



Printer's Devil: The Life and Work of Frederic Warde

Simon Loxley

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The book and type designer Frederic Warde is remembered today chiefly for his collaboration with Stanley Morison that produced the singular typeface Arrighi, and for being, briefly, the husband of Beatrice, Monotype's charismatic publicity manager. His life was short (dying in 1939, at the age of only 45) but in the previous two decades he had pursued a peripatetic, rollercoaster career that saw him come into contact with most of the leading players in his field, in England, Europe, and America: Bruce Rogers, Mardersteig, Updike, Ruzicka, George Macy, William Kittredge and, of course, Morison, are just some of a stellar cast of characters whose lives intersected with his orbit.

Until now scantily documented, Warde is the missing piece in the story of design, type and printing in the interwar years, and this book will make essential reading for anyone interested in that critical period, one that saw the final era of hot-metal composition and printing combined with the emergence of graphic design as a distinct profession. Warde laid many false trails about his personal history, but the author has drawn upon a surprisingly large body of surviving documentation to piece together a fascinating picture of his life and of the complex, frustrating, sometimes dislikeable, but often inspiring, figure at its center.

The best of Warde's extensive body of work displays a restraint and economy linked with an often striking color sense that feels thoroughly modern in its approach. This output was maintained, sometimes erratically, against the backdrop of Warde's mercurial and fragmented professional and personal life. Polarizing the opinions of those he met, he was unfailingly a prolific, entertaining, and informed letter writer, and his correspondence provides invaluable insights into his world and those around him. Here is a designer's life played out against the backdrop of the boom years of the 1920s, the challenges of the Depression, and the obstacles and opportunities created by his own remarkable, but troubled, genius.

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