

= Destiny (wordless novel) =

Destiny (German : Schicksal) is the only wordless novel by German artist Otto Nückel . It first appeared in 1926 from the Munich @-@ based publisher Delphin @-@ Verlag . In 211 wordless images the story follows an unnamed woman in a German city in the early 20th century whose life of poverty and misfortune drives her to infanticide , prostitution , and murder .

The book was the first whose images were made with leadcuts instead of the more common woodcuts , and showed a greater depth of character and cinematic sense than previous wordless novels . The book inspired American artist Lynd Ward to tackle the medium , beginning with Gods ' Man in 1929 . Ward 's success brought about an American publication of Destiny in 1930 which sold well . The book has impressed critics and has become one of the best @-@ known wordless novels .

= = Synopsis = =

The book follows an unnamed woman in a German city in the early 20th century who lives a life of poverty and misfortune . She is the constant victim of her society ? especially the men , such as her drunken , abusive father , and the traveling salesman who gets her pregnant . She is imprisoned for the murder of her unwanted child , and upon release turns to life as a prostitute . The police hunt her down after she murders a man with an axe , and as she jumps from an upper @-@ floor window they shoot her dead .

= = Background = =

Otto Nückel (1888 ? 1955) was born in Cologne in the German Empire . He studied medicine in Freiburg before switching to art , which he studied in Munich in 1910 ? 12 . His paintings were less successful than the illustrations he made for magazines such as the satirical Simplicissimus and for books by Thomas Mann and E. T. A. Hoffmann .

In 1918 , the Belgian Frans Masereel created the first wordless novel , 25 Images of a Man 's Passion , and followed it up the next year with his longest and most successful work , Passionate Journey . Such books achieved particular popularity in Germany , where they sold in the hundreds of thousands in the 1920s . Masereel 's woodcut artwork drew inspiration from the German Expressionists and displayed socialist themes of struggle against social injustice , themes that were to be common in the wordless novel genre .

= = Production and publication = =

Nückel 's medium was the leadcut ? engraved plates of lead ? a medium Nückel turned to when he found wood in short supply in Germany . Lead plates are also more economical than wood in that they can be melted down and reused if errors are made during engraving . Destiny was the first wordless novel to employ lead engraving . Nückel made 211 prints in black and white for the book . The images range in size from 2 3 ? 4 x 2 3 ? 4 inches (7 x 7 cm) to 4 3 ? 4 x 4 inches (12 x 10 cm) , and were originally printed on thin Japanese handmade paper when the book was published in Germany in 1926 .

= = Editions = = =

Das Schicksal : eine Geschichte in Bildern (1926) . Munich : Delphin @-@ Verlag
Destiny : A Novel in Pictures (1930) . New York : Farrar & Rinehart
Schicksal eine Geschichte in Bildern (1984) . Zürich : Limmat Verlag Genossenschaft
Destin (2005) . Paris : Éditions IMHO
Destiny : A Novel in Pictures (2007) . New York : Dover Publications

= = Style and analysis = =

Nückel engraved his plates with a multiple tool (also called a lining tool) , a sort of chisel that cuts multiple parallel lines at once , which gives a mechanical hatching texture to the print . The images vary not only in dimensions but in focus , from close @-@ ups of faces to panoramas of crowds .

In contrast to the earlier works of Masereel , *Destiny* focuses on an individualized woman instead of the plight of a man as cipher for humankind . Lynd Ward found Nückel 's book had greater psychological depth in its characters and plot development , and more skilled technical achievement in the artwork . Canadian artist George Walker believed that Masereel 's plots were more original .

= = Reception and legacy = =

American artist Lynd Ward discovered a copy of Nückel 's book in New York in 1929 and was inspired by it to create wordless novels of his own , beginning with *Gods ' Man* the same year . The success of both *Gods ' Man* and the subsequent *Madman 's Drum* (1930) led to a number of American publishers bringing other wordless novels into print , including *Destiny* in 1930 , which sold well in the US .

Literary scholar Martin S. Cohen called *Destiny* " perhaps the most pathetic ... and one of the most memorable " examples of the wordless novel genre . Wordless novel scholar David Beronä judged the book " a pioneering work in the development of the contemporary graphic novel " for the complexity of its plot , its social consciousness , and its focus on an individual character . Reviewer Christian Gasser commended the book 's " narrative pull " , which he credited as creating a " haunting , edgy narrative rhythm " of a story of persecution , satire , and Expressionist art . The story , he suggests , may be allegory of the Weimar Republic in which it arose .