

Robert Dance. Illustrated by Lynd Ward



Robert Dance. *Illustrated by Lynd Ward*. Norwich and New York: Impermanent Press and The Grolier Club, 2015. 164p., ill. ISBN 9781605830629. US\$ 500.00.

Lynd Ward was one of the most prolific and creative illustrators of the twentieth century. Oftentimes remembered for his seminal "novels in woodcuts," which gave birth to bona fide graphic narratives, considered by many as forebearers to modern-day graphic novels, and at other times cited for his work in book cover illustrations for children's literature, Ward is a permanent fixture in any discussion on the relationship between image and text in the literary landscape of the twentieth century. Not surprisingly, he declared in 1934 that images are "œa part of the flesh of the book in their technical creation, a part of the spirit of the book in the way they have come into being" (29). His vast collection of work intensifies, by contrast, the lack of ambitious compilations and academic reflections capable of providing a more global view of his work. Robert Dance's book is a step towards bridging this gap.

Illustrated by Lynd Ward is divided into two parts. The first (9-64) comprises an encompassing and objective introduction to his work. The text is ably supported by footnotes that combine mandatory references and insightful comments on diverse aspects of Ward's life and work. Ward's personal history is intertwined with his technical skills and the social and political issues of his time. He displayed a remarkable capacity to incite the modernist and expressionist debates that took root during his formative years in Germany in the 1920s. The social issues that were the order *du jour* did not escape his socialist eye upon his return to the USA in the latter half of that decade.

Ward's drawings, be they in woodcut novels or on book covers, reflect a refined, dark, and critical tone of capitalist modernity counterbalanced with accolades for the role of art and the artist to spark a critical interpretation of reality. His contribution as advocate of all the professionals of the trade comes as no surprise; Ward actively participated in cooperatives and professional associations to champion policies that guaranteed rights to illustrators and graphic artists.

The second part (65-148) is simpler, consisting of a topic-based timeline of works illustrated by Ward. Nonetheless, this being the first collection of his works since his death in 1985, Dance's efforts are pivotal for admirers and future Ward scholars. Moreover, the list is organized chronologically in specific formats " novels in woodcuts, book illustrations, political pamphlets, etc. *Illustrated by Lynd Ward* also documents the technical properties of his images (materials, colors, size, etc.). In sum, the set of cited references, the footnotes in the first part, acknowledgements, and an index of Ward's works provide thorough documentation for future Ward studies.

To conclude, we ought to point out that both parts of *Illustrated by Lynd Ward* contain top-notch reproductions of Ward's work, which serve the dual purpose of illustrating Dance's train of thought and of wowing the reader, making this book essential to understanding Ward's artistic development.

Ivan Lima Gomes
Federal University of Goiás, Brazil

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