



What We're Reading - 20 November 2020

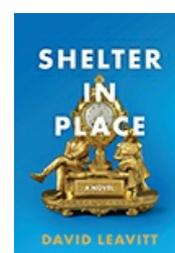
Lucy Nathan

Opinion - Books Friday, 20th November 2020

The BookBrunch team reveals what's on their bedside tables

Nicholas Clee

When my friend David Leavitt arrived on the literary scene in the Eighties with *Family Dancing* and *The Lost Language of Cranes*, he became inappropriately associated with the "brat pack" of emerging US writers - Jay McInerney, Bret Easton Ellis, Tama Janowitz. It helped for a while, and then did him a disservice: his talent is less flashy and, I think, richer than theirs. *Shelter in Place* is set among Manhattan bien pensants in the aftermath of Donald Trump's victory in the 1996 presidential election, and centres on the chilly and wilful Eva Lindquist's ambition to buy an apartment in Venice. Why should we care about such a matter? These characters, with their hangers-on, their Bedlington terriers, and their second homes in Connecticut, are ripe for satire; and yet, Leavitt shows us, their insecurities, their sense of danger even, are not negligible. *Shelter in Place* is a page-turning social comedy and a portrait of our anxious age.



David Roche

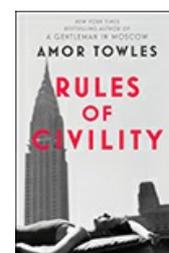


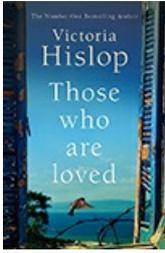
High Fidelity was one of my favourite books, I'm pretty sure in the mid 90s despite Amazon.co.uk telling me it was first published in January 1790. I have read most of Nick Hornby's novels since and was looking forward to reading *Just Like You* (Viking) when it came out this autumn. It tells the story of a forty-something white woman who is recently divorced who hooks up with a 22 year old black man that she meets in her local butcher where he works at the weekend. We look into their relationship - a balance of what brings them together with the complexities of their backgrounds which are very different. On top of that we are given a big dollop of North London debate on Brexit which personally I

didn't need right here, right now. Maybe I have changed rather than the author but I found *Just Like You* too saccharine and of the Richard Curtis stable for my tastes, though many will love his style of storytelling which has wit, insight and observation, as always.

Jo Henry

Amor Towles had a huge success with his novel *A Gentleman in Moscow* in 2016, so I was intrigued to read his first book, *Rules of Civility* (Sceptre), published five years before that. New York 1937, and Katey Kontent and her friend Eve Ross are stretching three dollars as far as it will go in the Hotspot nightclub in Greenwich Village. Enter good looking, rich banker Tinker Grey - and cue a whip-smart, funny and touching whirl through a year in the lives of a group of 20-somethings in New York. With a touch of *The Great Gatsby* and little bit of *Sex and the City*, Katey manages to keep her cool while navigating her way through the thickets surrounding her. One of those rare books I didn't want to end, it also made me hugely nostalgic for New York - can't wait to visit again!





Lucy Nathan

I'm only about seventy pages into *Those who are loved* by Victoria Hislop (Headline Review) but am already really enjoying it. I have never read any of her other books despite having been told about a thousand times that *The Island* is incredible (it's on my very long TBR list!) but the title of this one caught me first. I know very little about Greek history other than what I picked up from *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, one of my all-time favourite novels, and the way that Hislop weaves it into the text is seamless and cleverly done. It follows the story of Themis and her family as Nazi forces occupy Greece in 1941 and it's very easy to read, which is something that a lot of people seem to think is an insult, but to

me it's a big compliment. A book that pulls you easily along is blissful to sink into, and *Those who are loved* is exactly that.

Source article: <https://www.bookbrunch.co.uk/page/article-detail/what-we-re-reading--20-november-2020>