

= Wild Pilgrimage =

Wild Pilgrimage is the third wordless novel of American artist Lynd Ward (1905 ? 1985) , published in 1932 . It was executed in 108 monochromatic wood engravings , printed alternately in black ink when representing reality and orange to represent the protagonist 's fantasies . The story tells of a factory worker who abandons his workplace to seek a free life ; on his travels he witnesses a lynching , assaults a farmer 's wife , educates himself with a hermit , and upon returning to the factory leads an unsuccessful workers ' revolt . The protagonist finds himself battling opposing dualities such as freedom versus responsibility , the individual versus society , and love versus death .

Ward simplified his approach after the more complex , novelistic story of his previous book , Madman 's Drum (1930) , returning to the simplicity of his first , Gods ' Man (1929) . Wild Pilgrimage achieves more fluid pacing and varied imagery than the first two books , incorporating the influence of art movements such as American Regionalism and Futurism .

= = Synopsis = =

A factory worker leaves his place of work to live a free life . He travels deep into the woods , where he witnesses a lynching . Deeper in the woods , he finds farm work , but it does not last long ? when discovered attempting to enact his sexual fantasies on the farmer 's wife , the man is forced off the farm . He finds refuge with a hermit , who allows him to stay in his cottage and teaches the man to grow fruits and vegetables . The man educates himself with the hermit 's books . He finds himself in a reverie in which he and the hermit battle a slave @-@ owning capitalist . The man returns to his former place of employment and rouses a workers ' rebellion . During the fray , he fantasizes that he decapitates his employer 's head ; when he raises it , he discovers the head to be his own . Awakening from the fantasy , he is felled in the midst of the battle .

= = Background = =

Born in Chicago , Lynd Ward (1905 ? 1985) was a son of Methodist minister Harry F. Ward (1873 ? 1966) , a social activist and the first chairman of the American Civil Liberties Union . Throughout his career , Ward displayed in his work the influence of his father 's interest in social injustice . The younger Ward was early drawn to art , and contributed art and text to high school and college newspapers .

After graduating from university in 1926 , Ward married writer May McNeer and the couple left for an extended honeymoon in Europe . Ward spent a year studying wood engraving in Leipzig , Germany , where he encountered German Expressionist art and read the wordless novel The Sun (1919) by Flemish woodcut artist Frans Masereel (1889 ? 1972) . Ward returned to the United States and freelanced his illustrations . In 1929 , he came across German artist Otto Nückel 's wordless novel Destiny (1926) in New York City . Nückel 's only work in the genre , Destiny told of the life and death of a prostitute in a style inspired by that of Masereel , but with a greater cinematic flow . The work inspired Ward to create a wordless novel of his own , Gods ' Man (1929) , which he followed the next year with Madman 's Drum , a story with a much more complicated plot and developed characters than the first . Ward returned to the simpler , more streamlined style of the first book with Wild Pilgrimage .

= = Production and publication history = =

The 108 prints for Wild Pilgrimage were larger than in Ward 's previous two books ; the original printing of the book itself measured 10 by 7 inches (25 cm × 18 cm) . The " reality " portions are printed in black ink , and the " fantasy " segments in orange . The book saw print in November 1932 , published by Harrison Smith and Robert Haas .

= = Style and analysis = =

Unlike Ward 's previous books , which had titles between scenes , *Wild Pilgrimage* provides the reader with no textual cues . In 1937 Irvin Haas called *Wild Pilgrimage* the book in which " Ward became a master of his medium " , praising in particular the quality of the clarity and richness of the artwork .

Freedom and responsibility , individuality and society , and love and death are among the binaries the symbolic work abounds in . Cartoonist Art Spiegelman comments that Ward had mastered a fluid rhythm of pacing with his third book , achieveing a flow that minimized the need for the reader to spend time deciphering images before moving to the next page , while encouraging multiple readings and interpretations . At the same time , Spiegelman writes , the images reward a closer look on rereading .

Ward 's images offer a diversity of textures , moods , detail , and composition , and mix in influence from movements such as American Regionalism and Futurism . The seeming homoeroticism in the artwork drew attention , such as the prominent rear shots of the protagonist , the sort of imagery that prompted Susan Sontag to note Ward 's work in her 1964 essay " Notes on ' Camp ' " . Writer Sarah Boxer found the prominence of such imagery distracting . Spiegelman defends the book against critics who smirk at the Ward 's artwork 's affinity with the " fetishistic figures and landscape " of Thomas Hart Benton and the homoerotic art of Tom of Finland , saying the book 's " passion and even its off sexual subcurrents are among its strengths " , and calls it " in some ways the most accessible and satisfying " of Ward 's books .