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Warde (*née* Becker), Beatrice Lamberton Becker (1900–1969)

Warde (*née* Becker), Beatrice Lamberton Becker (1900–1969), typographer, was born in New York, USA, on 20 September 1900, the only child of Gustav Becker (1861–1959), pianist and composer, and his wife, May, *née* Lamberton 1873–1958, the journalist and literary critic May Lamberton Becker. Following her parents' divorce, she was raised and home-schooled by her mother and widowed grandmother, and was influenced by her mother's love of literature and Unitarianism. She later attended Horace Mann School, Manhattan (1912–16) and, from 1916, Barnard College, Columbia University, graduating in 1921. Endorsed by a family friend, the typographer Bruce Rogers, her first job was as assistant librarian at the American Type Founders Library, the foremost printing library in America. This marked the beginning of a career supported by influential colleagues, including Stanley Morison, the British typographer and printing historian, who became her mentor and close friend. On 30 December 1922 Beatrice Becker married the typographer Frederic Warde (1894–1939) from Minnesota, who was printer at Princeton University. They had no children, separated in 1926 and divorced in 1938.

Encouraged by Morison, Warde moved to London in January 1925, and between 1926 and 1930 wrote for the typographic journal *The Fleuron*, which was edited by Morison. In the male-dominated world of printing, she found it necessary to write under the *nom de plume* of Paul Beaujon. Under the name Beaujon, Warde's first article, 'The "Garamond"

types: sixteenth and seventeenth century sources considered' (1926), corrected a longstanding misattribution of the Garamond typeface by tracing its origins to the French printer Jean Jannon 1580–1658. This cemented Warde's reputation as a typographic scholar, and its importance to French typographic history was later acknowledged when the French Ministry of Culture republished the article in 2011 to commemorate the 450th anniversary of Garamond's death.

In 1925 Warde began writing for the British Monotype Corporation, where Morison was typographic adviser. An American company, with offices in Britain, Monotype designed typefaces and manufactured casting and composing machines. By 1929 Warde was publicity manager to the corporation and edited its publications, including *The Monotype Recorder* and *The Newsletter*. Her articles not only publicized the company, but also contributed to contemporary typographic debate and helped drive typographic taste.

Warde's work at Monotype was pivotal to the early twentieth-century typographic renaissance, which saw the revival of historic typefaces and the design of new ones. One such typeface was Gill Sans. Designed by Eric Gill and publicized by Warde, Gill Sans was ubiquitous, became synonymous with British design, and was a great commercial success; it was a typeface frequently used during the Second World War by the Ministry of Food as well as being adopted by Penguin Books and the nationalized British Rail. Beatrice Warde and Eric Gill were close and probably lovers, and she modelled for his *Twenty-Five Nudes* and for *Belle Sauvage*, his design for Cassells & Co. In her role at Monotype, Warde was instrumental in the development and expansion of printing as both an historical subject and a practical activity.

Warde's most notable text, 'The Crystal Goblet' or 'Printing Should be Invisible', was originally a speech given to the British Typographers Guild in 1930. Using the metaphor

of wine in a crystal goblet, she argued that typography should be clear and subservient to the meaning of the text. First reproduced in *The British and Colonial Printer and Stationer* (1930), it was subsequently published as a pamphlet by Marchbanks Press, New York (1932 and 1937), and re-published in Britain as *The Crystal Goblet: Sixteen Essays on Typography* (1955). It is the most-quoted typographic text of the twentieth century.

Warde wrote the publicity text for the broadside ‘Inscription for a Printing Office’ (1932), often referred to by its opening line ‘This is a printing office’, which promoted the typeface Monotype Perpetua, by Eric Gill. Distributed worldwide, Warde’s words upheld the importance of printing to the freedom of ideas: in the light of the Fascist threat in Europe, the text acquired an unexpected resonance. A bronze plaque reproducing this text is displayed in the Government Publishing Office, Washington, DC.

During the Second World War Warde’s obligations to Monotype reduced, but her commitment to printing was unabated and inspired both her charitable and political activities. She and her mother, May Lamberton Becker, equipped the Charles Dickens ambulance for London’s East End, using royalties from the British sales of her mother’s book *Introducing Charles Dickens* (1940). In 1940 Warde became one of the first members of the American Outpost of Great Britain, a group of American ex-patriots committed to defending the USA by aiding the allies. An information hub on American and British culture, the American Outpost published government updates and provided public speakers and lecturers for military education programmes. Warde frequently wrote for the ‘Outpost’ newsletter, keeping America informed about wartime Britain with articles such as ‘Shopping Hint’ (November 1940), which encouraged Americans to buy British.

In 1941 Warde co-founded the Kinsmen, an organization representing the families of evacuees to America. The same year, as a result of the cessation of the transatlantic book

trade, Warde and Lamberton Becker founded Books Across the Sea, a book exchange fostering cultural understanding through the printed word: T. S. Eliot was British president of the organization until his death in 1965. In 1946 Eleanor Roosevelt opened the Books Across the Sea reading room in London, and the organization became part of the English Speaking Union. Warde worked for Books across the Sea until her death.

Warde's wartime letters to her mother, May Lamberton Becker in New York, with whom she had a close relationship, were published as *Bombed but Unbeaten Excerpts from the War Commentary of Beatrice L. Warde* (1941), which was sold in aid of bombed and distressed children. Her letters were also reproduced in *This Burning Heat: An American in the Blitz* (1941), where she revealed her conversion to Roman Catholicism. Visiting America between 1942 and 1944, Warde devoted time to lobbying for the American Outpost, expanding Books Across the Sea and broadcasting on behalf of the British War Relief Society.

In the post-war printing industry Warde maintained her status as a typographic authority. An energetic workaholic, she travelled extensively in Britain and overseas, addressing audiences from both industry and education, linking Monotype's commercial aims with good typographic practice and taste. A confident and inspiring speaker, Warde lectured at schools of printing around the world, raising the repute of the subject by discussing its importance as a vital, powerful communication tool, and in so doing created an enthusiasm for typography and printing that stimulated and informed generations of students and teachers. She was a friend and supporter of the psychologist Cyril Burt, whose monograph *A Psychological Study of Typography* was published in 1959 at Monotype's expense.

After retiring in 1960 Warde continued lecturing and writing. Her mother, who had spent summers in Britain, settled with her in Epsom, Surrey, and died there in April 1958; her

father died in Epsom in February 1959. Warde died suddenly of a subarachnoid haemorrhage on 14 September 1969, at her home, 2 College Avenue, Epsom, Surrey, and was buried in Epsom cemetery. A memorial service was held at the Church of St Bride, Fleet Street. Her achievement was to raise the profile of printing and to inspire printing education, promoting the typefaces which styled twentieth-century Britain, and framing typographic concepts. Her work helped to determine the direction of much twentieth-century typography and printing and continues to influence typographic and graphic design theory.

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Archives

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Sound

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Likenesses

A. McBean, photograph, c. 1938, Cadbury Research Library, U. Birm.

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Wealth at Death

£16,739 (in England): probate, 19 Jan. 1970, *CGPLA Eng. & Wales*