



**GALLEY BEGGAR
BOOK CLUB**

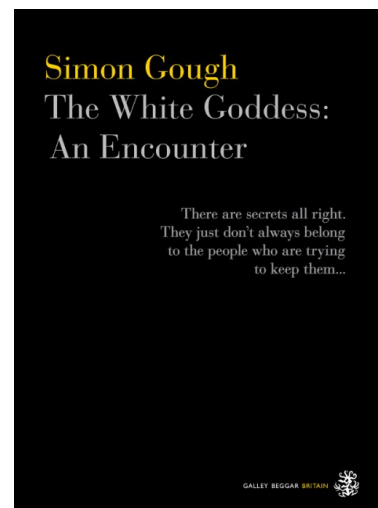
The White Goddess: An Encounter

By Simon Gough

There are secrets all right.
They just don't always belong
to the people who are trying
to keep them...

Background

First published by Galley Beggar in 2012, this book has been many years in the making. *The White Goddess: An Encounter* is a mesmerising tale of sex, lies and divided loyalties. Set between the magic of a bohemian Majorca and the horror of Franco's Madrid, it is a haunting evocation of a lost time and place, dominated by the extraordinary power of Robert Graves, one of the 20th century's greatest writers.



Synopsis

When 10-year-old Simon Gough went to Majorca in 1953 he thought he had landed in paradise. Far from the misery of his English boarding school and his parents' divorce, he fell in love – with the tiny village of Deya, with his wild cousin Juan and most of all with his beloved "Grand-Uncle" Robert Graves. When he returned in 1960, paradise had been overrun by beatniks and marijuana - and Simon liked it all the more. But soon he fell for the enchanting Margot Callas, Robert Graves' muse. He found himself entangled in a web of lies and deceit and playing a game whose rules he didn't understand. The repercussions would haunt him for the rest of his life.

Discussion Points

- How important do you find the use of 'present day' (1989) Simon as laid out in the opening section of the book, *Chaos*?
- As we find out in *Chaos*, Simon has what he refers to as a '*new lymphoma diploma*' and informs us that Robert is already dead. How do you think Simon's cancer and Robert no longer being alive affects the eventual telling of his story?
- Do you feel that the passage of time between initial visits to the island affects Simon and Robert's relationship? Perhaps Simon's adolescence, the modernisation of the island, or the changing attitudes of the local population?
- How important do you find the main female influences in Simon's life? Margot as his main passion, Diana as his sickly mother and Beryl as his doting Great-Aunt?
- How do you perceive Juan's influence on Simon, especially the contrast of their extremes of extroverted and introverted behaviour?
- Do you believe that a young Simon could fully grasp the possible consequences of his falling for Margot? Could it be that someone of that age would ever really know how a man like Robert would react?
- Do you believe that Margot is ever fully aware of the deepness of her charm over men and more specifically, Simon? How much blame would you lay at her door?
- Is Robert to blame for the family catastrophe he creates? Is his obsession with Muse culture, and particularly Margot, so overwhelming that he isn't aware of the damage he is causing to his relationship with his wife, friends and family?
- In your eyes, can Robert justify his reliance on his muses?

The Author

Simon Gough worked for many years as an antiquarian book dealer in London and Holt. *The White Goddess: An Encounter* is his first novel. He lives in North Norfolk.



Recommended Texts

- The Sun Also Rises by **Ernest Hemingway**
- A Time Of Gifts by **Patrick Leigh Fermor**
- Wild Olives: Life in Majorca With Robert Graves by **William Graves**

Resources

- <http://www.galleybeggar.co.uk/authors/simon-gough/>
- <http://richardstrachan.wordpress.com/2012/09/25/book-review-the-white-goddess-an-encounter-by-simon-gough/>
- <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/the-white-goddess-an-encounter-by-simon-gough-galley-beggar-10-8329428.html>

Galley Beggar Book Club notes compiled by Rory Hill – Contact rory@galleybeggar.co.uk for more information.