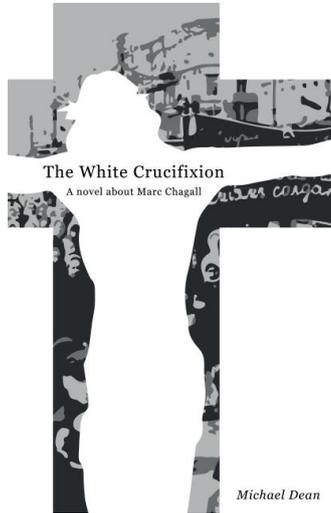


Holland Park Press



Press Release



The White Crucifixion

A novel about Marc Chagall

By Michael Dean

Published on 22 February 2018

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£10.99, \$16.00

The White Crucifixion starts with Chagall's difficult birth in Vitebsk 1887, in the present-day Belarus, and tells the surprising story of how the eldest son of a herring schlepper became enrolled in art school where he quickly gained a reputation as 'Moyshe, the painting wonder'.

The novel paints a vivid picture of a Russian town divided by belief and wealth, rumours of pogroms never far away, yet bustling with talented young artists.

In 1913 Chagall relished the opportunity to move to Paris to take up residence in the artist colony 'The Hive' (*La Ruche*). The Yiddish-speaking artists (*École Juive*) living there were all poor. The Hive had no electric light or running water and yet many of its artists were to become famous, among them Amedeo Modigliani, Chaim Soutine and Osip Zadkine.

The novel vividly portrays the dynamics of an artist colony, its pettiness, friendships and the constant battle to find the peace and quiet to work.

In 1914 Chagall and his wife Bella made what was supposed to be a fleeting visit to his beloved Vitebsk, only to be trapped there by the outbreak of the First World War, the subsequent Russian revolution and the establishment of the communist regime, which was increasingly hostile towards artists like Chagall.

Yet Chagall kept on painting, and the novel provides a fascinating account of what inspired some of his greatest work. He eventually managed to return to France, only to be thwarted by another world war, which proved disastrous for the people he knew in Vitebsk, the people in his paintings, including his uncle Neuch, the original 'fiddler on the roof'.

The White Crucifixion is a fictionalised account of the rollercoaster life in terrible times of one of the most enigmatic artists of the twentieth century.

Michael Dean

Michael Dean has a history degree from Worcester College, Oxford, an MSc in Applied Linguistics from Edinburgh University and a translator's qualification (AIL) in German.

His novels are *The Crooked Cross* (Quaestor, 2000, 2009); *Thorn*, about Spinoza and Rembrandt (Bluemoose Books, 2011); *Magic City*, a Bildungsroman (Odyssey Press, new edition 2017); and *I, Hogarth* (Duckworth-Overlook, 2012), which set out to unify Hogarth's life with his work.

He has also written three e-books for Endeavour Press: *The Enemy Within* (2013), about Jewish resistance in the Netherlands in World War II; *Hour Zero* (2014); and *Before the Darkness* (2015), about Walther Rathenau.



Notes for editors

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