

Audio file

[awriterswar2019pod07stormofsteelmaster181219.mp3](#)

Transcript

00:00:01 Speaker 1

Welcome to a writers war, a National Lottery Heritage fund, First World War Centenary project produced by Chrome Radio for the University of Oxford, faculty of Mediaeval and Modern Languages. In partnership with year 10 students from Oxford Spires Academy in this group of podcasts we learn about.

00:00:21 Speaker 1

Different responses to the First World War in Britain, France, Germany and former colonies of the British and French empires.

00:00:30 Speaker 1

We hear now from Ritchie Robertson Taylor, professor of the German language and literature and fellow of the Queen's College, about the German response.

00:00:39 Speaker 1

Storm of steel

00:01:00 Speaker 3

I Ritchie Robertson, Professor German at Oxford, the in my office in modern languages faculty surrounded by books under computer immersively

00:01:10 Speaker 3

If you can hear background noises, that's because a lot of teaching rooms in this building. The winds were calm down shortly when the classes get underway, but the moment people are still.

00:01:20 Speaker 3

Settling themselves.

00:01:22 Speaker 3

We are familiar with.

00:01:23 Speaker 3

The industry in English on the First World War.

00:01:25 Speaker 3

We know the.

00:01:26 Speaker 3

War poets own Sassoon. Rosenberg, Germany and others there.

00:01:31 Speaker 3

Apart from school syllabus in my day and still are most northerly, no wars of the war, the world of our Groves. Goodbye to all that it was the most famous and certainly one of the best.

00:01:42 Speaker 3

There's also Edmund Blunden undertones of war and some others, and also.

00:01:47 Speaker 3

Fiction of the war.

00:01:48 Speaker 3

Of which I think Frederick Manning is outstanding author. With her private we.

00:01:53 Speaker 3

You don't always realise there is a similar body of writing produced on the German side. The printed output Germany is limited by the fact that some of the outstanding poets were killed.

00:02:04 Speaker 3

Arrow Moore N Stadler was killed at Ypres in October 1914, for example and guilt trackle both of two superb.

00:02:14 Speaker 3

Poems of the war also met an early death, but a number of other survived Monk, who must mention Anton Schmuck.

00:02:21 Speaker 3

Not at all.

00:02:22 Speaker 3

A well known poet who wrote however remarkable sequence of 60 summits in unusual form with very long lines, evoking the experience of the Western Front.

00:02:33 Speaker 3

After the war, when Germany was to Jesse's defeat and adjusting to becoming a Republic instead of an empire or the poles of some 10 years before a large body of fiction about the war appeared.

00:02:46 Speaker 3

With a few exceptions, remark brought out invest nice noise, all quiet on the Western Front in 1929.

00:02:54 Speaker 3

That was a bestseller and a worldwide success.

00:02:57 Speaker 3

The problem was rated in terms of languages and it was filmed. Remark told young people the truth about the war and he also spoke very consciously for the last generation the generation.

00:03:09 Speaker 3

Of young men.

00:03:10 Speaker 3

Who had gone to war with no idea of what they were getting themselves in for, lost the best years of their lives and a great difficulty.

00:03:17 Speaker 3

Adjusting to civilian life afterwards and of course many cases lost their lives altogether as a result.

00:03:24 Speaker 3

Besides Rome, mark the number of other authors, one could mention Woodley Rail, who wrote no key down to Earth.

00:03:31 Speaker 3

Factual accounts of war with emphasis more on the blundering than the bloodshed and then curious and very rare book by NS Johansson which purports to be the memories of the war told by a horse.

00:03:44 Speaker 3

Called memories or front by a horse, this horse Amir tells her experiences with amazement at the murderous folly the humans get.

00:03:54 Speaker 3

Up to.

00:03:55 Speaker 3

Horses played a large part in the First World War. Not only cavalry horses, but much more horses will be used to pull artillery transport.

00:04:04 Speaker 3

Otherwise they limited heavy artillery who wrote by train to the royal head. After that it had been logged to the front by horses and light artillery was sometimes pulled by dogs.

00:04:15 Speaker 3

An ancient 1 exception to a dearth of serious world books after the war, and that is the book of you in English as Storm of Steel, by Ernst Humour. Avail. Martha right, of any standard.

00:04:27 Speaker 3

You know, as a soldier, a scientist as well as a novelist. Politically very far to the right, and in the 1920s he moved the centre for a number.

00:04:37 Speaker 3

Of far right.

00:04:38 Speaker 3

Groups, but he was not a Nazi.

00:04:40 Speaker 3

And it never joined.

00:04:41 Speaker 3

The Nazi party. His book, *Strong Steel*, recounts his own experiences and.

00:04:47 Speaker 3

It's as unpolitical as possible. It doesn't understand either for or against the war. It treats the world simply as an experience.

00:04:56 Speaker 3

He wasn't very, very honest. He missed being often frightened out of his wits, and also often to enjoy himself hugely.

00:05:03 Speaker 3

He was wounded several times and the book ends with his receiving a decoration. As he was dying convalescing in hospital, you afterwards mythologized the war into a hero experience and developed a visual future in which democracy would be abolished and and meet.

00:05:23 Speaker 3

Of hard bitten technocrats would rule over a population schooled in mindless obedience. Fortunately, nothing of this sort came to pass.

00:05:32 Speaker 3

His fantasies would never put to the test. He survived the Second World War in the German army, spending most of his time in occupied Paris.

00:05:41 Speaker 3

Remained a noted writer after the war and moved into different areas, including science fiction, and died in 1998 at the age of over 100, so they have a very rapid survey of the German literature of the First World War.

00:05:57 Speaker 3

When the first victims of the war among writers was Ernst Startler, he is not, strictly speaking, a German.

00:06:03 Speaker 3

He came from Alsace who's been conquered from France in the Franco Prussian War in 1871. He wasn't outlook.

00:06:10 Speaker 3

A very international person, equally at home in the German and French languages. He studied English and comparative literature. He went to Oxford with the thesis on German translations of Shakespeare. If he had lived.

00:06:23 Speaker 3

He moved to Canada with his job lined up for him as a professor of comparative.

00:06:28 Speaker 3

Mr. Wilson started supporting reason before the war. It's a very passionate poetry, in wrong, surging lines. It shows immunities from English and American literature, especially from Walt Whitman. You've ought to see about emotion, passion, sexual excitement, give us famous poem journey across the.

00:06:48 Speaker 3

Rhine Bridge at Cologne at night makes this crossing the bridge into our sensual even with sexual and metaphysical experience.

00:06:57 Speaker 3

Start with early death. Very great loss to listen to her. He didn't move to write directly.

00:07:02 Speaker 3

About the war.

00:07:03 Speaker 3

The reason remark will pull by him dear Aufbruch, sitting out which evoked the excitement that many people felt in Germany at the possibility of war. These are comparatively innocent times. He evoked the experience.

00:07:16 Speaker 3

Of a cavalry charge, so he has a somewhat old fashioned vision with all the world we like soon to be obsolete. And again this covering charge even this death is represented as being a supreme experience.

00:07:29 Speaker 3

If we had a feature common to several writers about the war, certainly to startler and danced. Humour is that where is meat into a hero experience? Perhaps a test of manhood setting experience? Well worth living and dying for.

00:07:44 Speaker 3

This heroic vision of the war would contrast sharply with reality. The rule about in rollmark, especially when reading of time, is spent crouching in trenches.

00:07:53 Speaker 3

In great discomfort, one famous passage in remarks all quiet on the Western Front describes the relief the soldiers feel when they can escape and conceal themselves.

00:08:03 Speaker 3

In field lavatories and a quiet smoke.

00:08:06 Speaker 3

Hungry Mark talks with actual fighting. He brings out the very sharp contrast between how people imagined the war and how it actually turned out to be.

00:08:15 Speaker 3

His main characters are school boys who are pressured by the school teacher into volunteering his cottage with full of enthusiastic patriotism increased by the belief that he himself would never have to serve at the front. So they'll volunteer with surge in enthusiasm. Military training is very rough.

00:08:33 Speaker 3

The waiter comments that he makes them into fighting animals, but without that painful training would never have survived.

00:08:41 Speaker 3

This means the front is a shock while the first things would happen either one of their comrades is shot, blinded, and they can't see him.

00:08:50 Speaker 3

Another is severely wounded, taken to a field hospital and his comrades visiting him. Let slip, but he doesn't know that his leg had never been amputated.

00:09:01 Speaker 3

He complains of pains in his leg, and they unwisely tell him that these pains are imaginary. His leg is no longer there.

00:09:08 Speaker 3

There's a famous subscription of going over the top and equally famous description of crouching for 36 hours. It will dugout under shellfire, unable to eat or drink, and so in extreme discomfort as well as fear.

00:09:22 Speaker 3

One thing through Mark does is remind us all the time of the basic necessities of life. It turns out that all prompted by soldiers in the front line is not winning the war.

00:09:32 Speaker 3

They soon cease.

00:09:33 Speaker 3

To care if they ever did about the cause of the war or the purpose of.

00:09:37 Speaker 3

The war or pre.

00:09:38 Speaker 3

Occupies them is getting enough to eat.

00:09:41 Speaker 3

Those example great.

00:09:42 Speaker 3

Episode which available source of soldier manages to steal goose and human later secretly roast the goose over a fire, but recent author files when he comes back home, the people in his hometown have absolutely no understanding of the.

00:09:56 Speaker 3

Or we slapped him in the back. The scene is doing well. We sure that spirits at the front must be very high.

00:10:02 Speaker 3

And of course, he can't tell the bottles were like marking tell his mother, but she's already worried sick about him.

00:10:08 Speaker 3

He doesn't want to make her feel any worse. Other writers, the war in his country as well. Comment on complete lack of understanding between civilians.

00:10:17 Speaker 3

And soldiers Robert Graves in goodbye to all that brings us out very strongly remark. Takes his narrator through the war tanks come into use and the waiter comes to fuel. The war has been completely dehumanised and is being fought between machines.

00:10:35 Speaker 3

The wizard dies in the course. The novel the model that shouldn't happen with the novel because.

00:10:39 Speaker 3

Because if you're telling the story in the first person, you can't recount your own death but the final paragraph will suddenly switch from the first person to third person, and we simply told how the narrator met his death. The book was a bestseller.

00:10:55 Speaker 3

Wrote the film debates about Louis Milestone came out in 1930, is really disconcerting when you see it's because the young German soldiers speak with American accents.

00:11:06 Speaker 3

Then the film was made for an American audience who have to empathise with the soldiers. The film also appeared in German and was something of a political sore point.

00:11:15 Speaker 3

Right wingers and especially Nazis objected to it when the film was shown. Balloon now.

00:11:21 Speaker 3

She's trying to distract.

00:11:22 Speaker 3

The audience, but letting mice loose in cinema but didn't stop the film's popularity.

00:11:29 Speaker 3

Remark continued to live in Germany under the Third Reich and in the Second World War, but he kept his head well down his professionals, that of a sports journalist and is able to move modestly as a professional writer and also to produce a number of other models that, among with the success of all quiet on the Western Front.

00:11:49 Speaker 3

In some ways, the best book to my mind about German in the First World War, the level that came out about 10 years after the war, this time by Arnold Spike.

00:12:00 Speaker 3

The one was called in English, the case of Sergeant Grisha doesn't involve any fighting. It histories behind the lines in the.

00:12:09 Speaker 3

German occupied area of northeastern Europe MORE or less present day, Lithuania. The Grisha of the title is a Russian soldier who deserts, he ask him back to his family. He's caught and suspected of being a spy.

00:12:24 Speaker 3

The general authorities put him on trial, but a number of Germans, some officers only a lawyer from Berlin, treat his case and tried to.

00:12:33 Speaker 3

Get him off.

00:12:34 Speaker 3

They don't succeed at the level becomes a tremendous story of justice and the difficulty of obtaining justice. It ends with vicious death, but it also.

00:12:44 Speaker 3

Ends with for buildings or the end of German power. It's like, of course, was writing with hindsight 10 years after the war.

00:12:52 Speaker 3

And places Imperial Germany in a long sequence of empires which have grown become oversized, overstretch themselves being carried away by pride and self satisfaction, and ended the Persians, the Romans, and now the German Empire. The others also warning for the future because.

00:13:12 Speaker 3

Once I published it, Nazis were simply wrong, parting with others of old, noisy, and unruly 1.

00:13:19 Speaker 3

It's like.

00:13:19 Speaker 3

Homes of June under the exile in 1933 in Palestine and continued to write fiction from there, one of his best models, written shortly after the war, does bow from Vance Bake.

00:13:30 Speaker 3

The Acts of Vance Beck. Vance Beck is a suburb of Hamburg, is actually set in Nazi Germany, and turns on and unsuccessful.

00:13:40 Speaker 3

Attempt to assassinate Hitler and also on the moral struggles of a butcher who's required because of trains. Killing animals to become an executioner and execute enemies of the regime. This models tremendously power.

00:13:57 Speaker 3

I should mention about other motherboard spike which has recently been translated filled outside vendo. Voda was a fortress which the Germans devoted tremendous resources to capturing his real centre of the war effort and a place where many, many soldiers met their deaths site once again writes about the attempts.

00:14:17 Speaker 3

Of good hearted and well intentioned people to limit the bloodshed. And he asks some difficult questions about what a warming person can hope to achieve under such circumstances. So outside where there is levels I warmly recommend.

00:14:34 Speaker 3

So the experience of the First World War generated not only descriptions of action and the suffering imposed by war, but also reflections on justice and power.

00:15:03 Speaker 1

You have been listening to a writers wall. I do hope you'll join us for the next podcast in the series.