aislinn's bullying Father truthful and compelling. Then ... well then's where I fall into a loss. My brain reports something about America and a very long phone call, but the blurb claims "a startlingly frank novel about the human predicament, about love and its substitutes, disgraceful or otherwise," so now I'm wondering if it's me (possible), or if it's not, whether the person who wrote that is available for freelance work.

It picks up again in the final third, but not enough, so I'm going to give it 2.5 stars and say I'd be interested to read other books by this author because I really liked the writing.

Riley says

Where to begin? There was no discernible plot to speak of in this novel. All of the characters are horrible human beings, and just when you think you're beginning to empathize with them just a bit, they go off and say or do something awful. None of them are very fleshed out, either, despite the fact that the events of the novel present many opportunities to do just that. The jaunt off to Indianapolis (which doesn't even happen until halfway through the novel) serves little purpose other than letting the author call out a few local spots before drifting into disjointed memories that introduce forgettable characters.

There were plenty of places in the plot where the author could have built a great narrative. The ideas were there. This book falls short in that it teases those and then abandons them, leaving you with very little as an alternative.

This book's saving grace was the fact that it was short.

Emran Mian says

Like overhearing a telephone conversation on the bus.

Oryx says

Not her best but it's still Gwendolyn...

3.7000000000.15

Helen says

Gwendoline is a very literary writer, multiple award-winning and her latest did not disappoint with her deft handling of prose and dialogue. I do, however, always take issue with writers writing about writers and much of this felt less like fiction and more like an exercise in catharsis. That said, Riley is masterfully brutal in her analysis of just how cruel humans can be to each other in her portrayal of three hundred and sixty degree abuse within a family - tiny, constant, taunting. In the end I wasn't sure how much I liked even Ashlinn herself, and I wasn't clear whether there was an actual story told.

Flows' Book Club says

One of our leaders, Kiera, got to interview Florence Welch about this book, *Opposed Positions*. This is a special treat from all of us at *BetweenTwoBooks* for all of you. Enjoy! x
(Note: I'm not sounding stern or anything when I say, 'yeah' or 'right', trust me...I was smiling like a fool.)

September 18th, 2012

Kiera: "What made you choose *Opposed Positions* as our first book to read?"

Florence: "WELL...um...Gwendoline Riley is a...I think she is a writer that should be far more well-known than she is in England and in America and...she's a really interesting character and writer and um...there's something about the kind of, the mix of...clarity and then these big sudden like life questions in her writing so you're going to see some sort of observational things into something kind of massive and overwhelming. Um, but yeah! I think I picked her because I feel like she is a young female writer underrated, and un...should be much more known than she is. And so it felt like it was a good way to start.

Kiera: "Right, were you reading the book while we asked you?"

Florence: "I was...I think that was part of it as well." *giggles* "I was, I had it with me on my travels...if my thing is here...my case...carry all kinds of books with me and you know, I was reading this one um...at the time. So touring...I could probably try and show you..." *stands up to look for the case & sings* "I don't think my little suitcase is here, but I've got all kinds of stuff in there." *sits back down next to me* "There's an Elvis biography called, 'Careless Love' which is amazing and the um...it is...'The Fire Alphabet'? I can't remember, but I've got a whole bunch of stuff. Um, so yeah this was just part of my big book pile, and I kind of picked it out because I feel like she should be getting a lot more recognition than she is."

Kiera: "Okay, um, which character is your favorite and why? Would this character be the one you'd take out to dinner or would you choose somebody else?"

Florence: *nods her head & taps her fingers on my OP book* "Emm....obviously not Aislinn's dad 'cause he's terrifying. Umm..." *laughs*

Kiera: "Nor Howard."

Florence: "What I wanted....not Howard. NO...NOT...Howard. Um...it's funny because I went to see Gwendoline Riley read, and at the beginning she was like, 'Well thank you.' And then at the end she was like, 'I'm sorry,' but you know, it's like, 'I'm going to read you a passage from this horrible book.'" *laughs* "She said that and it was like, 'You know, 'cause there are some kindof quite reprehens- there are reprehensible characters like throughout it and it isn't kindof... always an uncomfortable reading experience, you know, and you kindof worry. Especially, you know...there were moments in the book where I was worried, generally worried, for them. When she brings um...what was his name?" *flips through the pages of OP* "I mean you don't want to hang out with Cathy." *laughs* "It's hard, I mean, I think um...I like her friend, her.....the one she goes and drinks red wine with." *still flipping through the pages* "Is that Howard...oh no, not Howard. Howard's the worrrst. See it's hard, I don't know 'cause she has quite like." *exhales and stops going through OP* "Her view of the world is so kindof...almost just half dreamy and half stern, so it's, you know, quite hard to kindof figure out who you like but. And then I was really worried when, um, she kindof invites the drunk guy back to her house. I started getting like, I was like, 'Fuck, what's going to happen?' So you could've worried for her, you worry like." *pause* "Well I quite like Karl."

Kiera: "Yeah, yeah."

Florence: "Karl seems...Karl seem okay but"

Kiera: "Like the cool guy."

Florence: "Yeah! I quite like Karl. I don't like her ex-boyfriend very much."

Kiera: "No, I did NOT like him."

Florence: "Um, I mean, I think the character that you'd obviously wanna, you like the most, is Aislinn. But then, you know, from kindof her cool world view, you know, would you...she seems interesting, but would might be, she might be quite a hard person to talk to. You know, she seems very much...uhh...she seems very much kindof...on the edge of something. She seems kindof teetering, always like, always running away or kindof..."

Kiera: "Keeping to herself."

Florence: "Yes! Um... so you know, as a book to choose who you'd go to dinner with it would be...a difficult choice!" *laughs and flips through the OP pages again* "Because it's a bleak, I mean it's beautifully written, but it's like it's bleak...in parts. Her moments are really sort of beautiful, shining beauty like...ugh, where is that little paragraph where she talks, like, 'my hairdresser'? You know, where she lists things that are...lying on the floor...when she's in, um, America."

Kiera: "Yeah, um, I'm trying to think. It was about four books ago that I read that."

Florence: "Yeah, I know how you feel. I'm like, 'Oop, interview!'" *laughs* "I'm like, 'I don't remember any of the names!'" *pause* "Ah, here we go, this is beautiful. This passage; 100 to 101." *points to the passage, showing it to me* "In it is a type of moment of peace and clarity and the kind of...some things, quite, uh, quite sort of... you know, and I think you feel that's what she's kindof escaping to. Just that kindof...the moment of on the bedroom floor with my water, my phone, and my hand cream, you know those kinds of moments of serenity, that's in the book that seems cluttered, were so huge." *pause* "Not cluttered, actually. 'Cause 'cluttered' would definitely be the wrong word because she's very clear throughout."

Kiera: “Yeah. Alright, number four. During the book discussion, we had asked Flows what Florence + the Machine song did they think would best suit the book, if it was turned into a soundtrack. And most of them chose ‘Breaking Down’, would you agree or would you choose another one? And it doesn’t have to be yours.”

Florence: *laughing* “I think I would choose ‘Breaking Down’”.

Kiera: “Would you?”

Florence: “Yeah, ‘cause again, it’s like kindof a happy/sad song or it’s a sad song with a happy tune, and that always kindof... I’m not sure if the...again, it’s that moment of...a teetering on the edge, you know, of kindof self-reflection or conf...just desperately to find some kind of self, you know, to find...I like these...now what was the one, the bit that I really liked?” *flipping through OP pages* “And like disconnections with family and distance and, you know friendships and... you know, what do we really need? What do we really need? Do we need for these, all these ties? I mean she feels like, it seems like she’s someone who is, quite, caught between wanting to have them and then wanting to just completely, completely kindof purge and cut off from all that.” *pause* “She’s kindof like, and let’s talk about her face, you know like, ‘Why? Like why, you know, do I have this...is it, is it my face?’” *laughs*

Kiera: “I think...”

Florence: “It would probably have to be a Smiths’ song though. ‘Cause she loves the Smiths. Like Gwendoline Riley is a huge Smiths fan and Aislinn is, in the book as well, a huge Smiths fan so. It would probably have to be a Smiths song; I reckon to soundtrack this book.”

Kiera: “Okay, if you had to summarize the message of Opposed Positions in one word, what would it be?”

Florence: *looks around the room, and then into the OP book* “It’s hard.” *pause* “Where’s that passage that I really liked?” *pause for 20 seconds as she searches* “It’s funny because we went to White River, and we travelled to these places that she went. And I had the book with me the whole time. “

Kiera: “Yeah, we saw the video, thank you so much for that.”

Florence: “No problem!” *still flipping through OP* “Where did I love that bit where she said that her room looked like a ‘crashed mobile library’? She has like a room that is a crashed mobile library.”

Kiera: “Yeah, yeah. I think you tweeted that quote to us.”

Florence: “Yeah, that was good.”

Kiera: “I think you said something like you had the same type of room.”

Florence: “I have so many piles of books in my...” *lost herself in flipping through OP* “In my room. Just piles of them. I need to get a book shelf.” *pause* “I mean...it’s a hard question.”

Kiera: “Yeah, our followers are really intelligent. They come up with some really good questions.”
Florence giggles

~20 seconds pass as Florence is looking through OP, and she starts singing to herself out loud~

Florence: *talking to herself* “I wanna find the...I wanna find the page that I...” *flips a few pages* “Yeah, it’s like she’s not afraid to kindof make you feel uncomfortable. She’s not afraid to kindof take you into situations where you’re like so kindof involved in her strange life, and it’s really, like...the moments of like...you kindof wanna recoil from it but you can’t. She just kindof is there with you, kindof talking you through everything that’s happening.”

Kiera: “Right, exactly.”

Florence: “So much kindof discomfort throughout it, I think sort of...I do have... something being kindof beautiful and uncomfortable at the same time. The kind of experience, clarity and confusion, you know that...kindof. It’s probably that moment of clarity experience before you tumble into total...collapse.” *giggles* “The clarity before the collapse, I think. Suddenly that feeling of, ‘I understand everything’ and then...you all of a sudden, lose control.” *laughs* “But that was so many words, but I don’t know...” *trails off while looking through OP and starts humming*

~about 30-35 seconds pass as she’s looking~

Kiera: “Does Isa read a lot?”

Florence: “Um...she does...she does read a lot. She reads a lot of art works. She’s into Bridget Riley, so she looks at all books of art. Her whole family are book dealers, so they have an enormous...”

Kiera: “Oh really? That’s neat.”

Florence: “Yeah, you should ask her about it, actually.”

Kiera: “I saw her in the cafeteria.”

Florence: “Yeah, her whole family are book dealers, she has like this whole house full of books like stacked to the top. She has some pretty crazy titles on them, to be honest. I can’t find the bit that I...” *trails off again for about 30 seconds looking through OP and humming* “I can’t find the passage, um. It’s too hard to pick one word.” *giggles and closes OP* “I think ‘brilliant’ would be a good word to describe it because there is kindof a brilliance in the...you know, kindof in the white heat of America and kindof a clarity of description. Um, but then yeah there’s kindof a soggy, solemn bits as well. And I feel drenched in wine and...uh...what’s the word? Almost sort of...feel almost...like sad Christmases.”

Kiera: “Right.”

Florence: *pauses* “The word’s not popping out of me. I guess I will have to go with a lot of uh...lots and lots of words.” *opens OP and starts flipping through again and talks to herself.* “There’s a passage...” *15 seconds* “I mean, I guess we would just have to say that the word was ‘literary’.” *laughs*

Kiera: “Perfect!”

Florence: “Literary, we’ll have to go with that one. Let’s go with ‘literary’ then.” *giggles and drinks her water*

Kiera: “Do you have any questions for us? As in our creation or..?”

Florence: "Um...I just want to say how, just how, I think this is such a brilliant thing. And I think it's wonderful and I can't wait to kindof...whatever you guys need, if you need any...I can't wait to see how grows. I'm amazed at how many followers you have already. And, you know, so how did you guys start? Did you...?"

Kiera: "Okay, well..."

Florence: "I know I got that tweet that was like, 'We should start a book club' and it went from there!"

Kiera: "Oh, you saw that?! That said like..."

Florence: "Yeah! I think that...yeah, yeah, yeah!"

Kiera: "Oh! That was Leah!"

(Unfortunately, my mum called me in the middle of the interview, so this got cut off. Florence was the one who pointed out that she called, so I ignored it & started a new voice memo right away to finish the interview.)

Kiera: "Um, well...I can call her back afterwards." *Florence laughs* "But, uh, yeah so she said, 'we should start a book club' and I was like, 'alright, we'll see how this goes. I haven't read in a while, the last book I read was the Hunger Game series back in March.' And...that's a good one, I like that one."

Florence: "Yeah! I mean the Hunger Games film...ugh, I haven't read the books. I've seen the film."
giggles

Kiera: "Ah! You have to read the books!"

Florence: "Yeah, Hannah was...Hannah was reading the books."

Kiera: "Personally, I like the books a lot better than the movie, but that's usually how it goes."

Florence: "Yeah, that's usually the case."

Kiera: "But, um, basically we said, 'oh we're in!' and we were trying to decide the name for BetweenTwoBooks, and we were trying to decide, we were taking your song titles..."

Florence: "BetweenTwoBooks is a good one! I was really impressed with that!"

Kiera: "We were going to go with You've Got the Book or something, but..."

Florence: "I think you chose right with BetweenTwoBooks."

Kiera: "Yeah because, you know, we had said that that was your cover song so we wanted to go with an original song of yours, so we went with BetweenTwoBooks."

Florence: *laughs* "BetweenTwoBooks has a lovely ring to it."

Kiera: "Thank you."

Florence: "And it's funny because the name 'Between Two Lungs' actually comes from a book."

Kiera: "Does it?"

Florence: "An old pulp novel called 'Brute' which is horrendous, and I found it in a, like a secondhand book shop. And it has all these like crazy violent comics in it, and then on one of the pages it has just like...well it's a tiny book. It had this story called 'Between Two Lungs' and that's where it came from. And on the other side of the page was a book, was a story called 'Day of the Dog'. So it was a weird...those two stories came together in a book, but it was a weird thing. AND in 'Between Two Lungs', for all of you book nerds, there is a Cormac McCarthy quote, if you can find it. I'll give you a prize."

Kiera: "Okay, we'll ask, we'll challenge our followers!" *Florence laughs* "We'll see if they can find it!"

Florence: "What other...fuck, what other book-find things can I give you? I don't know, I can't really remember."

Kiera: "We liked Seven Devils, we found the book for that one. 'If He Hollers...'"

Florence: "YES! Chester Himes! Uh-huh. Good! That's good. Uh, what is this like, like uh, book, uh, book treasure hunt. A lyric treasure hunt!"

Kiera: "And I had watched an interview, uh, you were being interviewed in Canada and they said they found your grandfather in one of the books as like a writer or something."

Florence: "Yeah, OH! My...Colin. Uh, Colin Welch. He was my grandfather, my grandfather was...oh no, Craig Brown. Craig Brown is my uncle who writes satire. So he's written a good, an amazing book called 'One on One' which is like, all these meetings of historical figures. One to the other to the other, so they're all connected." *playing with my Sharpie* "And he's written a lot of parodies of famous people. He hasn't parodied me yet so...I'm waiting for that."

Kiera: "Waiting for that one, yeah." *she laughs* "You gotta get ready soon?"

Florence: "Soon, soon. But what else could we do for you? Would you want to meet the rest of the band, say, 'hi'?"

Kiera: "I kinda met Chris."

Florence: "You met Chris? Aww good, do you want to come meet Isa?"

Kiera: "Yes!"

Florence: "You can ask her about the book emporium."

Kiera: "Would you mind if I called my mum back real quick?"

Florence: "Of course not...make sure we haven't kidnapped you."

{The book Florence was trying to remember, “The Fire Alphabet” is actually called, ‘Fire, Blood, and the Alphabet’ by Sebastian Daggart. If you are interested in reading this book, you can purchase it here:
<http://www.amazon.com/Fire-Blood-Alph...> }

Middlemarcher says

A razor-sharp depiction of the grinding banality of parents, friends and lovers who fall short. Remarkable and recommended.

This slim, spare novel is English author Riley's fifth book and her best yet.
