

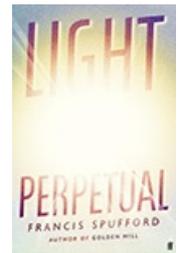
What We're Reading - 26 February 2021

Opinion - Books Friday, 26th February 2021

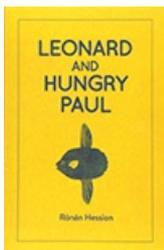
The BookBrunch team reveals what's on their bedside tables

Jo Henry

Francis Spufford's *Golden Hill* was one of my favourite books of 2016, so I've been eagerly awaiting his next one. *Light Perpetual* (Faber) is completely different to its predecessor: in 1944 a V2 bomb explodes in south London and atomises five children who have little in common except that they were with their mothers in Woolworths when the tragedy happened. But what if they weren't? Spufford explores how each individual's life might have developed if they hadn't died that day. So far, the writing is exceptional (reminding me a little of Kate Atkinson's *Time After Time*, which is high praise!) but it's difficult to see how - or indeed if - their stories intersect or relate back to that explosive opening.



David Roche

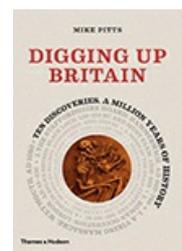


Bluemoose Books is a wonderful indie publisher, banging the drum for publishing in the North of England since Kevin and Hetha Duffy started in Hebden Bridge in 2006 and really hitting the headlines when Ben Myers' *The Gallows Pole* won the Walter Scott Prize in 2018. *Leonard and Hungry Paul* by Rónán Hession has been their latest breakout success and its iconic jacket has steadily increased its presence on tables at the front of many a bookstore since its publication in March 2019. It has been listed for awards, selected as the One Dublin One Book title for 2021, and looks certain to go on to wider success internationally.

I am delighted to join the vocal supporters and become an advocate - it really is worth the fuss. Friendship, belief, and innocence are everywhere and it is clearly striking a chord with many readers. It's charming, thoughtful and one of those books that appears to be so sweet and simple but you know has taken so much talent and skill to make it seem so. Highly recommended.

Neill Denny

In *Digging Up Britain* (Thames & Hudson) Mike Pitts tells the story of our deep history by focusing on ten iconic British archaeological sites, the history of Britain in 10 places if you will. Romans, Vikings, all the way back through the iron, bronze and stone ages to lions, elephants and rhinos, and early hominids walking this land over almost a million years ago, at Happisburgh in Norfolk. There are even cannibals. Each chapter goes in-depth to a single site, and presents the findings as part of a wider whole. Much time is spent on the new scientific methods of investigation, more akin to crime scenes than Time Team, that are revealing masses of data from even the most unpromising material. This is dense, authoritative stuff written by the editor of *British Archaeology*, who seems to get superb access to all the key sites and findings.





Nicholas Clee

I have been a fan of the novels of Elinor Lipman since reading her delightful *Then She Found Me* (1990), and am very grateful to my colleague Jo Henry for the reminder (**What We're Reading, 22 January**) about the author's new novel, *Rachel to the Rescue* (Lightning Books). True to form, it's a charming love story and a witty, perceptive social satire - but not the kind of satire, one would have thought, that should scare off US publishers, as appears to have happened. Rachel gets fired from her job reassembling Donald Trump's torn-up documents, gets run over by the president's alleged lover, and finds a new position as assistant to a writer of investigative non-fiction. Meanwhile, she's got a

promising thing with a guy who works in his father's wine store. It's a treat.

Lucy Nathan

This Lovely City by Louise Hare (HQ) was an incredibly enjoyable book. Despite weighty themes - there was a very tragic death at the centre of the plot, and the book also explores the terrible racism in London in 1950 - it was written with a lightness of touch that really pulled me in. When Lawrie, who's been in London for two years after arriving on the Windrush, finds the body of a baby in a pond, he is immediately a murder suspect - and although this plot was a real whodunnit, it was the authentic, natural interactions between the characters that resonated with me the most. The love story between Lawrie and Evie was beautifully drawn, and so were the friendships between the couple and the other characters. I think friendship is often undervalued in books, and it was a joy to read about Lawrie and Evie building their found family in London.



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