

Formal Analysis of Marc Chagall's Work "Lovers in The Lilacs" and Its Evaluation Within The Scope of Freud's Article "On A Special Type of Object Choice in Men" *

Marc Chagall'ın "Leylaklardaki Aşıklar" Adlı Eserinin Biçimsel Çözümlemesi ve Freud'un "Erkeklerde Nesne Seçiminin Özel Bir Tipi Üzerine" Makalesi Kapsamında Değerlendirilmesi

ABSTRACT

Expressionist Marc Chagall was an artist of Jewish origin and entered the art world from a poor life. His struggle for life deeply affected him and led to the emergence of his works. Sigmund Freud, like Chagall, was of Jewish origin and was born on 6 May 1856 in Freiberg, Moravia (now known as Příbor, within the borders of the Czech Republic) during the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Freud later moved to Vienna with his family and spent most of his life there. Freud, who was interested in art, addressed the subject in works of art and questioned the reason for the emergence of it. The aim of the research is to define the Expressionism art movement, to provide information about Marc Chagall's life and to evaluate the artist's work *Lovers in Lilacs* within the scope of Freud's article *On a Special Type of Object Selection in Men* and to find the reason for the emergence of the work. The descriptive scanning model, one of the qualitative research techniques, was used in the research. Within the scope of the article, the work was analyzed in depth both formally and thematically. As a result, the works produced by the artist reflect the effect of the observations and experiences that deeply affected Chagall's inner world. The artist's work *Lovers in Lilacs* can also be seen as a work that reflects the artist's feelings about love, affection and sexuality.

Keywords: Expressionism, Marc Chagall, Freud, Analysis.

ÖZET

Dişavurumcu Marc Chagall, Yahudi kökenli bir ressam olup yoksul bir hayatın içerisinde sanat dünyasına adım atmıştır. Yaşam mücadelesi sanatçıyı derinden etkilemiş ve yaptığı eserlerin ortaya çıkmasını sağlamıştır. Sigmund Freud da tıpkı Chagall gibi Yahudi kökenli olup 6 Mayıs 1856'da Avusturya-Macaristan İmparatorluğu döneminde Moravya'nın Freiberg kentinde (günümüzde Çek Cumhuriyeti sınırları içinde yer alan Příbor olarak bilinir) doğdu. Freud daha sonra ailesiyle birlikte Viyana'ya taşındı ve hayatının büyük bir kısmını orada geçirdi. Sanata ilgisi olan Freud, sanat yapıtlarında konuyu ele almış, sanat eserinin ortaya çıkış nedenini sorgulamıştır. Araştırmanın amacı Ekspresyonizm sanat akımını tanımlamak, Marc Chagall'ın yaşamı hakkında bilgi vermek ve sanatçının *Leylaklardaki Aşıklar* adlı yapıtını Freud'un *Erkeklerde Nesne Seçiminin Özel Bir Tipi Üzerine* adlı makalesi kapsamında değerlendirerek eserin ortaya çıkış nedenini bulmaktır. Araştırmada nitel araştırma tekniklerinden betimsel tarama modeli kullanılmıştır. Makale kapsamında yapıt hem biçimsel hem de tema bağlamında derinlemesine analiz edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, ressamın ortaya koyduğu eserler, onu derinden etkileyen gözlemlerin ve tecrübelerin Chagall'ın iç dünyasında yarattığı etkiyi yansıtmaktadır. Sanatçının *Leylaklardaki Aşıklar* adlı yapıtı da ressamın aşka, sevgiye ve cinselliğe ilişkin duygularını aynalayan bir yapıt olarak görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ekspresyonizm, Marc Chagall, Freud, Analiz.

INTRODUCTION

Expressionism is a modern art movement that ignores traditional style. In this art movement, where artists turn to their inner world, emotions and thoughts come to the fore. For expressionists who liberated their inner worlds, their own lives became the focal point, and painters depicted the traumas, events and moments that affected them in their works. In the works produced, both color and form elements were reconsidered, given meaning and symbolized according to the expressionist style and the artist's personality traits. Marc Chagall, one of the expressionist artists, also externalized his inner world by including his own life experiences and observations in his works. The painter's work *Lovers in Lilacs* also reflects the feeling of love that everyone experiences at least once in their lives and the

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effects of love on the individual. Falling in love is one of the feelings that deeply affects the individual and it also motivated Chagall, who listened to his inner world. In this context, it has been a matter of curiosity what the equivalent of love is in Chagall's inner world, how it affects him and in this context, with what psychological motivation he created the work in question.

Sigmund Freud, as a neurologist and psychoanalyst, dealt with almost everything about the individual's spiritual side. Curious about the effects of love on the individual, the psychoanalyst observed the effects of love through the behaviors of women and men. After examining the object choices of men and women in the context of love, Freud first expressed what was effective in the man's object choice in his article *On a Special Type of Object Choice in Men*. In this article, the psychoanalyst included how the man viewed the woman he had made his love object after choosing the object and what behaviors and attitudes he displayed towards her. Emphasizing that behind men's passionate attachment to their love objects were obsession, protective instinct and desire for possession, Freud associated the state of loving and being affectionate with the man's childhood, that is, with the mother-child bond. As a man who had experienced the feeling of love, Chagall also reflected the effect of love on him by turning it into an impulse in his works. In the work in question, as well as in other works where love became a theme, the painter's approach towards the love object as a man can be seen. Within the scope of Freud's article, Chagall's work *Lovers in Lilacs* can be more easily understood and evaluated.

METHOD

The descriptive scanning model, one of the qualitative research techniques, was used in the research, and the data was collected by scanning both written and visual literature and analyzed using the art work analysis technique (Karasar, 1998; Balcı, 2007).

Research Process

During the formation process of the research, research was conducted in the relevant field and information was collected. After the name of the research was determined, the characteristics of the Expressionism art movement were examined, the life of Marc Chagall was discussed, and Chagall's work "*Lovers in Lilacs*" was examined based on Freud's article "*On a Special Type of Object Selection in Men*".

Data Collection Tools

As part of the research, written and visual data were collected by examining the websites of international museums, articles, theses, and internet documents, primarily books.

Data Analysis

Data was obtained using the work analysis technique. The data obtained within the framework of literature review activities was compiled, organized, analyzed, divided into sections according to their subjects and titles, and used systematically in the study.

FINDINGS

What is the Expressionism Art Movement?

Expressionism, or Expressionism, emerged as a reaction to the Impressionism and Naturalism art movements (Turani, 1990, p. 576). The art movement, which existed with its striking style between 1905-1925, showed itself not only in the art field but also in the cultural field in Germany, and dealt with sociological issues within the scope of the cultural field, and created an extraordinary formal language by rejecting the traditional in artistic terms (Eroğlu, 2021, p. 27). Expressionism was initially used only as a term, but it became a concept thanks to Picasso and Braque, and then represented the art of the Expressionists (Batur, 2020, pp. 295-297).

Expressionism, which came to the fore especially in painting, rejected the traditional style and agreed with Nietzsche in terms of thought. German thinker Nietzsche stated that being within the traditional order hindered the individual in terms of thought and action and stated that people whose horizons were opened with innovation could develop and progress (Öndin, 2019, pp. 88-89). The anti-establishment attitudes of the Expressionists opened the doors of innovation to art. Artists ignored the capitalist order and thought that capitalism separated people and produced works that criticized the bourgeois class of society. Expressionists, who focused on the essence of man within the system in which the individual was trapped, targeted the inner world (Eroğlu, 2018, p. 9).

Expressionists stopped imitating nature and presented their own unique formal language in all their works, including landscapes and still lifes. Artists who advocated individuality symbolized color by adding meaning to it. For Expressionists, who mostly used the color element vividly and brightly, the color red represented anger,

violence and lust, while blue and purple tones were the semantic equivalent of a depressive mood, sadness and unhappiness. The line element was sometimes used static and sometimes dynamic (Kaya, 2012, p. 42; Dempsey, 2019, p. 33; Antmen, 2021, pp. 33-34). After color and line, form was taken up and the form was interpreted within the scope of subjectivity (Gögebakan & Kılınç, 2020, p. 28). Artists who produced works with intuition and impulsivity showed that they could interact with the audience and understand them in a spiritual context through their works.

With expressionism, the alienation brought by the modern world has disappeared, and the unsaid, the repressed, the crises have been able to be reflected to the outside world. The art movement of expressionism has brought together individuals who were alone in terms of thought, intuition and spirit in the discovery of truth and self. The creative subject and the receptive subject have been able to share their problems with each other on a common ground, together with the aesthetic object.

Who is Marc Chagall?

Marc Chagall was born on July 7, 1887. The artist was of Jewish origin and was the first child of nine siblings as a child of a poor family. The painter struggled to survive in a wooden hut with his mother, father, two brothers and seven sisters (Aaron, 2003, p. 14). Chagall's father worked as a laborer for many years. The artist described his father as a man who was tired and anxious but had smiling eyes. The painter's mother was born in Lyozno and took responsibility for the house after getting married (Chagall, 2020, pp. 7-15).

Chagall was interested in many branches of art in his childhood. Chagall, who loved singing, took lessons from an instructor who was in the church choir. While receiving his education as a painter, he worked in the synagogue. Chagall, who was seen as an apprentice, also met a violin virtuoso and started playing the violin after a while. In addition to playing the violin and singing, the artist also wrote poems, and while writing poems, he had a desire to become a poet. The painter's painting life began with the painting lessons he took in the fifth grade. Chagall, who shared his desire to become a painter with his mother, went to Penne's Painting and Drawing School with his mother and showed her the drawings he had made. Penne saw Chagall's inclination towards painting and the artist studied at the school for two months, but had difficulty due to financial difficulties. During the process, a rich student from Penne's school asked Chagall to train him, and thus their friendship began (Chagall, 2020, pp. 40-74).

In the winter of 1906-1907, the artist moved to St. Petersburg with his friend. Chagall, who continued his painting education in St. Petersburg, won a scholarship from the Svanseva School in 1908 and began his apprenticeship in painting in 1909, and the painter began to determine themes to work on, and the subjects of the works were village life and village landscapes (Walther & Metzger, 2021, pp. 7-11).

Chagall went to Paris in 1910 and stayed there for about a year and a half. The artist, who went to the Independents Exhibition, examined the works of painters such as Munch, Matisse, Bonnard and began to explore French painting, and had the chance to see the works of painters such as Manet, Delacroix and Courbet up close at the Louvre Museum (Aaron, 2003: p. 36-37). In 1912, the painter left his cousin and moved to the wooden mansion known as the "Beehive", where he began to work on large-sized canvases, formally differentiating his works (Walther & Metzger, 2021, pp. 18).

After Paris, the painter went to Berlin and returned to Russia after staying there for a short time. Chagall met with Bella, to whom he was previously engaged, and after some time, he married her. The painter, who wanted to return to Europe after getting married, could not go because of the war and did his military service (Chagall, 2020).

In the autumn of 1915, Marc Chagall and his wife Bella moved to Petrograd. During this period, the painter worked as a clerk for Bella's brother Jakov, who worked in the War Economy Office. During the same period, Chagall and Bella had a daughter named Ida. The artist, who wished to have a boy, was disappointed after Ida's birth. The painter, whose fame increased day by day in Russia, had his works exhibited in Moscow in 1916. After the revolution in November 1917, four of the artist's works and 69 drawings were presented to art lovers at the Dobitschina Gallery (Aaron, 2003, pp. 59-60). Chagall included his observations of his childhood in his works and reflected his childhood experiences on his canvases. The painter's works are limited to childhood memories, Jewish traditions, images of Jewish life and Russian ways of thinking (Walther & Metzger, 2021, p. 22).

The painter, who became famous in 1917, produced countless works until his death. The artist's works are evidence of his individual artistic and aesthetic views. The painter, who made a name for himself in the history of art with his works, died in 1985 (Eroğlu, 2018, p. 46).

Analysis of Marc Chagall's "Lovers in The Lilacs" Formal Analysis of the Work



Image 1. Marc Chagall, "Lovers in the Lilacs", 1930, oil on canvas, 131.1 x 89.5 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Reference: (Walther & Metzger, 2021, p. 56).

Chagall's work *Lovers in Lilacs* (See Image 1), which is located in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and was made in 1930, is designed in an open composition. Two figures, one male and one female, come to the fore in the work. In addition, two figures are depicted in the lower left section of the work.

The image that stands out in the work is the round vase with blue tones that covers almost the entire area of the painting and the lilacs inside. The lilacs are painted in shades of white, yellow and purple along with their green leaves. There are two figures, one male and one female, in a horizontal position among the lilacs.

The male figure, whose body is in frontal view, extends from the right side of the work to the left side, and is depicted facing the female figure in a lying position in front of him, holding the female figure's head with his right hand and touching it with his left hand. The male figure is depicted in a dark blue suit, with dark hair, pale skin, and a smiling facial expression. The female figure, like the male figure, extends from the right to the left of the composition, and is visualized with her upper body naked, one leg over the other, and her arm extended over the lilacs. The figure is depicted looking at the male figure, who is smiling at her with dark and long hair, pale skin, and smiling.

The background of the huge bouquet where the figures are positioned is dominated by blue tones. There is a white moon depiction on the right and bottom sections of the composition, and the moon's light is reflected on the ground. In the section where the dark tone of blue is located in the lower right corner of the work, two more figures wearing white clothes and sitting are depicted. In the lower left side of the work, there is a semi-transparent city silhouette. The painting looks like it was set up in both an exterior and interior space.

In the work where blue tones are dominant, the vase and lilacs determine the vertical direction, while the figures depicted within the lilacs determine the horizontal direction. The combination of vertical and horizontal directions in the composition gives movement to the work. The use of the warm tone of purple in the work colored with tones of cold colors creates a lively appearance in the painting. Balance in the composition is provided both by the warm and cold tones of the colors and the position of the images. The images in the close and distant plan add depth to the painting. The fact that the figures are not in real size within the pictorial order brings the figures deformed by the artist to the fore and emphasizes the theme of the work.

Evaluation of the Work Within the Scope of Freud's Article "On a Special Type of Object Choice in Men"

Sigmund Freud was born in Austria in 1856. Freud, who was the child of a Jewish family, became a neurologist and founded the theory of psychoanalysis as a result of his education (Balogh, 2023, p. 13; Freud, 2013, p. 7). The psychoanalyst devoted almost his entire life to the development of psychoanalysis and made his name and theory of psychoanalysis known to the world. According to Freud, the theory of psychoanalysis was seen as a research technique and also as a theory of mind (Özakkaş, 2022, p. 66). During the process in which the psychoanalyst developed psychoanalysis, he wrote many texts and articles in which he expressed his observations, impressions and thoughts by addressing the individual's personal life.

Freud wrote his article *On a Special Type of Object Choice in Men* in 1910. The psychoanalyst included his ideas and observations about people's love lives in his article and in this context, he first investigated which factors were effective in the male individual's object choice. Freud saw that two conditions came to the fore in the man's object choice. The first of these conditions was that the man chose women who were someone in his life as objects instead of choosing only one woman, and the second was the passion that emerged as a result of the man's feelings of jealousy, competition and ambition being activated due to the first condition. In the first condition, when there was another man in the woman's life, the man turned the woman into a love object. The woman had to be attractive for a reason in becoming a love object. Freud stated that in the condition he also described as the *love for a whore* condition, a woman who aroused doubts about trust and loyalty and whose sexuality came to the fore was attractive to the man and was chosen as a love object. The psychoanalyst examined the attitudes and behaviors displayed by the man when he fell in love after the two conditions. After choosing the object of love, men become obsessed with the women they are with and want to be loyal to women. Within the scope of these conditions, Freud associated the man's behavior with childhood and stated that the mother and child bond is effective at the basis of the individual's actions of loving and being affectionate in childhood (Freud, 2021, pp. 9-13).

Based on Freud's article in question, it can be said that this work is a work about Chagall's love life. The male figure in the work may represent the artist, while the female figure may represent a lover from Chagall's private life. The work gives the viewer an idea about the male figure's choice of object. The fact that the upper body of the female figure depicted in the composition is naked creates the impression that she may be a prostitute. Nudity is deeply associated with sexuality and is an indicator of suitability for sexual purposes (Leppert, 2020, p. 138). According to Freud, the second condition that plays a role in the man's choice of object, namely *love for the prostitute*, is visualized in Chagall's painting. The fact that the couple are depicted close to each other in the work may indicate that the male figure turns the woman he finds attractive into his love object, that he holds the female figure's head with his right hand, that he possesses and protects her, and that he touches her with his left hand, that he passionately desires the female figure, who is his love object. Along with deep emotions where passion is at the forefront, the artist externalizes the emotions that he cannot hold in during the creative process (Horney, 2022, p. 63). In this context, it is possible to say that the reason why Chagall created this work is that the unique feelings that the painter himself or the male figure in a love story he witnessed around him developed towards the object of his love could not be contained in his inner world.

DISCUSSION

Freud mentions five stages in the individual's psychosexual development. These are; oral period, anal period, phallic period, latency period and genital period. The oral period covers the individual's 0-1 age range and the baby's needs in this period are directly related to the mouth. The anal period constitutes the 1-3 age period. In this stage, the baby enjoys the act of defecation. In the phallic period, which includes the 4-6 age period, the genitals become the focal point due to sexual development. In the phallic period, the Oedipus complex and the Electra complex manifest themselves. The latent stage represents the individual's 7-11 age range. During this period, the child moves away from issues related to sexuality. The last stage, the genital period, corresponds to the 11-18 age range. In the genital stage, the development of the sexual organs creates sexual maturity in the individual and the individual establishes closeness with the opposite sex (Freud, 2016).

Based on the stages he described, the psychoanalyst states that Oedipal wishes are formed during the phallic stage and then Oedipal desires are met during the genital stage. Freud attributes the choice of romantic partners to unresolved Oedipal wishes. He suggests that some men unconsciously seek out women who are somehow similar to their mothers, whether physically, emotionally or behaviorally. These partners often take on the role of a nurturing or dominant figure, replicating the dynamics of early family relationships.

Freud observes that some men are particularly attracted to women who are *unavailable* or involved in complex situations, such as being married or socially unfit. He suggests that the presence of obstacles increases desire, and attributes this to the tension experienced in childhood when the mother is seen as an unattainable love object because of the presence of the father. The men Freud discussed often put their romantic partners on a pedestal and idealize them to an unrealistic degree. This idealization is often accompanied by feelings of guilt, both from their Oedipal feelings and from their inability to fully possess the love object.

Critics argue that Freud over-sexualizes relationships and neglects other social, cultural, or personal factors that affect partner selection. However, Freud sees sexuality as one of the cornerstones of an individual's psychological development. Therefore, he states that tabooed sexuality is active in the individual's behaviors/attitudes and in the thoughts and fantasies that are censored by the superego.

Freud's psychoanalytic approach to the individual also sheds light on the social and cultural background of the case being evaluated. In this way, the individual provides information within the scope of his/her past and cultural values. This information mostly includes sexuality. The data obtained shows where, when and how the individual is experiencing problems in terms of psychology. The problem that emerges is not limited to the psychological field but also includes the sociological field. In this context, Freud's psychoanalytic analyses are not only related to sexuality but also interact with other disciplines, especially sociology.

This article reveals questions about the extent to which childhood dynamics influence adult relationships. How much of Freud's theory remains valid in understanding modern relationship models? Can his framework be expanded to include social and cultural contexts?

CONCLUSION

Art, as a culture, was born with humanity. The adventure of art that began on cave walls has changed over time, depending on the periods. Art, which updates itself with change, has a universal quality and continues to reflect almost everything about humanity. Art, which interprets the emotions, thoughts and feelings of artists, has begun to be expressed with different formal languages depending on the search for innovation of creative subjects. Especially modern period artists have proven themselves with their extraordinary productions as individuals who advocate freedom in art. Expressionism is one of the modern period art movements in which artists externalize their inner worlds. The rebellious attitude of expressionist artists has influenced their formal language, and emotions, thoughts and feelings have enabled the emergence of works of art with a striking style. Expressionist works are the productions of artists who question the truth and find the truth in the essence of the individual, that is, in their soul, representing their reality. The works of the famous expressionist painter Marc Chagall reveal his existence, reality and feelings. The artist reflected his own childhood, village life and experiences from an emotional perspective in his works, symbolizing his feelings with form and colors, and immortalizing them by transferring his memories and experiences to his canvas. Chagall's work *Lovers in Lilacs*, in which he reveals his own character and style, is one of the works in which the painter stops time. In this work, where the theme of love is handled, the artist's own experience or an observation is depicted. Chagall's depiction of a couple in love has been associated with the Freudian perspective. The neurologist and psychoanalyst Freud, the founder of the theory of psychoanalysis, conducted numerous studies and examinations during the process in which he developed the theory and examined the human psyche in depth. Freud also observed people's love lives during his studies and evaluated their behaviors and attitudes. The psychoanalyst, who primarily examined men's object selection in individuals' love lives, wrote about this subject in his article *On a Special Type of Object Selection in Men* in 1910. The article determined which factors were effective in the woman a man chose as his love object and analyzed the man's behavioral patterns in this context. According to Freud, factors such as the attractiveness of the woman, her attraction to the man, and her awakening of a sense of protection and ownership in the man come to the fore in the man's choice of love object. The formation of passion in the man is triggered by ambition, jealousy and competitive feelings. Chagall, as a man, also presented love from a male perspective in his work. What Freud expressed about men's choice of object is depicted in Chagall's work in question. This research aims to find the psychological reason for Chagall's work *Lovers in Lilacs* and in this context, Freud's article *On a Special Type of Object Choice in Men* is discussed. As a result of the research, it has become possible to say that the reason why Chagall created this work, based on Freud's article in question, is that the painter himself or a male figure in a love story he witnessed around him, acted

passionately and sanctified the love object, and that he could not control the feelings he developed in his own soul along with the love he felt for the love object, and that these felt feelings directed Chagall as an internal impulse and encouraged him to create.

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