

What We're Reading - 12 February 2021

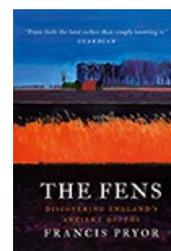
Lucy Nathan

Opinion - Books Friday, 12th February 2021

The BookBrunch team reveals what's on their bedside tables

Jo Henry

Lockdown, with so many seminars and talks now online and easily available, has given me an opportunity to spend a bit more time on archaeology, an area I've been fascinated by for many years. One of the most accessible writers in this field is Francis Pryor, who has dug extensively in the fens and East Anglia over the past forty years and was instrumental in discovering, among others, the incredibly important Flag Fen site. His book on the (rather misnamed) seahenge in north Norfolk was fascinating, and I'm now very much enjoying the audiobook of his latest, *The Fens: Discovering England's Ancient Depths* (Head of Zeus). Extremely erudite, with a deep love for and understanding of the flat landscapes of Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire (where he has lived for many years), this is the bronze and iron ages brought vividly to life.



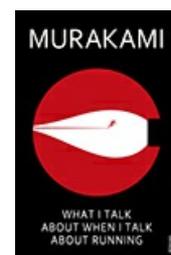
Neill Denny

After the scene-setting of the first half of David Miles' *The Tale of the Axe* (Thames & Hudson), the enigmatic stone axes of the neolithic take centre-stage. He links a magnificent green jadeitite hand-axe, found by a farmer in an English field and now in Devizes museum, to its source: the isolated peak of Monte Viso in the Alps. Axes from this one mountain are found across Ireland, Britain and Brittany: then, 6,000 years ago, they dry up, and the locals turn to domestic sources. This then unlocks a masterful distillation by Miles of the latest research and thinking about British and European prehistory, scholarly but accessible. My only plea would be for more maps and more photographs.



David Roche

One of the surprises of the last year, to me and most people who know me, has been that I have started running a couple of times a week. Not chasing a ball in some sort of competitive fashion - running for its own sake. Unheard of. Being a big Murakami fan, I have orbited the closest thing to his memoir but kept a safe distance because of the title, fearing it would be too focused on running, per se. Finally, I felt that I was ready to take a look. Oh me of little faith, it's Haruki Murakami and it's wonderful. It's accessible, it's dinky (at 192 pages), it's thoughtful and informative, it's philosophical and amusing. One is a better person for reading it. What on earth was I thinking?



Nicholas Clee

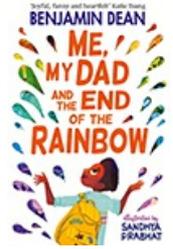
Bitter Lemon now faces a lot more competition in the field of translated crime fiction than when it started out, but continues to unearth exciting titles. I should guess that *Crocodile Tears* by Mercedes Rosende is the first Uruguyan crime novel to have appeared in the UK; it is certainly the first by Rosende, a well established author in her home country, and I hope we'll get others by her. *Crocodile Tears* occupies Elmore Leonard/Patrick Hoffman territory, with a cast of amoral characters observed intimately and ironically, and here with a certain amount - but not an overdose - of playful commentary. The translation by Tim Gutteridge is a pleasure to read.





Lucy Nathan

Me, My Dad and the End of the Rainbow by Benjamin Dean (S&S) is absolutely charming. It's the Waterstones children's book of the month for February, marking LGBT History Month, and it's one of the most wonderful, funny and vibrant children's books I've read in some time. It follows 12-year-old Archie Albright, whose parents are getting divorced, and who are keeping a big secret from him - but when a flyer for London Pride falls out of his dad's pocket, Archie thinks he's found the solution. This book is gloriously inclusive, with drag queens, a nonbinary character, and countless characters of colour. It's also very warm - Archie's voice is so likable, and the way his relationships with his friends and family are drawn is just gorgeous. I hope every school library buys multiple copies of this book and that booksellers press it into as many children's hands as they possibly can. Finally, I must mention Sandhya Prabhat's illustrations - the page decorations are beautiful, and the cover is breathtaking.



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