

= Passionate Journey =

Passionate Journey , or My Book of Hours (French : Mon livre d 'heures) , is a wordless novel of 1919 by Flemish artist Frans Masereel . The story is told in 167 captionless prints , and is the longest and best selling of the wordless novels Masereel made . It tells of the experiences of an early 20th century everyman in a modern city .

Masereel 's medium is the woodcut , and the images are in an emotional , allegorical style inspired by Expressionism . The book followed Masereel 's first wordless novel , 25 Images of a Man 's Passion (1918) ; both were published in Switzerland , where Masereel spent much of World War I. German publisher Kurt Wolff released an inexpensive " people 's edition " of the book in Germany with an introduction by German novelist Thomas Mann , and the book went on to sell over 100 ,000 copies in Europe . Its success encouraged other publishers to print wordless novels , and the genre flourished in the interwar years .

Masereel followed the book with dozens of others , beginning with The Sun later in 1919 . Masereel 's work was lauded in the art world in the earlier half of the 20th century , but has since been neglected outside of Western comics circles , where Masereel 's wordless novels are seen as anticipating the development of the graphic novel .

= = Synopsis = =

The story follows the life of a prototypical early 20th century everyman after he enters a city . It is by turns comic and tragic : a sick woman cared for by the man loses her life ; the man breaks wind at a group of businessmen ; the man is rejected by a prostitute with whom he has fallen in love . He also takes trips to different locales around the world . In the end , the man leaves the city for the woods , raises his arms in praise of nature , and dies . His spirit rises from him , stomps on the heart of his dead body , and waves to the reader as it sets off across the universe .

= = Background = =

Frans Masereel (1889 ? 1972) was born into a French speaking family in Blankenberge , Belgium . At five his father died , and his mother remarried to a doctor in Ghent , whose political beliefs left an impression on the young Masereel . He often accompanied his stepfather in socialist demonstrations . After a year at the Ghent Academy of Fine Arts in 1907 , Masereel left to study art on his own in Paris . During World War I he volunteered as a translator for the Red Cross in Geneva , drew newspaper political cartoons , and copublished a magazine Les Tablettes , in which he published his first woodcut prints .

In the early 20th century there was a revival in interest in mediaeval woodcuts , particularly in religious books such as the Biblia pauperum . The woodcut is a less refined medium than the wood engraving that replaced it ? artists of the time took to the rougher woodcut to express angst and frustration . From 1917 Masereel began publishing books of woodcut prints , using similar imagery to make political statements on the strife of the common people rather than to illustrate the lives of Christ and the saints . In 1918 he created the first such book to feature a narrative , 25 Images of a Man 's Passion . He followed its success in 1919 with Passionate Journey , which remained his favourite of his own works .

= = Publication history = =

The black and white woodcut images in the book were each 9 by 7 centimetres (3 1/2 in x 2 3/4 in) . Masereel self published the book in Geneva on credit from Swiss printer Albert Kundig in 1919 as Mon livre d 'heures in an edition of 200 copies . It was printed directly from the original woodblocks .

German publisher Kurt Wolff sent Hans Mardersteig to Masereel to arrange German publication in 1920 . It was printed from the original woodblocks in an edition of 700 copies under the title Mein

Stundenbuch : 165 Holzschnitte , Wolff thereafter continued to publish German editions of Masereel 's books , later in inexpensive " people 's editions " using electrotpe reproduction . The 1926 edition had an introduction by German writer Thomas Mann :

Look at these powerful black @-@ and @-@ white figures , their features etched in light and shadow . You will be captivated from beginning to end : from the first pictured showing the train plunging through the dense smoke and bearing the hero toward life , to the very last picture showing the skeleton @-@ faced figure among the stars . Has not this passionate journey had an incomparably deeper and purer impact on you than you have ever felt before ?

The German edition was particularly popular , and went through several editions in the 1920s with sales surpassing 100 @,@ 000 copies . Its success prompted other publishers and artists to produce wordless novels .

The book won an English @-@ speaking audience after its 1922 US publication under the title My Book of Hours. printed from the original woodblocks in an edition of 600 copies with a foreword by French writer Romain Rolland . English @-@ language editions took the title Passionate Journey after publication in a popular edition in the US in 1948 . An edition did not see print in England until Redstone Press published one in the 1980s . It has also appeared in many other languages , including Chinese popular editions in 1933 and 1957 . Some editions since 1928 have cut two pages from the book : the 24th , in which the protagonist has sex with a prostitute ; and the 149th , in which the protagonist , giant @-@ sized , urinates on the city . Dover Publications restored the pages in a 1971 edition , and American editions since then have kept them .

= = Style and analysis = =

I believe that it contained the essence of what I wanted to say ; I expressed my philosophy , and perhaps My Book of Hours with its 167 woodcuts contains everything I have created since , because I have developed a number of themes from it in my later work .

Masereel uses an emotional , Expressionistic style to create a narrative replete with allegory , satire , and social criticism ? a visual style he continued with throughout his career . He expresses a broad variety of emotions through understated , unexaggerated gestures . Most characters are given simple , passive expressions , which provides emphatic contrast with characters expressing more explicit emotion ? love , despair , ecstasy . He considered Passionate Journey partly autobiographical , which he emphasized with a pair of self @-@ portraits that open the book ? in the first , Masereel sits at his desk with his woodcutting tools , and in the second appears the protagonist , dressed in identical fashion with the first . Literature scholar Martin S. Cohen wrote that it expressed themes that were to become universal in the wordless novel genre .

The original titles of Masereel 's first two wordless novels allude to religious works : 25 Images of a Man 's Passion to the Passion of Christ , and My Book of Hours to the mediaeval devotional book of hours . These religious books made frequent use of allegory , also prominent in Masereel 's works ? though Masereel replaces the religious archetypes of mediaeval morality plays with those from socialist ideology . The book derives some of its visual vocabulary ? framing , sequencing , and viewpoints ? from silent film . Thomas Mann named the book his favourite film .

Wordless novel scholar David Beronä saw the work as a catalogue of human activity , and in this regard compared it to Walt Whitman 's Leaves of Grass and Allen Ginsberg 's Howl . Austrian writer Stefan Zweig remarked , " If everything were to perish , all the books , monuments , photographs and memoirs , and only the woodcuts that [Masereel] has executed in ten years were spared , our whole present @-@ day world could be reconstructed from them . " Critic Chris Lanier attributes the protagonist 's appeal to readers to Masereel 's avoiding a preaching tone in the work ; " rather " , Lanier states , " he gives us a story as a device through which we can examine ourselves " . This openness in the images invites individual interpretation , according to Beronä .

In contrast to the works of Masereel 's imitators , the images do not form an unfolding sequence of actions but are rather like individual snapshots of events in the protagonist 's life . The book opens with a pair of literary quotations :

Behold ! I do not give lectures , or a little charity : When I give , I give myself .

... des plaisirs et des peines , des malices , facéties , expériences et folies , de la paille et du foin , des figues et du raisin , des fruits verts , des fruits doux , des roses et des gratte @-@ culs , des choses vues , et lues , et sues , et eues , vécues !

= = Reception and legacy = =

Impressed by the book , German publisher Kurt Wolff arranged for its German publication and continued to publish German editions of Masereel 's books . Wolf 's edition of *Passionate Journey* went through multiple printings , and the book was popular throughout Europe , where it sold over 100 @, @ 000 copies . Soon other publishers also engaged in the publication of wordless novels , though none matched the success of Masereel 's , which Beronä has called " perhaps the most seminal work in the genre " .

While not as successful at first in the United States , American reviewers recognized Masereel as father of the wordless novel at least as early as the 1930s . A revival in publishing interest in wordless novels in the 1970s saw *Passionate Journey* the most frequently reprinted .

While the graphic narrative bears strong similarities to the comics that were proliferating in the early 20th century , Masereel 's book emerged from a fine arts environment and was aimed at such an audience . Its influence was felt not in comics but in the worlds of literature , film , music , and advertising . Masereel 's work was widely recognized with awards and exhibitions in the early 20th century , but has since been mostly forgotten outside of Western comics circles , where his wordless novels , and *Passionate Journey* in particular , are seen as precursors to the graphic novel .