

= Madman 's Drum =

Madman 's Drum is a 1930 wordless novel by American artist Lynd Ward (1905 ? 1985) . Its 118 images tell the story of a slave trader who steals a demon @-@ faced drum from an African he murders , and the consequences for him and his family .

The book was executed in wood engravings . It is the second of Ward 's six wordless novels , after Gods ' Man of 1929 . Ward was more ambitious with this second work in the medium : the characters are more nuanced , the plot more developed and complicated , and his outrage at social injustice more explicit . He used a finer degree of detail in the artwork , through a wider variety of carving tools , and was expressive in his use of symbolism and exaggerated emotional facial expressions .

The book was well received upon release , and the success of Ward 's first two wordless novels encouraged publishers to publish more books in the genre . In 1943 psychologist Henry Murray used two images from the work in his Thematic Apperception Test of personality traits . Madman 's Drum is considered less successfully executed than Gods ' Man , and Ward streamlined his work in his next wordless novel , Wild Pilgrimage (1932) .

= = Synopsis = =

A slave trader steals from an African he murders a drum bearing the face of a demon , condemning his family to its curse . The slave trader becomes rich and buys a mansion for his family , in which he displays the drum and the sword he used to kill the drum 's original owner . He catches his son playing on the drum , beats the boy , and insists he read and study . The slave trader is lost at sea when he tries to return to Africa .

The boy devotes himself to study , while distancing himself from the vices of his peers . He embraces and then rejects religion , and a cross he tosses to the floor trips and kills his mother . He becomes a successful scientist , and in middle age marries and has two daughters , but is cold and indifferent to his family . One by one he loses them : his wife dies after having an affair with a musician , one daughter falls into depression when her labor @-@ organizer lover is hanged for his communist sympathies , and the other daughter falls in love with a man who pimps her to others . Driven insane by the loss of all who were close to him , he equips himself with the forbidden drum to play music with his wife 's musician lover .

= = Background = =

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

After getting a university degree in fine arts 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 New York City in 1929 , he came across the wordless novel Destiny (1926) by German artist Otto Nückel (1888 ? 1955) . Nückel 's only work in the genre , Destiny told of the life and death of a prostitute in a style inspired by Masereel 's , but with a greater cinematic flow . The work inspired Ward to create a wordless novel of his own : Gods ' Man (1929) . In his second such work , Madman 's Drum , he hoped to explore more deeply the potential of the narrative medium , and to overcome what he saw as a lack of individuality in the characters in Gods ' Man .

= = Production and publishing history = =

Ward made 118 woodcuts for *Madman's Drum*. The black and white images are not uniform in size ? they measure from 4 by 3 inches (10 cm x 7 cm) to 5 by 4 inches (13 cm x 10 cm) . Cape & Smith published the book in October 1930 in trade and deluxe editions ; the latter was available in a signed edition limited to 309 copies . The original woodblocks are in the Lynd Ward Collection in the Joseph Mark Lauinger Memorial Library at Georgetown University in Washington , DC .

Jonathon Cape published the book in the UK in 1930 . It appeared in the collected volume *Storyteller Without Words : The Wood Engravings of Lynd Ward* in 1974 , and again in 2010 in a *Library of America* collection , *Lynd Ward : Six Novels in Woodcuts* , edited by cartoonist Art Spiegelman . It had a Japanese publication in 2002 by Kokusho Kankokai , and was brought back into print in the US as a standalone edition by Dover Publications in 2005 .

= = Style and analysis = =

Madman's Drum is a more ambitious work than *Gods' Man* , with a larger cast of characters and more complicated plot . The book is more explicit in its radical leftist politics , and includes a subplot in which the main character's sister's communist lover is executed for his political beliefs . Late in life Ward described it as " set a hundred years or more ago ... in an obviously foreign land " , but that the story's situation and characters could be encountered " almost anywhere at any time " .

The art has a variety of line qualities and textures , and more detail than in *Gods' Man* . Ward availed himself of a larger variety of engraving tools , such as the multiple tint tool for making groups of parallel lines , and rounded engraving tools for organic textures . The large cast of characters is distinguished by visual details in faces and clothing , such as the main character's sharp nose and receding hairline and his wife's checked dress .

A wide range of emotions such as resentment and terror is expressed through exaggerated facial expressions . Ward broadens his use of visual symbolism , as with a young woman's purity represented by a flower she wears ? she is deflowered by a young man whose vest is adorned with flowers . His house also displays a floral stucco pattern and is adorned with phallic spears and an exultant rooster as a weathervane . To French comics scripter Jérôme LeGlatin , the " madman " in the title could be interpreted as any of a number of its characters : the laughing image adorning the drum , the subdued African , the slave trader , and even Ward himself .

= = Reception and legacy = =

The book's release in 1930 was well received , though it did not achieve the earlier book's sales . A reviewer for *The Burlington Magazine* in 1931 judged the book a failed experiment , finding the artwork uneven and the narrative hard to follow without even the chapter titles as textual guidance that *Gods' Man* had .

The success of Ward's first two wordless novels led American publishers to put out a number of such books , including Nückel's *Destiny* in 1930 , as well as books by Americans and other Europeans . Interest in wordless novels was short lived , and few besides Masereel and Ward produced more than a single work . Each of Ward's sold fewer copies than the last , and he abandoned the genre in 1940 after a failed attempt at a seventh . In 1943 psychologist Henry Murray used two images from *Madman's Drum* in his *Thematic Apperception Test* of personality traits .

Cartoonist Art Spiegelman considered Ward's second wordless novel a " sophomore slump " , whose story was bogged down by Ward's attempt to flesh out the characters and produce a more complicated plot . He believed the artwork was a mix of strengths and weaknesses : it had stronger compositions , but the more finely engraved images were " harder to read " , and the death of the wife and other plot points were unclear and difficult to interpret . Spiegelman considered Ward to have broken free from this slump by streamlining his work in his next wordless novel , *Wild Pilgrimage* (1932) . Jérôme LeGlatin declared *Madman's Drum* Ward's first masterpiece , " [

triumphing] at every fault , [succeeding] in each failure " as Ward freed himself from the restraint displayed in Gods ' Man .