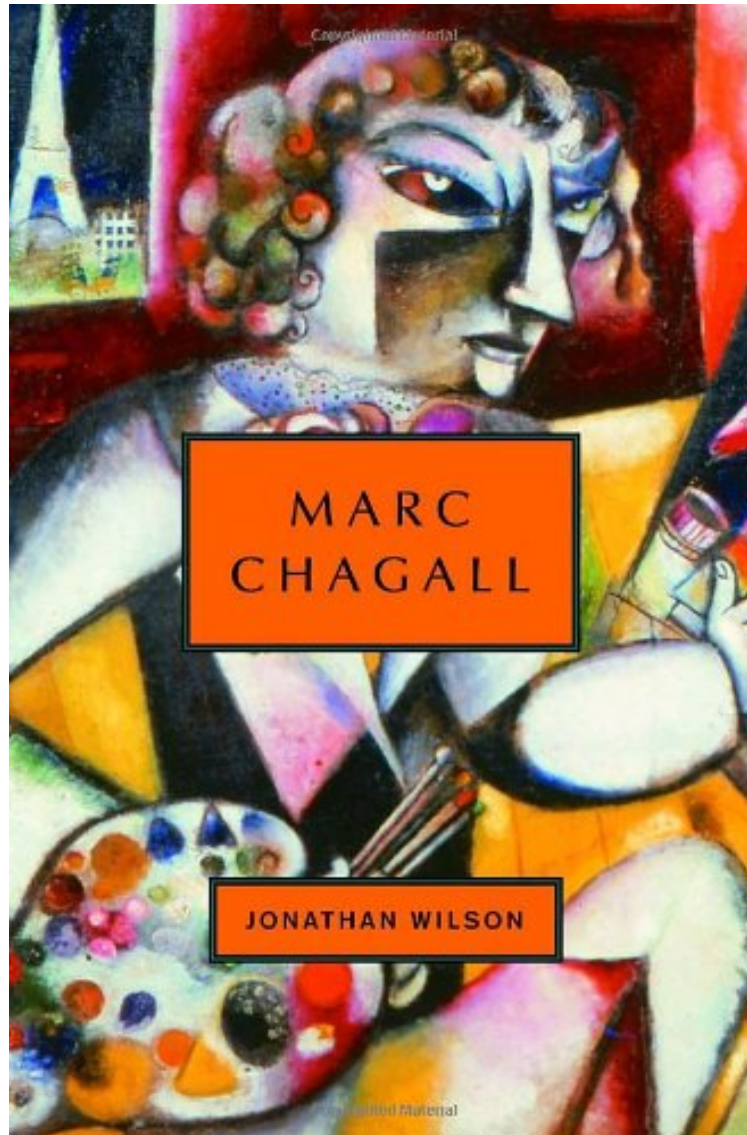


[Download pdf ebook] Marc Chagall (Jewish Encounters Series)

Marc Chagall (Jewish Encounters Series)

Jonathan Wilson

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Jonathan Wilson : Marc Chagall (Jewish Encounters Series) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Marc Chagall (Jewish Encounters Series):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. the flaming shtetl's long-cast glow By David A. Baer Jonathan Wilson's intimate look at this most enigmatic artist is just the introduction a non-specialist like this reviewer needs for moving from a first encounter with Chagall's work to a deeper understanding of his life and person. I suspect the veteran Chagall watcher will also find more than a little in Wilson's pages that will enrich his understanding or throw

fresh light on ambiguities that are worthy of further inspection. Wilson's method is to follow Chagall around from city to city and lover to lover. Evidence for this is seen in the titles of the book's seventeen chapters. All but three of them simply present the name of one of Chagall's places or one of his women. So, for example, '1. Vitebsk, 2. St. Petersburg, 3. Paris, 4. Bella ... 12. New York, 13. Virginia (Haggard), 14 Orgeval ...' The three exceptions (6. Yiddish Theater, 15. A Problem of Conscience, 17. Blessings) explore matters of deep thematic importance that lie close to the soul of Chagall and his art. So does Wilson periodize Chagall's life in helpful ways. We travel with an artist as he moves from context to context in a world where it seemed impossible for him to own any one of them completely or to deny any one finally. Chagall emerges as a conflicted human being, unable fully to rank the places and the people that have shaped him, unable to leave any place behind, certain to live simultaneously as Russian, as Jew, as Frenchman, as quasi-American, as on-again, off-again Zionist, as an artist who was himself never other than a work in progress. If Chagall failed to integrate these stages-of-residence, he at least combined them. For example, Wilson writes that 'Chagall, whether he believed that he was doing so or not, sneaked Yiddish culture into twentieth-century painting through the back door. Hardly anyone, with the exception of the odd French anti-Semite, noticed what was happening because the vibrant visual expression of his paintings carried the stamp of the modern and not the stigma of a dying language. Sadly, Chagall's genius spawned a host of artists who specialized in Jewish kitsch, whereas Picasso's had an impact on almost every great painter who came after him.' And again, 'It was Chagall's great talent as an artist to absorb influences without becoming a slave to them. He was not an intellectual, and he powerfully resisted ideologies and theories while, magpielike, stealing what he fancied from the various isms that surrounded him. This characteristic preserved Chagall's artistic integrity in Paris but inevitably got him into trouble in Russia after the Revolution.' Along the way, Wilson touches repeatedly upon Chagall's fascination with Jesus, this crucified Jew who frequents the artist's canvas in a way that has generated multiple explanations, sadly none of them coming directly from Chagall's own lips or pen. Here is Wilson himself on the question: 'Chagall, in what was perhaps an even more radical gesture, appeared to reach back to a pre-Christian Jesus, a man who has not yet been granted the powers of miracle and redemption, and is rather an ancient Jewish martyr presented as a symbol of contemporary Jewish martyrs. In so doing Chagall risked alienating those members of his Jewish audience for whom the simple presence of Jesus Christ in a painting signaled betrayal and oppression rather than their opposite ... Chagall's appropriation of the Crucifixion of Jesus as an icon of *Jewish* suffering is not entirely uncommon among Jewish writers and artists in the twentieth century. It occurs, for example, in the work of the Yiddish novelist Pinchas Kahanovich (known as Der Nister, The Hidden One), in Scholem Asch, to chilling effect in Elie Wiesel's NIGHT, and in Yehuda Amichai's remarkable poem 'The Jewish Time Bomb'. Whatever its degree of surprise to a Jewish audience, Chagall's decision to paint a Crucifixion scene in 1938 is hardly out of keeping with his own obsessions, for, as has already been noted, his relationship with "Christ as a poet and prophetic figure" was deep and long-lasting.' Wilson does not elevate the great man more than the evidence allows. He is wry about the massive and vulnerable ego that does not so much distinguish Chagall from his peers as it identifies him with them. He can just as easily register Chagall's well-earned reputation as an attentive and caring teacher as he can quote this observation by one of the artist's wives: "'(H)e painted love but he didn't practice it," Virginia Haggard remarks of Chagall in her memoir, more in sorrow than in anger.' Writing as he does for the JEWISH ENCOUNTER SERIES, Jonathan Wilson is particularly perceptive on the dynamics of Chagall's Jewishness, both as the artist lived this identity and as others (both Jews and non-Jews) perceived and interacted with it. In the end, Wilson's life of Chagall appropriately humanizes the man, recording in his final pages Chagall's wistful observation in a speech before the Israeli Knesset that 'I tend to look with some sadness at everything friend or foe.' Wilson has done us the service of introducing us to an artist who *tended* more than he *declared*, who brought his abiding enigma into his art and so illuminated our own unshakeable paradoxes, nuances, and mixed identities as we engage the very bright and deeply brooding blue art of Marc Chagall.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. She loved Chagall and wasn't ashamed of that...By Bernard . Pucker" She loved Chagall and wasn't ashamed of that. T. Carmi, 'In Memory of Leah Goldberg'" This quote is at the very beginning of Jonathan Wilson's Ode to Chagall or so it seemed. Wilson presents the details of Chagall's long and productive life 1887 to 1985. He also raises many engaging questions about the artist and person Marc Chagall. He does not try to fully explain why Chagall remained ambivalent about his identity as a Jew, a Frenchman, a Russian and as a narcissistic artist in the 20th century. Chagall's prodigious output often overshadows the occasional intimacy of some of his work. The constant disruptions in his life and losses provide some framework for viewing and appreciating his art. A shtetl Jew who becomes a major 20th century artist who gained international recognition sounds like an oxymoron. The 2nd commandment which prohibited graven images did not impede Chagall's commitment to making art. His subjects reflect his life's journey and his style combined many of the powerful trends of the 20th century. Wilson shares the good, the great, the personal and the disappointing thoroughly without any specific judgments. Chagall's art celebrates the experiences of a romanticized Shtetl, the beauty and joy of love and ladies, the powerfully destructive forces of WW I and II as well as the Russian revolution - some of his work touches the core of our humanity while much of it borders heavily on sentimentality. All of this and much more is packed in this concise and very readable volume. Worthwhile quotes; If artists have one big job, it is to move what is inside to the outside, to reveal secrets, and in so doing to allow us to discover who we are. Chagall's artistic spirit

resides close to that of the tellers of Hasidic tales, individuals who search out sparks of goodness in the bleakest of events and collect these firefly flashes over a dark sea as acts of tikkun. Hence, in terms of a political statement, we will find no equivalent to Guernica in Chagall's massive oeuvre. No amount of financial or critical success later in life was ever quite able to dispel the aura of suspicion, or drain the well of bitterness....."If money was involved". How slippery was Chagall's identity? He appears often as a chameleon figure, fiercely protective of his artistic independence and yet eager to please. Many more salient and penetrating insights and questions are clearly articulated by Wilson. Certainly a very entertaining and saddening biography. It remains unclear if Wilson like Leah Goldberg loved Chagall. 7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A Short Chagall By Christian Schlect A nice short study of Marc Chagall's personal life (wives, children, and homes) and of his essential cultural roots including religious inspirations and conflicts. Chagall was fated to live a long life amidst a century of enormous social turmoil and with direct emotional ties to countries in the middle of the storms --- the USSR, France, U.S. and Israel. Professor Wilson is a fine writer with an eye for the arresting detail. His book is a very good overview of the complex life of a great artist. (Readers will have to refer to the Internet or art books for the actual paintings referred to in this text--- unless happily they have already in person viewed the work of Marc Chagall.)

Part of the Jewish Encounter series. Novelist and critic Jonathan Wilson clears away the sentimental mists surrounding an artist whose career spanned two world wars, the Russian Revolution, the Holocaust, and the birth of the State of Israel. Marc Chagall's work addresses these transforming events, but his ambivalence about his role as a Jewish artist adds an intriguing wrinkle to common assumptions about his life. Drawn to sacred subject matter, Chagall remains defiantly secular in outlook; determined to narrate the miraculous and tragic events of the Jewish past, he frequently chooses Jesus as a symbol of martyrdom and sacrifice. Wilson brilliantly demonstrates how Marc Chagall's life constitutes a grand canvas on which much of twentieth-century Jewish history is vividly portrayed. Chagall left Belorussia for Paris in 1910, at the dawn of modernism, looking back dreamily on the world he abandoned. After his marriage to Bella Rosenfeld in 1915, he moved to Petrograd, but eventually returned to Paris after a stint as a Soviet commissar for art. Fleeing Paris steps ahead of the Nazis, Chagall arrived in New York in 1941. Drawn to Israel, but not enough to live there, Chagall grappled endlessly with both a nostalgic attachment to a vanished past and the magnetic pull of an uninhibited secular present. Wilson's portrait of Chagall is altogether more historical, more political, and edgier than conventional wisdom would have us believe, showing us how Chagall is the emblematic Jewish artist of the twentieth century. Visit nextbook.org/chagall for a virtual museum of Chagall images.

From Publishers Weekly. Born Moishe Shagal in 1887, the son of a poor Orthodox Jewish laborer drew lifelong inspiration from his native Vitebsk, Belorussia. Chagall became famous for painting explosively colorful rooftop fiddlers, airborne cows and lovers floating above onion-domed churches, and a tallith-wrapped crucified Jesus. A victim of anti-Semitism who was ambivalent about his role as a Jewish artist, Chagall adorned churches and synagogues with stained-glass windows and often chose Christ as his symbol of martyrdom when depicting Jewish tragedies. Chagall's road to fame is mapped out by Wilson: his exposure, as a St. Petersburg student, to Matisse's dazzling palette; feverishly productive early years in Paris, where he absorbed an array of artistic influences; his immersion in politics in postrevolution Vitebsk, where he founded an art school; his return to Paris, where the legendary Vollard became his art dealer; and his New York exile during the Holocaust, where his beloved wife, Bella, died (he lived on for four more decades). Wilson's critiques (particularly of Chagall's "slippery" identity and his work's supposed sentimentality) are familiar, and this is less a fresh biography than a synthesis of writings by Benjamin Harshav, Chagall and his intimates. But Wilson (*A Palestine Affair*) is an incisive, lively writer. Domestic photos are included, but the omission of color reproductions of Chagall's oeuvre in this entry in the Jewish Encounters series is frustrating. (Mar. 13) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist. Chagall's bewitching paintings of flying lovers, otherworldly cows, and enormous floating bouquets appear to be joyously romantic and exuberantly folkloric, but in fact they are poetic memorials to a doomed world. Chagall, a "master of color" who painted right up until his death at 97 in 1985, survived the brutal anti-Semitism of czarist and Soviet Russia, lost hundreds of paintings during World War I, and barely avoided the concentration camps when he fled Vichy France. Novelist Wilson, whose inventive way with words perfectly matches his subject's topsy-turvy visual lexicon, succeeds in illuminating in fresh and penetrating ways the mysteries and sorrows inherent in Chagall's complex work. He elucidates the influence of Hasidic mysticism, speculates about Chagall's chameleon-like personality and possible sexual ambiguity, eloquently articulates Chagall's "Orphic/Cubist" aesthetic, and revels in Chagall's best works. Wilson also cogently analyzes the Jewish painter's obsession with Christ and unsettling use of the Crucifixion as "an icon of Jewish suffering." Ultimately, Wilson portrays Chagall as an artist trapped between "apparently irreconcilable worlds that could only be unified in his work." Donna Seaman. Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved. Praise for Jonathan Wilson's *A Palestine Affair*. Like the best of historical fiction, Wilson's story is placed in an imagined past, but it is really happening right now . . . You're likely to stay up late reading. The Washington Post Book World. An engrossing, complex, and fearless tale of politics, arts, murder, sex, and

history (personal and global). Anita Diamant, author of *The Red Tent* A Palestine Affair evokes, quite tangibly, the days of the Mandate. This is a true and touching act of the imagination. The book is very sexy, a nostalgic and provocative envisioning of that time. I recommend it highly. David Mamet: Worth reading? An Englishman might say: Rather. An American would put it differently: You bet it is! Saul Bellow