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I. CHAPTER ONE – Chagall’s Illustrations in View of Nostalgia

It was with illustrations that Chagall started and ended his long life as an artist. He began his first art lesson by copying an illustration from the magazine *Niwa*, a magazine by which he was inspired.24 And on the day of his death, he was still discussing the details of a lithography illustration with his assistant Charles Sorlier.25 Throughout his life, Chagall created more than 25 series of illustrations for literary texts. He made them using various techniques, including pen and ink drawing, etching and lithography. Despite their sheer size and explicit relationship to his oil paintings, Chagall’s illustrations are often underestimated and only briefly mentioned by most of his biographers.

In France, Chagall’s illustrated books began with the ambition of a publisher to make *livres d’artiste* without financial restrictions. With the considerable number of publications he produced, Ambroise Vollard is one of the most prominent publishers to promote *livres d’artiste* at his time. As a successful art dealer with intuitive taste, Vollard already made a fortune with his financial strategy of “buy low, sell high”. He soon became an amateur merchant when he established his own gallery at Rue Laffitte and began financing young and unknown artists. With Vollard’s support many artists became recognized and significant in later years, including Cézanne, Maillol, Renoir, Picasso, Rouault, Gauguin and Van Gogh. Most of them had also collaborated with Vollard on book illustrations.

It seems an unlikely decision for a businessman like Vollard to take the risk of commissioning young artists to create unconventional illustrated books that collectors were unlikely to appreciate. However, it is both Vollard’s personal interest in graphic arts and his belief in *livres d’artiste* that made everything

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possible. “All the same, I shall have the last word,” Vollard reminded himself after each rebuff from book collectors.

After working with a few potential artists on book publications, Vollard decided to cooperate with the Russian-Jewish artist Marc Chagall. In spite of all the difficulties and interruptions during the process, Chagall completed three series of book illustrations commissioned by Vollard. Similar to other artists’ examples of *livres d’artiste*, Chagall interpreted the texts in his own artistic style. Although the public was already accustomed to the idea of the artist’s book, it was still difficult for Chagall’s books to gain appreciation because of his rather unusual and casual style. Particularly his treatment of *Les Fables de La Fontaine* aroused strong objection from the world of bibliophiles.

Chagall’s three illustrated books made in collaboration with Vollard can be appreciated separately, but they attain a wider dimension and a new interpretation if viewed as a trilogy. Seen as a trilogy, the three illustrated texts convincingly exude a sense of nostalgia, as is the case in most of his other works. On the other hand, his trilogy is not unique in this respect: the sense of longing for a lost world, as a result of exile and nostalgia, can also be recognized in several works of contemporary artists and literary writers, including other *livres d’artiste* by artists of the École de Paris. Therefore, this trilogy of illustrated texts will be examined from the perspective of nostalgia. I will reflect on the influences and reflections of his contemporary milieu, the sources of inspiration inherited from the artist’s birthplace and ethnic identity, and finally the styles and techniques that shaped his representations.

1. The Golden Age of *Livres d’Artiste*

The artistic achievement of Chagall’s illustrations also contributed to the so-called golden age of illustrated books in France. The peak of *livres d’artiste* took place from the last quarter of the 19th century to the interwar years, which is more or less the same period as the French Belle Époque.

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27 I will elaborate more on Chagall’s pictorial styles in the following section and provide further details on the illustration of *Fables* in the third chapter “Infant Joy: *Les Fables de La Fontaine*” of this thesis.

28 This will be discussed in the following section.

29 The definition of the term *livre d’artiste* and the dates of its peak period vary among scholars and researchers. In this thesis I adopted the classification by Gordon Norton.
How to maintain one’s own style while illustrating a text is the main concern for an artist when producing an artist’s book. Although without a precise definition, the term livre d’artiste (or livre de peintre), refers to “a book containing illustrations carried out by the artist himself (…) who has himself employed some autographic process for the execution of his designs.” In the context of the French publishing world, it can refer to either a few French precursors in early 19th century, or the works by artists under the commission of specific publishers in Paris around the turn of the century. In the latter category, the idea is to commission artists to create book illustrations without the interference of engravers. Unlike professional illustrators, the artists bypass technical regulations for book illustrations and with their own artistic styles they see the book as an artwork independent of the text.

Ray in his voluminous book The Art of the French Illustrated Book, 1700-1914, because it makes the most sense to me since he related the summit of book illustrations to La Belle Époque, which explained the implicit influences from the aesthetics in the latter period. See Gordon N. Ray, The Art of the French Illustrated Book, 1700-1914, Cornell University Press, 1982, p.372-498.

It is necessary to briefly review the general situation of illustrated books before this period. As early as the second half of 18th century, William Blake already made the initiation with his illuminated books. Owing to the progress of the industrial revolution in the beginning of 19th century, there emerged a renovation of illustrations in England, led by pre-Raphaelite painters and William Morris’s Art and Crafts’ Movement. It was in the late 19th century that Parisian publishers found their renaissance in illustrated books. With new printing technologies, such as the use of lithography, the production and circulation of illustrated books were made more available to the public than they used to be. The technical possibility led to new experiments of the illustrated book, on its formats and subjects, and thus came the notion of livres d’artiste.


In fact, in the first half of 19th century, Eugène Delacroix already shocked the book market with his innovative use of lithography in his illustrations for Goethe’s Faust (1828). Despite Delacroix’s precursory works, the tradition of delicate engravings was still considered the ideal format for book illustrations in Vollard’s time. Firstly, the form of illustrations was meant to be decorative, such as the well-praised version of Œuvres de Molière (1836) illustrated by Tony Johannot. Although Johannot had proved his ability of imaginative interpretation for many other fantastic texts, he also had to follow the norms of decorative illustrations, which included using the proper medium for engravings, clear and understandable details of images, and the pleasant layout accompanying the texts, etc. Secondly, the content of illustrations should remain loyal to the texts. The standard example is the huge illustrated albums by Gustave Doré (1832-83) who visualized numerous classics into sharp realistic details, which is ironically the only artistic feature attributed to this famous professional illustrator.

This definition comes again from Ray in his “Painters’ Books”, The Art of the French Illustrated Book, 1700-1914, 1982, p. 496.
Unsurprisingly, the avant-garde experiments of the _livre d’artiste_ were not easily accepted by the public, or by the market of book collectors to be precise. The frustrating experience of selling an illustrated book by Maurice Denis is a typical example. When Vollard tried to recommend Denis’s illustrated _Sagesse_ (text by Paul Verlaine, 1889) to a book collector who had been a connoisseur of Denis’s oil painting, the latter rejected the work by arbitrarily declaring that “Painters are not illustrators. The liberties they permit themselves are incompatible with the ‘finish’ which is the whole merit of an illustrated book.”\(^3^4\) A more notorious example is Pierre Bonnard’s _Parallèlement_ (1900), commissioned by Vollard as well, which paradoxically has been evaluated as both a scandal and an innovation in book printing history. Paul Verlaine’s rebellious poetry about the passion of young lesbians was vicious enough for his contemporary readers. More than that, Bonnard’s unconventional way of drawing the images around the text, plus the use of lithography in pink ink, annoyed most collectors and authorities at the time.\(^3^5\)

Fortunately, the belief in making _livres d’artiste_ was not obstructed by such acidic criticism. Persisting on the belief that artistic expression in book illustrations should be independent of the texts, publishers and commissioned artists cooperated to accomplish a revolution in the history of illustration.\(^3^6\) During this flourishing period of _livres d’artiste_, it is “hard to think of a single great French painter or sculptor who has not illustrated at least one such book—and often several (in the case of Picasso, dozens)—with masterpieces of creative originality.”\(^3^7\)

As the atmosphere of _fin-de-siècle_ still haunted the art world, the concept of “art for art’s sake” and the aesthetics of the Decadents were also expressed in the visual and material form of books. Moreover, it is important to note that in the world of book publication, foreign artists known as belonging to the “École de

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\(^3^4\) Vollard, _Ibid_, p.254.

\(^3^5\) A typical reaction is that when M. Béraldi, who showed much appreciation for _Gaspard de la Nuit_ (illustrated by Armand Seguin, text by Louis Bertrand) in the beginning, learned the name of the publisher, he abruptly rejected the book: “The man who published _Parallèlement_ and _Daphnis et Chloé_? Ah, no! That would be letting the Devil into my library…” See Vollard, _Ibid_, p. 254-255.

\(^3^6\) Besides Vollard, there were other significant publishers working on _livres d’artiste_ such as Marty, Floury and especially Henry Kahnweiler who sponsored young artists like Picasso, Braque and Derain. All these efforts made the gold age of illustrations possible. Further details see Ray, 1982, or Jacqueline Armingeat in “The Illustrated Book”, _Lithography: 200 Years of Art, History, and Technique_, Harry N. Abrams, 1983, p.223-239.

\(^3^7\) Strachan, _Ibid_, p.20.
Paris” especially enriched the production of livre d’artiste. These artists shared themes of identity, exoticism and nostalgia in their works. Chagall is a prime example of a foreign artist belonging to the École de Paris. For a Russian painter like Chagall, it was exactly his outspoken attitude and hometown pride that made him distinctive and attractive to the French audience.

Among the most popular topics for livres d’artiste, there appears to be a preference for either French literature of the late 19th century or for reinterpretations of the ancient classics.38 The former includes poetry by Baudelaire, Flaubert, Rimbaud and other contemporary writers,39 while the latter ranges from Greek and Roman mythology and classical literature to versions of fables and bestiaries.40 Altogether they display a spectrum consisting of a fascination for the contemporary and a yearning toward the ancient or the naïve.

In this context, Chagall’s illustrated books La Bible and Les Fables de La Fontaine can be seen not only as the direct

Figure 1-1 Le voyage d’Urien

3 For example, the popular classics for the texts of artists’ books included Longus’ Daphnis and Chloe, illustrated by Collin, Bonnard (1902) and Chagall (1967); Dante’s Vita Nova illustrated by Denis; La Fontaine’s Contes et Nouvelles by Derain, etc. Picasso also made a good amount of illustrations for Greek masterpieces, such as Les Métamorphoses by Ovid (1931) and Lysistrata by Aristophanes (1934); Chagall himself made illustrations for Homer’s Odyssey (1974-75) and Shakespeare’s The Tempest (1975) in his later years as well. Of course, the classical texts for artists’ books vary widely and here I only list titles or artists that are somehow related to Chagall’s works. For references of titles of illustrated books, see Strachan, Ibid. and Ray, 1982.

4 There are illustrated versions of Les Fleurs du Mal by artists like Matisse, Rouault, Goerg, etc., and Le Spleen de Paris by Emile Bernard. There are Richier, Coutaud and Prassinos interpretation of Rimbaud’s Une Saison en Enfer. For contemporary authors, the most famous example is Toulouse-Lautrec on Gustave Geffroy’s Yvette Guilbert (1894). The creations of livres d’artiste are mentioned in many studies. Here I mainly refer to the surveys by Strachan in The Artist and the Book in France: the 20th-Century Livre d’Artiste or Armingeat, “The Illustrated Book”, 1983.

5 It is necessary to note the animal image as a specific theme in illustrated books, which spans from ancient fable stories to contemporary adaptations. The most popular texts used include Jules Renard’s Histoires Naturelles illustrated by Buffon, Bonnard and Toulouse-Lautrec (1899); Fables de La Fontaine by Chagall, Lurçat and Krol; or Apollinaire’s Bestiary: Or the Parade of Orpheus illustrated by Dufy (1910-11).
results of the artist’s cultural background, but also as a reflection on the trends of his time.

The illustrated books by Maurice Denis offer a good example of the fin-de-siècle aesthetics of book illustration. His illustrated versions of Sagesse and L’Imitation de Jésus Christ (1903), again published by Vollard, are more a demonstration of his Nabis art than a faithful visualization of the texts. Particularly his illustrations for Le voyage d’Urien (1893, fig. I-I), written by André Gide, consist of almost mysterious pictures. Coherent with his painting style, characters in these illustrations seem to consist of contours or shadows instead of substantial figures, and the backgrounds are either flat in perspective or integrated with the character in an ambiguous way. However, Denis’s style in these illustrations not only shows his affinity with a certain art movement, but also evokes an elusive atmosphere in Gide’s text. While Le voyage d’Urien, a wordplay on “le voyage du rien”, describes the hallucinatory trip of Urien, Denis’s illustrations correspond with empty and surreal shadows instead of realistic details. The choice of the text itself together with Denis’s Nabis style creates a sense of nothingness in an uncertain world.

Aside from 19th-century literature, the reinterpretation of classical texts in livres d’artiste implies the longing towards a more primitive or innocent state of humankind. One of the examples is Longus’s Daphnis and Chloe. Filled with elements such as nature, animals, love and desire, the ancient Greek pastoral explains how two orphans, a shepherd and shepherdess, discover their natural eroticism as well as their real identities. It is clear that Daphnis and Chloe remained popular among artists at the time when livres d’artiste thrived, which is proved by its numerous illustrations especially from the latter half of the 19th century.

Immediately after the scandalous publication of Parallèlement, Vollard was determined enough to cooperate with Bonnard again on a new version of Daphnis and Chloe. Bonnard finished the illustrations quickly and the book was published

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41 Denis made thirty designs to illustrate Le voyage d’Urien, a work of Gide’s early Symbolist phase. Gide invited the artist to take the assignment out of his admiration for Denis’s drawings for Sagesse (produced in 1889). See Ray, 1982, p. 491.

42 The life of Longus, author of Daphnis and Chloe, remains unclear. The work was set on the isle of Lesbos in the 2nd century AD, which is assumed to be the author’s background.

43 Throughout its history, Daphnis and Chloe has been illustrated for centuries by a great variety of artists. Since late the 19th century, artists who continued to illustrate this story include the cooperation of the British artists Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon, French artists Raphaël Collin (1877), Bonnard (1902), Maillol and Chagall (1967).
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in 1902. Owing to the “correct” choice of subject matter and Bonnard’s relatively restrictive illustrative format this time, the illustrated *Daphnis et Chloé* was more successful than the previous *Parallèlement*. However, this does not mean that Bonnard chose to compromise his notion of art. Despite the standard illustration format, Bonnard still expressed a rather modern, almost impressionist artistic style for this classical text. His sketch-like drawings of shattering landscapes and naïve figures produce a vague, fragmented sense of a forgotten dream.

In spite of the different medium of coloured lithography, similar effects were created in Chagall’s later version of *Daphnis and Chloe* (fig. 1-2). Chagall’s blurry colours often escape the contours of objects, which results in dissolving colours as if in a watercolour painting. With a dreamy atmosphere reminiscent of Bonnard’s impressionist drawings, Chagall also alluded to the Old Testament in his frontispiece of *Daphnis et Chloé*. In the picture, the offering of the red fruit—which can be interpreted as the boy offering fruit to the girl or the other way round—reminds readers of the most familiar scene in the Garden of Eden. The difference here is that on the little Greek island of Lesbos, there is neither a serpent nor a correlation with sin; instead there is pure joy as if caused by the discovery of a primitive desire and self-identity. Taken together, this expresses a sense of nostalgia in two ways: firstly the longing for a lost time and place that once existed (albeit in mythology) and secondly the longing for a primitive and innocent state of mind of humans.

As mentioned earlier, it would be problematic to assume that the frequent choice of the same themes for illustrations is purely a coincidence. From the perspective of nostalgia, the choice for classical or pastoral themes as the texts for *livres d’artiste* can be interpreted as a yearning for the lost and desired. After the age of Belle Époque, it would have been plausible that the two World Wars would have thwarted the success of illustrated books. Although the wars did cause some financial problems for the publishers, the turbulent situation also provided artists with the necessary nourishment to reflection on such notions as exile, nostalgia,

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*Again to make it clear, I use the English title "Daphnis and Chloe" to refer to Longus’s work, and the French title "Daphnis et Chloé" to refer to specific illustrated versions published by Vollard.*

*Bonnard’s 151 lithographs for *Daphnis and Chloe* were printed in black ink to match the text. "Abandoning the free and daring disposition of images throughout the margin area that in *Parallèlement* had proved anathema to contemporary bibliophiles, Bonnard restricted his *Daphnis and Chloe* illustrations for the most part to an unvaried rectangular format." C. Ives, H. Giambruni, S. M. Newman, *Pierre Bonnard: The Graphic Art*, Harry N Abrams, 1990, p. 172.

*Chagall’s version of 42 illustration plates was produced between 1952 and 1957 and was published by Tériade in 1967. For more than half century after Bonnard’s version, the theme was still popular among artists.*
identity and self-quest. It is within this complex environment—of both the publishing circle of *livres d’artiste* and of the social political reality—that Chagall undertook the commissions for his illustrated trilogy.

To be more precise, “exile” in this context does not necessarily refer to political refugees. The term “displacement” is perhaps more appropriate for this discussion, for it offers a better description of most of Chagall’s foreign journeys during which he completed his illustration trilogy.\(^7\) Chagall was not only part of the Jewish Diaspora, but was also one of the representatives of these 20\(^{th}\)-century art and literary movements. As George Stein’s rather radical proposal states, a whole genre of 20\(^{th}\)-century Western literature is “extraterritorial, a literature by and about exiles, symbolizing the age of the refugee.”\(^8\) The same can be said about the visual art of the 20\(^{th}\) century. Chagall’s choice of subjects and his caricatural, sometimes mysterious style of expression was a very personal reflection on the era in which he lived.

At first glance, Chagall’s three illustrated books in France played only a small role among the numerous publications of *livres d’artiste* in the first half of the 20\(^{th}\) century. However, as the productions spanned more than thirty years—from Vollard’s initiation to Tériade’s final publication\(^9\)—Chagall’s trilogy can be said to span the most abundant period of French illustrated books. With both its overall theme and its pictorial styles, the trilogy reflects the social environments of the period between the World Wars. On the one hand, the trilogy distinguishes itself from other art experiments by the background and identity of the artist; on the other hand, the trilogy is a testament to the more general spirit of the *livres d’artiste* with its experiments of artistic independence.

2. **The Handwriting of the Birthplace**

For Chagall, the sense of nostalgia is inherent to art, whether one is aware of it or not. It is the birthplace that clings to the work of every artist like his or her

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\(^{7}\) The term is suggested by Nico Israel in his book *Outlandish*, in which he made a clear distinction between exile and diaspora. For further definitions and thoughts, see Nico Israel, *Outlandish: Writing Between Exile and Diaspora*, Stanford Univ. Press, 2000, p.1-22.


handwriting. To quote Chagall himself: “Every painter is born somewhere, and even though he may later respond to the influences of other atmosphere, a certain essence—a certain ‘aroma’ of his birthplace clings to his work. […] The vital mark these early influences leave is, as it were, on the handwriting of the artist.”

In Chagall’s illustrations, this “handwriting” of the birthplace expresses itself from his earliest drawings dedicated to Yiddish literature. Due to the affinity in cultural backgrounds with the authors, Chagall’s surreal arrangement of realistic elements corresponds to the Jewish nature of the illustrated texts. In addition to some designs he made for the Jewish magazine ShTROM, his first illustrations of texts by Jewish authors, such as Der Nister’s Tales in Verse and I. L. Peretz’s The Magician published in 1917, followed by David Hofshtein’s Troyer (1922), clearly displayed Chagall’s identity for the lost Jewish world among his early illustrations.

In these early illustrated books, the prominent theme of nostalgia in Chagall’s later works is prefigured. These books also demonstrate the strong relationship between the artist’s birthplace and his art.

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50 This comes from Chagall’s speech in French at Mount Holyoke College in 1943, and at the University of Chicago in 1946. The English translation was done by Robert B. Heywood, first published in 1947, and was also included in ed. Harshav, Marc Chagall on Art and Culture, 2003.

51 Including works by David Hofshtein (also spelled as Hofstein), Abraham Sutzkever, Elkhonon Vogler and others; also poetry by Abraham Lyesin (Walt) in the 30s (discussed below). See Benjamin Harshav, Marc Chagall and the Lost Jewish World, 2006, p. 18.

52 Der Nister (The Hidden One) is actually the pseudonym of Jewish author and critic Pinchas Kaganovich (1884-1950). The children’s book Tales in Verse consists of two poems: “The Rooster” and “The Little Kid” (A mayse mit a hon, dos tsigele). The title of “The Little Kid” is often substituted as “The Goat” in other versions in different languages. Chagall made eight small illustrations and one title page with ink on paper for this publication. For more details, see Susan Tumarkin Goodman, “Chagall’s Paradise Lost: The Russian Years”, Marc Chagall: Early Works from Russian Collections, Third Millennium Publishing, 2001, p. 56-58.

53 I. L. Peretz (1852-1915) was a Yiddish author and playwright. The use of Hebrew letters in these early illustration works of Chagall will be further discussed in the chapter “La Bible”.

54 David Hofshtein began writing poetry in Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian and Ukrainian, but after the Russian Revolution of 1917 he wrote only in Yiddish. Hofstein was a co-editor of the Moscow Yiddish monthly Sh trom. His elegies Troyer (Yiddish, meaning “grief”) with Chagall’s illustration is dedicated to the white movement pogroms in Ukraine, 1919, during which time the Jewish communities were devastated.

55 In Chagall’s own words during Sweeney’s interview: “The root-soil of my art was Vitebsk, but like a tree, my art needed Paris like water.” See James Johnson Sweeney,
subjects, at least two important characteristics of Chagall’s drawings in relation to his hometown were already formed in these early illustrations: first, the affinity with folklore images of traditional Russian luboks and second, the presentation of Hebrew or Yiddish letters as part of pictorial elements.

In these early drawing-illustrations, Chagall’s style is recognizable by their sharp and discontinuous lines, naïve figures, irregular perspectives, dreamy compositions and the adoption of local details. In this style, Chagall already displayed a tendency towards his future illustrations as distinct from his colourful paintings. For instance, in Tales in Verse, Chagall ornaments the plates in a way resembling folklore images. In “Child in Perambulator and the Goat”, the emblematic composition corresponds to the decorativeness of luboks. His anthropomorphic depiction of the goat also reminds readers of the traditional image of a human-goat figure, which can be seen in many existing luboks such as “The She-goat and the Bear” (fig. I-3). Almost every illustration in Tales in Verse can be adorned as a single print hung on the wall.

Another connection between lubok images and Chagall’s works is the jubilant atmosphere in the pictures. This can be traced to the teachings of Hasidism, a sect of Judaism known for its joyful and spiritual nature. Chagall’s family and their neighborhood belonged to this sect. This can be seen as an explanation for why objects in Chagall’s works, particularly in his illustrations, seem to be dancing or floating, despite their solemn subjects.

Tales in Verse also exemplifies the other symptoms of nostalgia in Chagall’s works: the multicultural interplay of languages. In fact, more than visual presentation independent from the texts, Chagall’s illustrations usually integrate


*A lubok is a Russian folk print characterized by simple graphics and narratives usually derived from religious stories and popular tales. The first examples were back to the second half of the 17th century and were cheap icons painted on boards. See Alla Sytova, *The lubok: Russian folk pictures 17 th to 19 th century*, Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1984, p. 5-16. Sytova indicated traditional Russian luboks shed inspiration on many modern artists, including Chagall, and the association of luboks with Chagall’s art started in 1918.

*Pour l’humour de Dieu: Sur quelques sources d’un imaginaire*, Pierre Gianadda, 1991, p. 149-153. However, further analysis on Chagall’s pictorial style is needed.

“The She-goat and the Bear” was found in the collection of Dmitry Rovinsky (1824-95), a famous Russian art historian and lubok collector, 1796. The picture was also reprinted in Sytova, *Ibid.*

Figure 1-2 The She-goat and the Bear
more with the text itself. In the drawing of “The Dead Man and the Rooster”, the ornamental sense is reinforced by the framed characters depicted in handwriting. Also on the title page of “Goat and Rooster”, the Hebrew characters written in a formal, printing typology are arranged parallel to the pictorial objects of the goat and the rooster. By way of incorporating different forms of Hebrew letters into these folklore images, Chagall actually responded to the renaissance of Jewish culture and also opened up a new relationship between words and images.

Another example is shown in his illustrations for Troyer by the Yiddish poet David Hofstein. Here Chagall’s surrealistic rendering of realistic elements is literally entangled with the text itself; we find the Hebrew letters “escape” from the poetry and become part of the picture. In the piece titled “The Walking Village” (fig. I-4), a little figure from the window of the “walking” houses is pointing at one line of the poem: “why do I need it, the clear, transparent lucidity?” On the one hand, the inserted text emphasizes the theme of this illustration: the absurd situation of the Jewish Diaspora these villagers were facing. On the other hand, as many readers do not understand the Yiddish language, Chagall peppers his images with quotes from the text; these quotes tend to interpret the typographic characters into purely artistic forms. The text can be seen as a row of square letters in balance with the row of the rectangular houses; therefore, it also functions as part of the visual composition.

This interplay with Hebrew typography seems somehow similar to what Chagall’s countryman and avant-garde art colleague El Lissitzky (Lazar Markovich Lissitzky, 1890-1941) tried to achieve in his numerous illustrations. Nevertheless, unlike the supremacist stance El Lissitzky had chosen, and aside from using typography as a mere declaration of the visual artistry of Hebrew characters, Chagall also reinforced the message of the text itself by combining it with personal emotions and experiences. Owing to his multicultural background, Chagall often adopted Russian and Yiddish characters in his pictures as well, while El Lissitzky used solely Hebrew characters in art nouveau style. Just as Lissitzky later used Hebrew characters as the main feature in his book designs, Chagall frequently incorporated Russian, Hebrew and Yiddish typography into his own artworks, such as oil paintings and book illustrations.

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58 This line was translated from Hebrew to English by Benjamin Harshav. In fact Harshav explained that the title of this illustration is misleading, since the Yiddish idiom “the whole town goes” means the Jews are leaving their hometown, fleeing into exile. It is safer to assume that the title should be “The Town Is Walking”. See Harshav, 2006, p. 122.

59 Works by El Lissitzky, Sihas hulin: Eyne fun di geshikhten (An Everyday Conversation), Jewish Passover song Had gadya (One Goat), etc.

60 In fact, the use of texts is not uncommon in Chagall’s oil paintings. Chagall often
The insertion of textual characters in Chagall’s artworks also implies an identification with the subjects he painted. For example, in “Homage to Gogol” (fig. I-5), the sketch for the curtain design of the Gogol festival at the Hermitage Theatre in St Petersburg (1917), Chagall displayed his enthusiasm for Russian literature by showing respect to a great Russian author. Here, the artist distorted the figure of himself into an arabesque curve, with a laurel dedicated to Gogol in his hand and a typical Russian orthodox church on his feet. His curved body surrounds the colourful Russian characters “To Gogol, from Chagall”. Once again, Chagall included Russian characters to decorate the whole composition with their forms and colors, as well as to express the message of the picture itself.

To return to Chagall’s trilogy of *Les Âmes Mortes*, *Les Fables de La Fontaine* and *La Bible* from the perspective of the theme of nostalgia discussed above, this theme explains the general characteristics of those naïve, festive images with realistic details as well as local idioms. In the trilogy, the nostalgic sense can be seen as embodied in at least two major ways: the first is the details of illustrated objects based on real places; the second is the pictorial forms he chose, including the insertion of local languages, the festive presentation within supernatural compositions, the use of Chagallian animals/figures, etc. How these two aspects are expressed in the illustrated trilogy will be explained below.

In the illustration for *Les Âmes Mortes*, local elements from the Russian countryside are depicted realistically throughout the series; from trivial things such as a traditional tea maker (illu. 18), to the overall view of a rural village (illu. 3). In each illustration, the seemingly naive figures, the distorted perspective, or the Chagallian animals floating around, form a sketch of nostalgia reminiscent of inserted Russian, Hebrew or Yiddish characters into his images, for example, as the backdrop in *The Red Jew* (1915) or as the inscription on his well-known *The Cemetery Gate* (1917). In the latter piece, Chagall covered the Jewish cemetery gate with sacred texts inscribed with Hebrew characters to emphasize the sacred meaning of the subject. However, the sense here is different from the words quoted directly from the illustrated texts. The characters written/inscribed on the objects in a picture belong to the tangible, representational world, while the excerpts from the texts actually belong to the abstract, literal field. Now as soon as they come across into the images and become part of it, they actually function as the transition from the illustrated to the illustrating, and hence they blur the boundary between words and images. I will come back to this point again in the chapter “La Bible” later in this thesis.

It is necessary to note that Chagall himself has emphasized more than once that his choice of pictorial elements, the repetition of Chagallian animals for examples, were purely for formal reasons. To him, the insertion of a green cow is not for the sake of the allegory but for the sake of aesthetics. See Ed. Harshav, *Marc Chagall on Art and Culture*, Stanford University Press, 2003, p.78.

Of course, further analysis on each series in the trilogy will be included in the following chapters. Here I’ll give an overview of the different ways the theme of nostalgia is used in each series.
the traditional lubok image again. Take the very first illustration piece “The arrival of Chichikov” (illu. 1): the brichka that rides through the entire novel with Chichikov, the weather roosters that perch on top of the city gate, the Russian letters inscribed on the signs of shops, or the orthodox churches that stand on the slanting horizon, all these realistic details, arranged against an abstract background, invoke a vivid dream of a place that once existed.

Similarly, in the illustration of “The Tavern” (illu. 20), where we see the depiction of a typical Russian traktir with roosters on its roof, the distinctive shapes of pillars and windowpanes, as well as arabesque patterns on the façade of the building continuing on the clothes of the hostess. All these details echo Gogol’s picturesque description:

The time-darkened wooden inn received Chichikov beneath a narrow, welcoming porch, resting on slender carved wooden posts, which resembled ancient church candlesticks. This inn was built along the lines of a Russian peasant hut, /.../ painted on the shutters were jugs with flowers.

Chagall made a corresponding water-colour sketch especially for this illustration, which is unusual during the production of *Les Âmes Mortes*. The exception of this important sketch might be explained by Chagall’s nostalgia for his hometown activated by his memories when he made the illustrations. The sketch also shows the significance of realistic observation needed to capture a hotel so different from those he saw in Paris.

In later illustrations, which Chagall produced for the poetry of his Jewish editor A. Lyesin published in 1938, many elements familiar from the *Les Âmes*

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63 A brichka is a three-horse carriage; a kind of poor man’s troika.
64 “*Traktir*” is a type of Russian tavern or inn, where one can also get a tea and a bite to eat.
67 A. Lyesin (pseudonym of Abraham Walt, 1888-1938) was a poet and then became the long-term editor of a Yiddish journal in New York, where Chagall published his memoirs and poems. In 1938, three volumes of Lyesin’s poetry were published posthumously with 34 drawings by Chagall. See Benjamin Harshav, *Marc Chagall and His Times: A Documentary Narrative*, Stanford University Press, 2003, p.328.
Mortes and La Bible series were reused. For example, the scene of crowds in the street in the illustration for the poem “The Grave” (fig. 1-6) resembles the illustration of “The Public Prosecutor’s Funeral Procession” (illu. 78) in Les Âmes Mortes. Both pieces consist of realistic elements from his Russian hometown, such as the peasant-like villagers, the Star of David on the coffin in the carriage, and the typical houses with Russian signs above the door. On top of that, the spirit of his Hasidic teaching is shown throughout his pictorial caricature style. Although the subject in both pieces is the funeral itself rather than mourning, Chagall’s depiction of the people in the pictures seems to capture them singing, dancing and celebrating. It is in these elements that the impact of Chagall’s birthplace can be recognized.

The festive atmosphere continues in the illustrations for the French classic Les Fables de La Fontaine. This time, the festiveness is coloured with the sunshine in the countryside of France, Chagall’s second home. The characters are no longer dressed as stout Russian peasants. The landscapes of the south of France are evoked in bold colours in the premier gouaches. However, in spite of these French appearances, the impression of the artist’s birthplace still haunts the pictures. First, the choice of the Fables itself—a genre of literature with animals as its main characters—coincides with the artist’s vocabulary: Chagall is known for his use of animals in many of his other artworks, such as the famous “I and the Village” which will be discussed below. This can be explained by his memory of the animals in his hometown in the Russian countryside where, in Wullschlager’s words, “chickens and goats scratched; cattle wandered on dirt tracks and into houses and shops.”

Chagall uses the animals from his homeland as formal elements to construct his pictures:

I have used cows, milkmaids, roosters, and provincial Russian architecture as a source of form [sic] because these are a part of the country from which I come; and these things, without doubt, have left a deeper impression in my visual memory than all the other impressions I have received.

Secondly, the anthropomorphic representation of animals in Les Fables again shows the influence of both traditional folklore images and, more specifically, the teaching of Hasidism that all beings are relative and are the permeation of God himself. Therefore, Chagall’s illustrations demonstrate “the one-ness of animal

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68 Here, Wullschlager is describing the scenery in Peskovatik, a suburb of Vitebsk where Chagall was born. Jackie Wullschlager, Chagall: Love and Exile, Allen Lane Penguin Group, 2008, p. 12-13.

69 This is part of Chagall’s speech from 1943/1946, included in ed. Harshav, Marc Chagall on Art and Culture, 2003, p.78.
Most animal characters in *Les Fables* bear a human expression: they smile, laugh, mourn, or frown. The human expressions not only show the sarcastic attitude in the verses toward the human world, but also hint at Chagall’s view of the universe.

The Hasidic conception of all beings in the universe is often misunderstood as pagan and pantheistic. However in Hasidism, God, absolute Reality, is beyond physical being; hence, all beings are illusive and are seen as created in God’s image. This also explains that in Chagall’s *Les Fables*, the world seems like a carnival where animals, humans and gods can rejoice, interact or even transform into each other. In a way, this colourful playground shows Chagall’s Russian roots, though with some French features, which can be seen as the transition from the artist’s first cultural identity to the second one.

The seemingly pagan world in *Les Fables* contrasts with the world of the third book of the trilogy: Chagall’s illustrations for the *Bible* delve into the core of his Jewish identity. This time, the nostalgia for his birthplace goes further into a quest for the hometown of his ancestors. To make this series, he managed a trip to Palestine—though Vollard disagreed with this trip and replied with “allez plutôt place Pigalle”—so that he could visualize an imaginary biblical world based on a realistic place. As a matter of fact, aside from a direct depiction of the *Bible*, Chagall’s vision of the Holy Land extends to many of his other art works. The nostalgia toward both the place of the Holy Land and the time in the Old Testament continues as one of the main subjects in his works: the characters and themes from *La Bible* in particular reappear in many of his later illustrations, oil paintings, stained glass windows, and the famous stage designs for the Jewish theatre in Moscow. On top of that, Chagall’s *La Bible* is not merely a faithful mirror of authentic Judaism. Mixing Jewish, Hasidic, Christian and even mythological elements, Chagall constructed a biblical scene from his own interpretation.

The sense of nostalgia in *La Bible* also lies in several pictorial elements like the use of Hebrew letters and Jewish religious symbols, which will be discussed later in the chapter “La Bible.” As a whole, Chagall attempts to re-narrate a story of Jewish people from the view of a modern painter. For example, and as previously mentioned, Chagall frequently inserts texts of Yiddish, Hebrew or Russian characters in his pictures, either as the reinforcement of a certain message.

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70 Wullschlager, 2008, p. 327.
71 Chagall made the foyer design of the Jewish theatre, as well as decorations, sets and costumes for its first production. The Jewish theatre can also be translated as the Yiddish art theatre (Jewish and Yiddish are the same word in Russian), and was later known as GOSET. The design for GOSET was Chagall’s most significant work back in his hometown in Russia.
or purely as part of the pictorial field itself. As regards the trilogy, the insertion of texts appears most often in La Bible so as to emphasize the authenticity of the scriptures and the prophetic messages. Unlike his other works, where he often mixed Yiddish dialects with Hebrew texts, in La Bible he switched to a rather serious tone via a formal typeface and printing style.

The subjects in the trilogy are therefore different but coherent in respect to their relationships with the artist. This trilogy clearly demonstrates how Chagall visualized the sense of nostalgia as a multi-cultural representation based on a variety of elements from his birthplace.

3. Stylistic commonalities of Chagall's Illustrations

Rooted in different sources, Chagall’s nostalgic attitude in his illustrations expresses itself via specific styles and techniques. In the trilogy Chagall elaborates his supernatural and caricatural style by means of experiments in printmaking.

There is no reason to separate the style of Chagall’s illustrations from that of his major paintings, in spite of some fundamental differences in materials and ways of expression. Although the nature of Chagall’s art has been discussed by many critics and scholars, it is still necessary to briefly summarize the stylistic commonalities shared by his illustrations and paintings.

“Supernaturel!” is the word Apollinaire used when he saw Chagall’s works for the first time in his studio at La Ruche, and afterwards it turned out to be perhaps the best description for Chagall’s artistic style. The “supernatural” or imaginary elements in his paintings often led to him being incorrectly categorized as surrealist. The manifesto of surrealism was published by André Breton in 1924; the year after Chagall started to work on Les Âmes Mortes. Though similar in their surrealist appearance, Chagall never associated himself with any artistic or political groups throughout his life. In fact, although influenced by many artistic

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72 This will be further discussed in the chapter "La Bible".

73 To quote Chagall himself in his speech at Mount Holyoke College: "...Apollinaire, despite everything, came to see me in my studio. It was there that he pronounced for the first time the magic word 'supernatural'. [...] To be honest, I little understand this word myself at that time.” See "Some Impressions Regarding French Painting—Address at Mount Holyoke College, Aug 1943/March 1946", English trans. and ed. by Harshav, Marc Chagall on Art and Culture, 2003, p.71.

74 In fact, in Sweeney's interview, Chagall showed his doubt on the method of "automatism" proclaimed in the Surrealist manifesto and declared that "Fantastic or illogical as the construction of my pictures may seem, [...] I did not do it by
trends, especially impressionism and cubism, which he openly admitted, Chagall did not participate in any of them. Instead he kept his distance from them. Instead of following the Surrealist Manifesto, the supernatural arrangement in Chagall’s pictures was an aesthetic concern inspired by elements from his hometown and the festive nature of Hasidism mentioned earlier in this chapter:

/My first aim is to construct my picture architecturally, [...] please defend me against people who speak of ‘anecdote’ and ‘fairy tales’ in my work. A cow and a woman to me are the same—in a picture both are merely elements of composition./

Therefore, in his pictures it is typical to see figures and objects displayed in a topsy-turvy world: there are figures like a green-faced Jew, a fiddler dancing on the roof, an up-side-down head on a body, or a flying couple crossing many of his pictures. All these elements construct a supernatural and very idiosyncratic vocabulary of art.

In one of his most famous oil paintings, “I and the Village” (1911, fig. I-7), for example, the pictorial language Chagall had developed is evident. The realistic elements from Vitebsk are dotted unrealistically around the picture, such as the traditional village houses in the background, the farmer and the upside down village girl, and the milking woman inside the head of a cow. However, despite the fact that Chagall claimed that the absurd way he arranged these elements was purely for compositional reasons, the image explicitly evokes a feeling of nostalgia for his hometown. The nostalgia does not only concern the longing for the tangible land itself, but also the quest for the spiritual harmony between humans and animals in this countryside village, which is shown through the painter’s parallel deployment of the cow and the green-faced human. Another interpretation of the picture concerns the quest for one’s identity. The green man with a cross on his neck is the artist himself—which shows the strong influence of Christianity despite the Hasidic teaching he grew up with—while the cow functions as the projection of his ego, since Chagall often expressed his idea of the oneness of humans and animals: “I often said I was not an artist, but some kind of a cow. What’s the difference?”


For further analysis on “I and the Village”, see ed. Harshav, Marc Chagall on Art and Culture, 2003, p. 83.

Chagall, Ma Vie, 1931, English translated and quoted in Harshav, 2006, p. 60.
The supernatural rendering of elements based on the artist’s background results in a recognizable Chagallian style in all his illustrations, paintings, theatre designs and stained glasses in his later period. He integrated personal experiences into universal topics, which makes his world of art funny and serious at the same time, and also pleasant to the eye.

As a matter of fact, most of Chagall’s illustrations meet the above description of his painting style. However, there is an extraordinary touch added exclusively to his illustrations: the casual, semi-sketch style of caricatures. Owing to the drawing-like nature of etchings he used for this trilogy, Chagall was able to represent free, almost improvised lines and shadows in his illustrations. Together with the sarcasm implied in the pictures and the exaggerating portraits of figures, Chagall’s illustrations often resemble the depiction of a satirical caricature, which is different from his other paintings.

Chagall’s expressive style of caricature is deeply affected by the different printing techniques he chose. His early illustrations in Russia were produced with ink on paper, and it was only after he traveled to Berlin to be an apprentice of Hermann Struck that Chagall started to make etchings for his illustrations. Chagall soon proved his talent for printmaking with the etchings he made for his autobiography Ma Vie, written at the age of thirty-five. Although the finished plates were never used as illustrations for the book, the publisher Paul Cassirer (1871-1926) decided to publish these etchings as an independent portfolio, Mein Leben (1923), without the accompaniment of any text. It was the clean lines and the dreamy atmosphere in Mein Leben that caught Ambroise Vollard’s attention in the first place.

In Mein Leben, Chagall already showed the sense of humour which can be recognized in most caricatures. In the most well-known piece, “Self Portrait” (fig.

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78 It might be interesting to bear in mind that this was the period after Daumier and others had already made their establishments in satirical caricatures when the young Chagall first arrived in La Ruche in Paris. Despite no direct evidence for their influences on Chagall, it is important to point out the public awareness of the form of the drawing style of caricatures.

79 Hermann Struck (1876-1944) was a German-Jewish artist known for his engravings. Though banned from teaching at Berlin Academy because of his Jewish blood, Struck still signed his works with his Jewish name and the Star of David. Marc Chagall is one of his most famous students.

80 Due to the problem of translating Chagall’s dreamy Yiddish poetry into French, the plan of publishing the illustrated autobiography was postponed. However, Cassirer’s decision proved a wise one, for sales were better than expected. Later on, the French version of Ma Vie translated by Bella Chagall was published in 1931, but the original engravings were not used in this version.
Nostalgic Impulse 39

Chagall depicted his childhood house on an enormous head and his beloved family surrounding him below. The unnatural proportions indicate the theme of this self-portrait: how his hometown always haunts him and how he carries them with him as his responsibility for his whole life. The portraits of the family members also imply a sense of haunting memories and their extraterritorial situation: Bella and their daughter Ida, who were with the artist in Berlin at the time, were shown as head-shoulder portraits, while his parents who lived far back in their Russian hometown were portrayed in full length.

Chagall’s impossible composition in Mein Leben not only created the humour that characterizes caricature, but also a sense of distant memories. He drew a flying carriage across a traditional village house in “House in Vitebsk” reminiscent of lubok images and summarizing Chagall’s supernatural style. Likewise, he dissolved the silhouette of figures in “Lovers on the Bench” as if they were melting into a passionate kiss; the discontinuous lines evoke the feeling of a vague, hilarious dream. A free play with lines and compositions is made possible in the form of caricatural drawings.

Later on, Chagall added sarcasm to his caricatural illustrations, either politically, socially or religiously. For example in Les Sept Péchés Capitaux, a smaller illustration series he made in 1926 between Les Âmes Mortes and Les Fables, the gross and distorted figures produce a sheer sarcasm on the title of the series. Chagall’s illustrations clearly distinguish themselves in this respect from his other works.

4. Printing Techniques

With the new printmaking techniques he acquired, including etching, engraving, drypoint, aquatint and roulette, Chagall was able to make stronger variations on black and white surfaces, from clear-cut silhouettes and dark, heavy shadows to hazy gradient backgrounds. Already known for his ability to manipulate colours, Chagall was now able to create the effect of chiaroscuro in black and white.

Due to the fact that it is not easy to make modifications with drypoint, the prints preserve the original touches during the artist’s creative process directly. Nikolai Gogol had already made a vivid metaphor of artistic labour when he described how difficult life is for a writer who “with the robust strength of an implacable chisel has made bold to set them [lies] forth in full and bright relief for

\[\text{Les Sept Péchés Capitaux (the Seven Deadly Sins)}\]

is a volume by seven authors including the famous French author Jean Giraudoux. Chagall made 16 prints with grotesque images for this work. See Wullschlager, 2008, p. 326.
all the people to see!” As the acid bites into the copperplate so as to reveal the picture that the artist tries to create, the analogy between the work of the author and that of the printmaker here reinforces the acidic sarcasm brought out by his caricature prints.

It is with these printmaking effects that Chagall created a great number of emotions and situations in the series Les Âmes Mortes. For example, etchings made with a pointed needle are used to create thin and smooth contours. Pictures in the form of pure etchings with clear and shadowless lines are suitable for creating sentimental scenes or illusive spaces. Since in the series few pieces consist only of etchings—most of them are combined with drypoint or other techniques—it explains why these pure etchings receive more attention. Examples are “Chichikov bids farewell to Manilov” (illus. 12) or “Lovers on the Bench” mentioned earlier. The soft tone in these pictures corresponds to the oversentimentality described in the scene. Also, in pieces like “At the Town Gate” (illus. 47) or “The Witnesses” (illus. 58/3), the discontinuous contours without shadows create a drifting and unreal surface, reminiscent of the absurdity of the entire story.

In addition to the gentle and smooth lines produced by etching, drypoint could create rough scratching lines or thick heavy shadows, which require hard sculpting movements of the artist on the copperplate. Therefore, just like the brushstroke left in an oil painting, the texture of drypoint marks the strong, original emotions of the artist, invoking moody atmospheres or shabby situations. For example, when Chichikov feels frustrated during “A Heavy Cold” (illus. 74), or when the governor’s daughter feels wronged when “The Governor’s Wife Scolds her Daughter” (illus. 67), the heavy and disordered lines run across the background as if deleting the whole surface. Besides the background, these kinds of fierce lines sometimes appear directly on the objects, as in “Pliushkin’s Old Garden” (illus. 39) in order to emphasize the pathetic surroundings of the landlord, or even on the face of the characters in “Our Hero Is Getting Ready” (illus. 77), together with discontinuous lines, so as to increase the tension of the hero’s unknown fate in the following scene.

With the help of drypoint technique, Chagall was able to create contrasts between brightness and darkness in the series. One of the examples is “Pliushkin and Mavra Arguing” (illus. 46) where the black-dressed maid situated in lightness

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83 I focus my discussion of the techniques of printmaking on examples of illustrations from Les Âmes Mortes because I consider this series to be the best etchings among Chagall’s works. In two other series of Les Fables and La Bible, it is the painterly effects that Chagall pursued mainly in his etchings because of the watercolour sketches he made premier to the prints. In this section I’ll focus on the techniques. Further analysis on the style of expression will be discussed in the next chapter “Les Âmes Mortes.”
is confronted with the white-robed master in the shadow. This enhances the emotion of conflict in the illustration. Chagall once again proves his ability to elaborate his vocabulary with black and white and often uses this kind of dual composition to create a visual effect un-presentable in the literal texts.

In addition to the printmaking techniques adopted in Mein Leben, Chagall also experimented with the technique of aquatint in Les Âmes Mortes. Aquatint helps to render a melting effect, which is suitable for creating a blurry background. In Les Âmes Mortes, illustrations with aquatint appear mostly in the second volume, owing to the scenes of recalled memories or embarrassing feelings. It is with this technique that Chagall invoked Chichikov’s distant memory of the governor’s daughter for “In Church” (illu. 82), as well as the foggy background in the uncertain journey of “Troika at Night” (illu. 85), which concludes the illustration series in a dreamy atmosphere.

As mentioned earlier, Chagall’s trilogy of illustrated books is distinctive because of the material he chose. Since he turned to coloured lithography soon after, these three series became a rare testimony to his endeavours with a large number of etching plates. The trilogy soon proved its charm and its sense of nostalgia, created by the variety of etching techniques in black and white.

Just like other livres d’artiste, the nature of the trilogy is defined by the spirit of independent artworks representing the artist’s ideas and styles, and also by the fact that these works are commercial products reflecting the tastes and interests of the time. For the series Les Âmes Mortes solely, Chagall made 96 plates plus 11 head- and tail-pieces. In 1950, the publication was finally issued by Tériade in an edition of 285 pages all signed by the artist, with the first 50 copies containing a set of etchings on japon nacre paper, and 33 artist’s hors commerce proofs. Despite the unusual presentation of Chagall’s caricatural and supernatural styles, the medium of engravings applied in the series met the taste of his contemporary book collectors. The way he revealed the influences from his birthplace via absurd but surprisingly realistic details seemed to please most buyers.

Soon after he had made the trilogy, commissioned by Vollard, Chagall turned to the medium of coloured lithography with which he stayed for the rest of his illustration projects. From then on, the nature of freehand lithography drawing enabled him to convey his thoughts and emotions via his well-known flowing colours. For example, in the work Daphnis et Chloé mentioned earlier, the sense of nostalgia and primitive affection are shown in his abundant use of multi-

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84 For Vollard’s commission, Chagall made a much larger number of plates than for his earlier series of illustrations. Les Âmes Mortes consists of 96 illustration plates in total, Les Fables de La Fontaine of 100, and La Bible of 105.
coloured plates. However, this does not mean that black and white became Chagall’s second choice; in fact, in one of his last illustration series *The Tempest*, Chagall actually used coloured lithography to present mono-coloured prints in grey tones which resemble the effects of black-and-white etchings.

Chagall’s trilogy of illustrated books distinguishes itself from his later illustration projects in many ways. First, with a large number of engraving plates, the trilogy concludes the characteristics of the artist’s early illustration drawings. Second, the black and white etchings contribute another aspect to the artist’s reputation in addition to his ability to use colours. Third, the trilogy was produced in the highly tense interwar period, which prompted a dialogue between the works and the social environment on themes like exile, quest, identity and nostalgia. With a variety of techniques, Chagall’s illustrations present contemporary themes in a recognizable style. Chagall’s trilogy—as well as his later series—can be viewed as individual interpretations of classic literature, but when considered from the perspective of the idea of nostalgia, his illustrations taken together express a consistent theme reflecting the spirit of his time.

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85 It’s worth mentioning that Chagall was very enthusiastic about the plates in *Daphnis et Chloé*. He went to Greece to get a first-hand impression of the little Mediterranean island. To produce the 42 lithographs, with over 25 colours for some prints, he used more than 1000 zinc plates in total. See Ulrike Gauss, ed., *Marc Chagall: The Lithographs*, Hatje, 1999.

86 Chagall’s *The Tempest* was produced in 1975 and published by André Sauret, containing 50 lithograph plates.