

Transcript

Talking literature with Richard E. Grant

Title:

How do you think books bring places to life?

Richard E. Grant:

I think it's always going to give you a different perspective reading your way round a country or a city in a way that no guide book does in the same way and you get an individual voice - the personalised vision of one person's journey through a story as Robert Harris's or Carlo Levi in 'Christ Stopped at Eboli', so it's the personal that you don't get in a history book and you don't get in a guide book. You get one person's view of that and that is very arresting.

Reading a book by an author, when you go to the country they come from and the location where the novel or travelogue is set particularly, it gives you a 360 degree experience which enhances and expands your experience of reading the novel, I think.

I have a very strong feeling that fiction and fact interweave far more than we think they do and so that what may be very autobiographical certainly in Scott Fitzgerald's case, writing about Nicole and Dick Diver, based on the Murphys, in reality we now know that it was really a portrait of the breakdown Fitzgerald's marriage rather than the Murphys so that kind of, sort of window dressing of their lives, but the real story is entirely autobiographical of Scott Fitzgerald and I think that it's a case of fiction being entirely informed by the facts of people's real lives.

Title:

How can fiction bring history to life?

Richard E. Grant:

In the case of Victoria Hislop's book, obviously I've read around about the Spanish Civil War but framing within that story with the flashbacks it enables you through a story to go into history in a way that is less dry I think than if you're just reading the Wikipedia of what happened there because what the story always gives you is the emotional impact and how that affected people's lives in a way that history books, well that's not how they're written to be.

Title:

Do you think the series will inspire readers to travel to the places associated with the books?

Richard E. Grant:

My experience of films – if a film is successful – the locations of where they were shot immediately become a great tourist attraction, the Sound of Music being the most obvious one and films that I've been involved with, I've had the same experience. So hopefully if you show the landscape and interview people who can inform you in more detail about how the book came about or where the person lived or anything that you can bring to it, I think that that does hugely attract people to go to the places and to read the book with a renewed interest, or books that may have fallen by the wayside get taken up again, so I think that's, they complement each other – hugely.