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# Harry Crosby, Experimental Materiality, and the Poetics of the Small Press

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HARRY CROSBY, EXPERIMENTAL MATERIALITY, AND THE POETICS OF THE  
SMALL PRESS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2014

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Title: Harry Crosby, Experimental Materiality, and the Poetics of the Small Press

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This dissertation explores the case of Harry Crosby, modernist poet and publisher, whose neglect by modernist scholarship serves as an example of flaws and oversights in the process by which the dominant mainstream literary canon is constructed. The literary canon is not one body of work, but an intersection of several constituent canons that inform what scholars consider to be literature; scholarly neglect arises from several different variables within this complex interaction. A primary weakness in this process that has gone largely unexplored follows from assumptions grounded in material concerns surrounding the selection and publication process for literary anthologies: editors and publishers consider the extant publication status of an author or work to be a priori evidence of the subject's literary worth, when decisions concerning the logistics and expense of including a work may more readily be at the root of the exclusion.

The neglect of Harry Crosby is but one example of how this process has erased significant figures from the greater narrative of literary scholarship. Crosby was vital to the "Lost Generation," both as a poet esteemed by those peers (many of whom were subsequently awarded canonical status themselves) and also as a patron who contributed to the success of works now considered essential modernist texts. However, Crosby was marginalized through a confluence of several factors: the scandal of his lifestyle and suicide, his embrace of a deliberately distancing and confounding poetic persona, and his

eclectic experimental style of writing which defies easy classification. By establishing the grounds for Crosby's significance, both in his poetry and in his position within the modernist movement, and highlighting the parallels with similar poets reclaimed from neglect, this dissertation aims to bring Harry Crosby's work to the renewed attention of critics.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION .....	1
1: CROSBY'S HISTORICAL CONTEXT: MODERNISM, PUBLISHING TECHNOLOGY, POLITICS AND PARIS IN THE 1920S.....	28
2: HARRY CROSBY AND THEORIES OF INFLUENCE AND NEGLECT .....	60
3: CROSBY IN CONTINUITY: READERS READING CROSBY .....	115
4: "FOR A FEW FRIENDS AND A FEW CRITICS": PRIMARY TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM .....	153
CONCLUSION.....	184
NOTES.....	191
WORKS CITED .....	212
APPENDICES .....	225
APPENDIX A – HARRY CROSBY’S POETIC CORPUS .....	225
APPENDIX B – LAMANTIA’S “POETIC MATTERS” .....	241
APPENDIX C – PERMISSIONS .....	245

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1 The publication history of Harry Crosby's poems.....	2
2 "Tattoo", reprinted in <i>Devour the Fire</i> . 95. ....	12
3 An inscription in Crosby's hand, discovered in the front of Harry's personal copy of <i>Sonnets for Caresse</i> . ....	15
4 A basic diagram of the Fourdrinier machine for continuous paper production. Pulp from the headbox is formed on a mesh screen, sent over a series of conveyor belts and drums that press and dry it, and collected on rolls as paper stock. ....	33
5 Crosby, Harry. "Uncoffined." <i>Red Skeletons</i> . Paris: Black Sun, 1929. 34. ....	119
6 Williams, William Carlos. "The Death of See." ....	138
7 Equi, Elaine. "To Harry Crosby at the Hotel Des Artistes." ....	149
8 Unpublished, handwritten poems discovered in Harry Crosby's personal copy of <i>Anthology</i> ....	158
9 Crosby, Harry. "Eventuate." From <i>Transit of Venus</i> . ....	162
10 Crosby, Harry. "Photoheliograph (for Lady A.)." From <i>Chariot of the Sun</i> . ....	165
11 Crosby, Harry. "Pharmacie du Soliel." From <i>Chariot of the Sun</i> . ....	166
12 Crosby, Harry. "Photoheliograph (for Lady A.)." reprinted in Rothenberg, <i>Revolution of the Word</i> . ....	166
13 "Photoheliograph (for Lady A.)." reprinted in Nelson, <i>Anthology of Modern American Poets</i> . ....	167
14 Crosby, Harry. "Pharmacie du Soleil.", reprinted in Rothenberg, <i>Revolution of the Word</i> . ....	169
15 Crosby, Harry. "Pharmacie du Soleil", reprinted in Nelson, <i>Anthology of Modern American Poets</i> . ....	169
16 Crosby, Harry. "Photoheliograph (for Lady A.)." reprinted in Jenkins, <i>Ladders to the Sun</i> . ....	170



Figure	Page
17 Crosby, Harry. "Pharmacie du Soleil", reprinted in Jenkins, <i>Ladders to the Sun</i> . ....	170
18 Crosby, Harry. "Laid Under." From <i>Transit of Venus</i> .....	171
19 Crosby, Harry. "Stud Book". <i>Mad Queen</i> . Reprinted in Kahn, <i>Devour the Fire</i> . 53.....	175
20 Two sections excerpted from Sy Kahn's reproduction of "Assassin," demonstrating the variation in poetic composition as the poem progresses. ....	179

## INTRODUCTION

*Just because something is neglected is reason enough to consider it.*

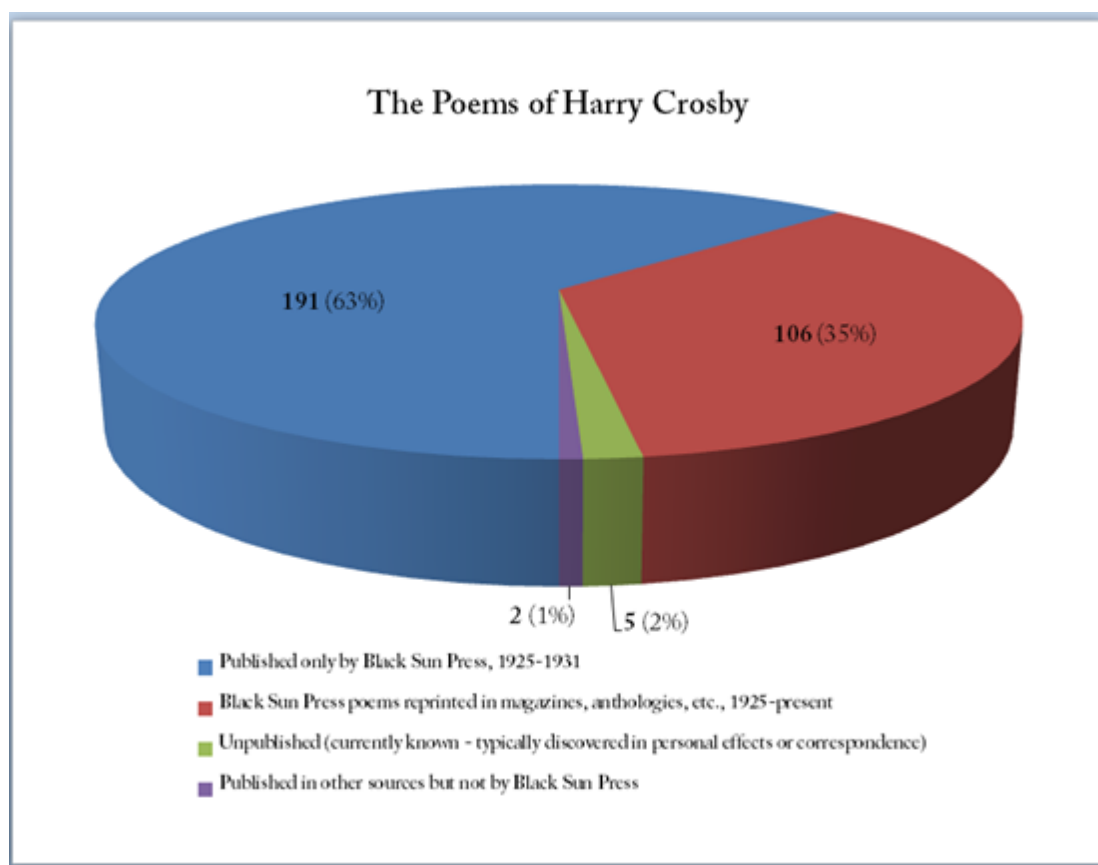
Charles Bernstein

Harry Crosby occupied a central role in the literary community dubbed the “Lost Generation” by Gertrude Stein – broadly speaking, the literati in Paris in the 1920s and their cohort – as not only a poet but publisher and social linchpin. His omission from consideration by subsequent literary scholarship may be attributed to several variables which reveal flaws in the practice of criticism applicable more widely than just to this particular case of neglect: first, because Crosby’s work is eclectic and experimental in ways that defy easy categorization in the taxonomy and corresponding historical narrative of Western twentieth-century modernism, it is more convenient to relegate that work to “minor” status rather than to reexamine assumptions; second, Crosby himself bucked the notion of accessibility by adopting a poetic persona both on the page and in his life that resists conventional vectors of approach; and third, a recursive cycle of neglect arises from the lack of availability of texts by Crosby for scholarly consideration, even as simultaneously the lack of critical attention perpetuates the low level of interest in reprinting Crosby’s work.

“Read all together”: Effects of Material Scarcity on Scholarship

To the extent that we can say there is any scholarly perception of Harry Crosby’s work, such awareness remains fundamentally skewed due to the narrow selection of Crosby’s poetry which has circulated in any fashion. In total, Crosby is known to have written at least 304 poems. Five of those poems have remained unpublished, leaving 299 in print; out of those, only 106 have appeared anywhere other than a Black Sun Press volume, a mere 35% of the total corpus<sup>1</sup>. We can expect, by comparison, for all of the work of Crosby’s most familiar peers – T.S. Eliot, E.E. Cummings, James Joyce, and so forth – to be in print, but it is illuminating that, looking at the works of those poets who may not be household names but who are recognized as significant in modernist studies

Fig. 1. The publication history of Harry Crosby’s poems.



(such as Gertrude Stein, Hart Crane, or Mina Loy), their works are also readily accessible as collected volumes. Thus, Crosby's lack of visibility is somewhat anomalous.

Morris Library at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale holds the single most exhaustive collection of material related to the Black Sun Press, bequeathed to the collection by Caresse Crosby. The copyright status of the bulk of Harry Crosby's creative output remains difficult to pin down with certainty, but Cornell University maintains a wonderfully helpful heuristic chart on the internet which guides readers through the exceptions and specifics of copyright status. According to their general guidelines, as a US citizen who lived and published abroad after 1923, the published poetry of Harry Crosby would be due to enter the public domain on the first day of the year following the 95<sup>th</sup> year after his death – in this case, meaning January 1, 2025. Unpublished works have already entered the public domain, however, as their protection expires 70 years after the author's death; also, many of Crosby's published works fall into an interesting edge case, having been published without copyright notices, which printed matter after 1923 required as a condition of registration. As such, then, many of Crosby's poems are already in the public domain, particularly as represented in the earlier volumes; however, any of the poetry reprinted in the four posthumous volumes in 1931 were the first Black Sun Press offerings published with a copyright notice in the colophon, and presuming the other steps in registration were followed, would therefore remain under legal protection. Records of official registration remain elusive, however, though the conservative approach would be to presume their existence for the time being.

The state of canonicity, as will be discussed in greater detail later, depends upon many interconnected variables, the most fundamental of which is availability (what

Wendell Harris dubs the “accessible canon”) – that is, in order for a work to be considered for inclusion into the ever more narrow sets of canonicity that ultimately lead to curricular inclusion and explication in scholarly publication, it must first be present in a form that those instructors and scholars can obtain. All other considerations of inclusion must follow from that primary binary dichotomy: if the work cannot be read, it cannot be included in discussion of canonical lists nor even discussed for such inclusion, and must therefore default to an excluded status. The major hurdle, then, in reclaiming Harry Crosby’s work is, first and foremost, making it available. This is a significant task, for Crosby was more prolific than is commonly realized by scholars, owing to the very slim selection of poetry from his total output that has remained in circulation.

### An Overview of the Crosby Corpus

The arc of Harry Crosby’s self-publication may be broadly outlined as a vector of increasing experimentalism<sup>2</sup>. “Experimental,” though not a particularly satisfying term, is perhaps the best descriptor for understanding where Crosby fits into the picture of twentieth-century modernism, due to the complications underlying the use of the related phrase “avant-garde”; though the French contemporaries with which Crosby had close artistic connections would use that label themselves, Crosby does not quite match the refined definition that we have subsequently constructed, in that his work avoids overtly political inquiries or statements (barring one or two isolated exceptions) in favor of exploring formal innovation. The distinction remains unsettled: Crosby is included in Richard Kostelanetz’s *A Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes*, for example.

This difference only underscores the need for wider visibility for Crosby's corpus; in making Harry Crosby's work available, we are also permitted a broader view of Crosby's work that allows us to reexamine his poetic production in toto and make more insightful conclusions about it than judging it piecemeal – a recommendation frequently made by Crosby's peers, but seldom heeded in the century following his death. *Sonnets for Caresse* (1925) marks his early poetic apprenticeship, tackling conventional material and forms – the subject matter is quirkily but solidly romantic, and the composition, obviously, consists of various iterations of the sonnet. The volume was printed in four editions, each one slightly amended from the previous, in a manner that recalls Walt Whitman's ever-evolving *Leaves of Grass*; poems were added or removed between editions, and sometimes even renamed from printing to printing. The effort superficially bespeaks dissatisfaction with the product, but in light of Crosby's subsequent work, we may alternately interpret the continual tinkering as the poetic fidgeting of one working within uncomfortable constraints.

Because of Harry Crosby's persistent re-editing of *Sonnets for Caresse*, comparatively more copies of it remain extant than most of the publication found in the middle of Crosby's career. 17, 27, 108, and 44 copies of each edition were printed, respectively, some of these being unique deluxe versions of greater material workmanship: gold ribbon bookmarks were bound into early editions; some copies were created on Japanese vellum. On the private market, owing to their relative availability, a few examples of *Sonnets for Caresse* continue circulate, fetching in the vicinity of \$1000 for the most well-preserved (though still low compared to \$5000 for some of the rarer special printings of later works such as *Mad Queen*)<sup>3</sup>.

*Red Skeletons* (1927) stands as the first fully self-published work by Harry Crosby. It is also notable because of the collaboration with illustrator Alistair, the first of a number of other artists to take notice of Harry Crosby both as a fellow creator and as a material supporter of creativity. The book's visual aims are a starkness achieved by red and black, both in Alastair's contributions and in the use of the words "red" and "black" repeatedly as the dominant color motifs in poems and titles. As an early work, and one which reprints a significant number of selections from *Sonnets for Caresse*, by itself the volume is not especially illuminating: it is, however, a transitional work, as it not only reaches back towards earlier work seen fit for republication, but also early versions of poems, forms, and themes which would be explored with increasing maturity in subsequent volumes. Further, the work suffers from preoccupation with homage to Crosby's fundamental poetic influences – primarily Verlaine, Baudelaire, and Rimbaud – with a significant preponderance of titles in French compared to Crosby's following work. This homage sometimes crowds out Crosby's burgeoning poetic invention, and his voice does not fully break through until the subsequent collection, *Chariots of the Sun*, but a scholarship of Crosby would be woefully incomplete without the important developmental phase that this collection represents.

Critical to serious scholarly examination of Crosby's poetry, *Chariot of the Sun* (1928) may be characterized as the first whole emergence of Harry Crosby as the poet he would eventually become, steering away from the early work of homage to and formalist imitation of influences and sources. The solar motif is as prevalent in the collected poems as it is in the title, but so are some of the other emerging traits that would come to form Crosby's poetic voice — the importation of written forms from quotidian documents, for

instance, would become a part of Crosby's idiom much more prominently from this collection forward. As Harold Brunner attests,

Crosby's voracious appetites also included extensive reading, and *Chariot of the Sun* is a virtuoso demonstration, a set of textbook-perfect examples that include variations on the sonnet, *vers libre*, the five-line "cinquaine" poem developed by Adelaide Crapsey, descriptive travelogues in the tradition of the French prose poem, poems composed entirely of lists (some of which are devotedly encyclopedic, others of which ridicule the idea of making a list), understated love poems that echo T. S. Eliot at his most dryly delicate [...] and what D. H. Lawrence would name as a "sound poem" – a string of apparent nonsense syllables (its first line reads: "Sthhe fous on ssu cod") that were in fact a personal cipher that could be decoded as "harry poet of the sun." ("Harry Crosby's 'Brief Transit'")

The portions of *Chariot of the Sun* that are subsequently carried forward and reprinted – both by Crosby and by subsequent anthologists – are slim, and thus this volume's stock has not risen along with the later works, a problem compounded by the relatively small print run of *Chariot of the Sun* and its consequent rarity.

Bibliophile collectors of the Black Sun Press tend to be less interested in early volumes (up to *Chariots of the Sun*) as they hold less appeal for reasons both bibliographic and poetic: for one thing, the books predate the relationship between Roger Lescaret and Harry Crosby, which may be considered the quintessential phase of Crosby's artistic output. *Sonnets for Caresse* was printed instead by Herbert Clarke for the first two editions, and then by N. Trecult for the third edited by Albert Messein, and



the fourth “Definitive Edition” printed under the fledgling Editions Narcisse banner. Additionally, while the illustrations in *Red Skeletons* mark a visual high point for the Crosby collections, their absence is hardly felt as the material production quality of the volumes escalates. The increasing uses of gold leaf or foil, as well as more frequent use of lavish paper stock from Holland and Japan, make the books forward from *Chariot of the Sun* delightful artifacts to hold and view.

*Transit of Venus* (1928) is held as most representative of the Black Sun Press as an entity, though this may mainly be attributed as much to its relative ubiquity as its content. It is the most readily accessible of Harry Crosby’s poetry collections, with 244 copies of the first two editions prior to 1929, then up to 570 additional copies as part of the four-volume posthumous edition of Crosby’s poetry.<sup>4</sup> Sy Kahn’s selections in *Devour the Fire* heavily skew towards *Transit of Venus* for this reason of practicality, in particular, and the material also sees regular use by anthologists, as the data in Appendix I demonstrates. There are hints of the untrammelled mad poet persona to come, and the emergence of a secondary astrological figure – Venus, as indicated by the title and throughout the poems collected, recurs as counterpoint to Crosby’s sun – as significant metaphor tend to capture popular interest in Crosby, owing to the symbolic substitution cipher in play: Josephine is Venus, passing across the face of Harry’s Sun, and exerting a resonant influence on those viewing from below.

When taking excerpts from Crosby’s work for anthologies, however, the rambunctious excerpts from *Mad Queen* (1929) is typically the bold main course against which the comparatively tamer offerings from *Transit of Venus* are often set as if conducting a wine pairing. The combination of its rarity (only 141 copies, if the colophon

is accurate), its bold vitality, and its encapsulation of the developed voice of its author makes *Mad Queen* a prized entry in the Black Sun bibliography. Although the later four-volume collection represents Harry Crosby's output as a repository of his work in a literal sense, *Mad Queen* is thematically exemplary of Harry Crosby as a poet, and of his vision for the Black Sun press. It showcases the "tirade" form of prose poem that serves as a vehicle for the feverish mystic persona; the length of some of these tirades perhaps work against reprinting them in the more tightly constricted anthologies and textbooks, which in turn robs readers of a chance to experience Crosby's poetic character at its zenith of both passion and technical development.

The most significant issuance of Harry Crosby's work remains the hefty four-volume posthumous collection from 1931: *Chariot of the Sun*, *Transit of Venus*, *Sleeping Together*<sup>5</sup>, and *Torchbearer*. Unfortunately, many factors have converged to blunt its impact. Despite Crosby's own wishes regarding the entry of a fresh and prolific run of his poetry into print following his death (see Figure 3), only this set of four books reprinting Crosby's work was produced, and even that was done incompletely; the intent was to produce 500 copies "on uncut Navarre," along with a deluxe run of 20 in "Japanese vellum" and 50 on "Holland Paper" (probably the Van Gelder Zonen used by Lescaret for many of the Black Sun editions), but only approximately 100 were actually completed.

Mostly forgotten in the shadow of the poetry, several other works in progress by Crosby were also produced in the immediate wake of his death. *Aphrodite in Flight* (1930) conveys both the artist's passion for aviation and his inherent romanticism. As an extended exploration of sexual interaction through the metaphor of a flight manual, its adherence to its conceit rivals the metaphysical poets, and its playful tone puts it in

intriguing contrast against the fiery *Mad Queen* and is more of a piece with *Sleeping Together*. It remains among the rarest of all of Crosby's texts, as its publication following Crosby's suicide seems to have been a fairly low priority for Caresse, no doubt due in large part to the fraught emotional weight of collating and preparing what in some cases were incomplete works conveying a passion that turned out in hindsight to carry much more doom than it first appeared.

### Misapprehending Harry Crosby

Besides the difficulties of collecting Crosby's texts for scholarly consideration, Harry Crosby obscured himself behind a poetic persona and apparent style that succeeded too well in appearing cavalier and unstudied. His complexity remains preemptively dismissed by readers unwilling to delve deeper into a figure bearing the stigma of the label "minor poet," accepting that judgment uncritically. In contrast, through both his work and his life, Crosby took to heart the Whitmanesque<sup>6</sup> declaration: he contradicted himself; he contained multitudes. As a result, he occupied a key place in the burgeoning modernist clade now dubbed the "Lost Generation," the expatriate writers active in Paris between the World Wars. Unfortunately, his work is still given less attention than his personality and background. At various points in his life, he was a soldier, ambulance driver, talent scout, publishing doyen, and disciple of poetry, as well as a bon vivant, hedonist, and charismatic mystic – a much more rich and fruitful poetic persona than one would expect of one born to the privilege of a Boston banking dynasty and groomed for a life behind a desk.

Harry Crosby tends to reemerge periodically in the artistic consciousness, rediscovered serendipitously by some poet or writer or playwright. However, the same story tends to be rehearsed over and over again, calcifies a bit more with each iteration by the passing of time and his visibility dwindles again after only brief consideration, due to the weight of the ritualized and often incorrect tale of his life which overshadows his work. There are standard benchmarks, always marking the turns of the story much like the mnemonic phraseology necessary to embed the Greek epics in the mind for oral recitation — World War I, his wife Caresse, the Black Sun Press, his hedonistic lifestyle, his affair with Josephine Rotche, and death. These details provide only the skeleton of a story, much less of a man, but the full-fledged biographies have not done much to mitigate this, adding not so much flesh as more of the same old bones in greater detail.

The explanation for this is simple: Harry lived in his poetry as much as in his life, and vice versa. Reading his biographies only gives a certain sense of the man, and less of the poet. Understanding him requires following the advice of Pound and Lawrence, Eliot and Gilbert, to choose just the names of his erstwhile eulogists, the four literati chosen to each contribute to a volume in memoriam of Harry: he must be *read* to be comprehended<sup>7</sup>.

To that end, let us briefly look at one of Harry Crosby's works, "Tattoo" from the collection *Torchbearer*. It is a later piece, in the mode of what he would term "tirades," and succinctly encapsulates a number of the features which will be discussed in greater detail in the regard of Crosby's neglect by critics. The language is typical of Crosby: sentence constructions are repeated in a manner reminiscent of a liturgical utterance, meant to be memorized and chanted. The tone is aggressive (a poniard is a slender

Fig. 2. "Tattoo", reprinted in *Devour the Fire*. 95.

## TATTOO

I am the criminal whose chest is tattooed with a poinard  
above which are graven the words "mort aux bourgeois." Let  
us each tattoo this on our hearts.

I am the soldier with a red mark on my nakedness—when in a  
frenzy of love the mark expands to spell Mad Queen. Let us each  
tattoo our Mad Queen on our heart.

I am the prophet from the land of the Sun whose back is  
tattooed in the design of a rising sun. Let us each tattoo a rising  
sun on our heart.

dagger), and as would be increasingly true as his career progressed, hints vaguely at anarchistic or revolutionary leanings ("criminal," "mort aux bourgeois") without committing to a named movement or principle. As such, according to Cary Nelson in *Repression and Recovery*, Crosby was gathered into the loose categorization of "leftist poet" both by those sympathetic to the label (such as Conroy and Cheyney, who included Crosby in two volumes of the *Unrest* anthology of "rebel poets") and also by critics such as Malcolm Cowley, who would make Crosby an exemplar for the excesses of the era and disregard him as a symbolic gesture dismissing the ideologies of the entire period.

Subsequent scholarship has tended to treat poets as if they can be distilled down to a uniform statement. This can be blamed in large part on efficiency of resource use: poets who require complicated examination concomitantly require more space in anthologies, more words written for introductory notes, and more days of time on the course syllabus; a poet who can be readily encapsulated is thus attractive to those planning the logistics of a survey course, while the troublesome complex poet is reserved for the limited audience of the seminar or special topics offering. Thus, fewer upcoming

scholars learn of the complicated poet, going on to design their own future courses based on their exposure, and the positions of the accepted and marginalized poets harden further.

As a result, Harry Crosby was consigned to an early grave not only in his life, but in the eyes of literary scholars, for it is Crosby's contrarian, eclectic voice, developed openly throughout the course of his brief creative period, which has defied easy categorization – or, perhaps more bluntly, easy reductionism – and thus remains relegated to marginal status. Even Eliot, who (as will be discussed further at length in Chapters 2 and 3) has enjoyed as much critical mulling as any literary figure could want, is typically presented in the undergraduate curriculum as “difficult” or “esoteric”.

Crosby, as with many of the modernists, appealed to a narrow audience, and such specificity is not necessarily a fault. Indeed, Eliot's famous critique of Kipling was that

It is wrong, of course, [...] to address a large audience; but it is a better thing than to address a small one. The only better thing is to address the one hypothetical Intelligent Man who does not exist and who is the audience of the Artist. (“Kipling Redivivus”)

But whereas Eliot courted obfuscation to keep out the intellectually unworthy, Harry Crosby did so to keep out the spiritually unworthy. Neither one expected the obstacles to keep out those who were capable of meeting the challenge; those who wish to prepare themselves further can glean great rewards from the effort. Or, perhaps, in Crosby's case, they would, if readers had access to the texts which would serve to prepare them for the task. Ezra Pound's exhortation that Crosby be “read all together” assumes the possibility on the reader's end to read Harry Crosby all together, or indeed at all: it was feasible at

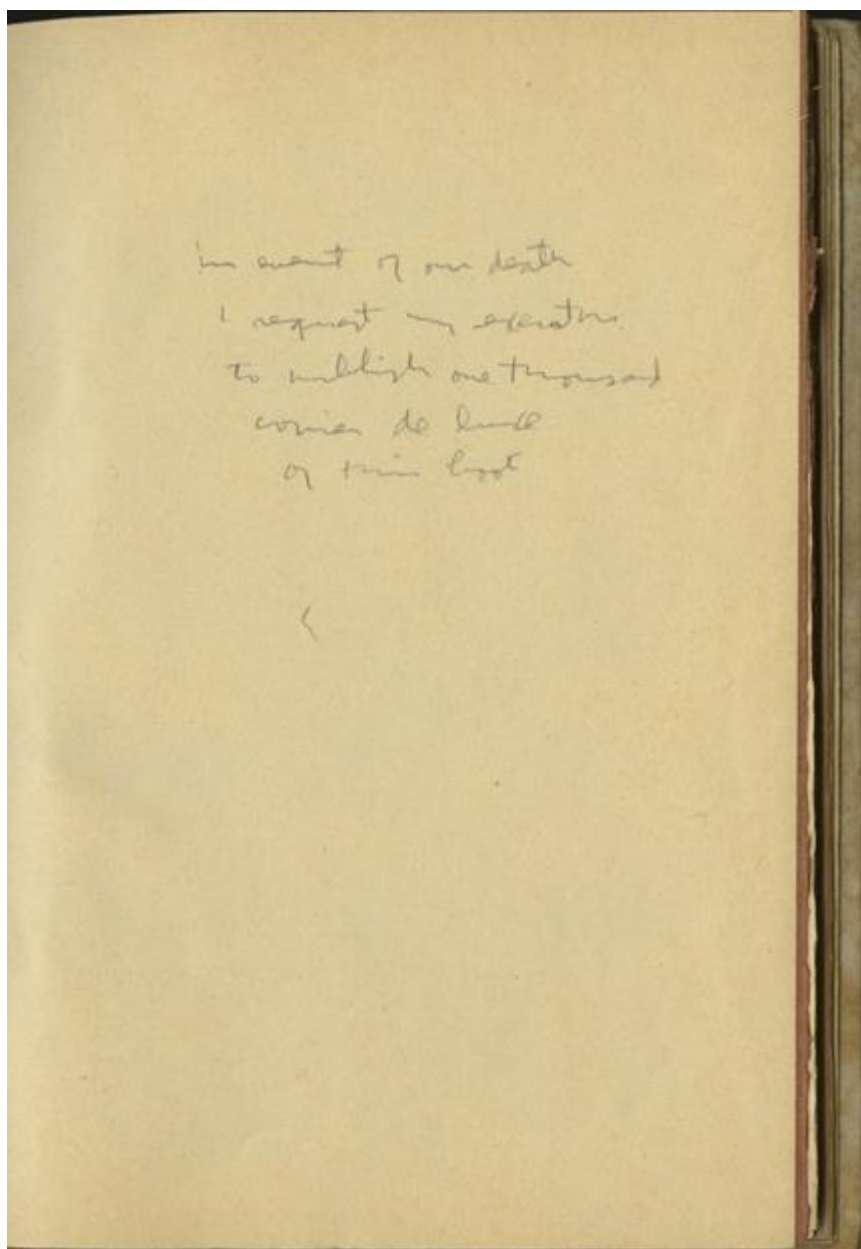
the time the statement was written, but at no time since then, it seems, except for the devoted and monied collector capable of acquiring his volumes. Thus, we cannot follow this advice, nor that of Eliot, in the preface to *Transit of Venus*, who assures us of Crosby's work that "if any of it is worth reading, then it all is." ("Preface" v)

Pound's oft-repeated admonition to read all of Crosby together, like many of Harry's own request concerning what was to happen to his work and estate after his death, has gone unheeded. In the front leaf of one of Morris Library's copies of *Sonnets for Caresse*, one can find a penciled inscription by Harry, reading "in event of our death I request our executors to publish one thousand copies de luxe of this book" (reproduced as Figure 3 below). It would have been the most extensive print run of any Black Sun Press work. The request, however, was ignored, as were similar dictates proffered in his will and verbally recounted by acquaintances.

A note on the organization of this dissertation: it is impossible to fully extricate the theoretical basis of the reading from the reading itself, or to separate the historical context informing both the texts and the interpretation thereof, nor is drawing such a bright line entirely desirable, as discussed further below. Nonetheless, this dissertation attempts to delineate three main areas of discussion into distinct chapters where possible. Chapter 1 engages with historical contexts necessary to properly contextualize Harry Crosby: besides a discussion of relevant comparable figures of the "Lost Generation," the section deals with theories of social interaction which posit that Crosby's social worth within the interpersonal network of post-war Parisian literati is more significant than previously has been given credit. Chapter 1 also addresses the Black Sun Press, Crosby's

publishing venture, as a site for literary innovation made possible by the development of smaller, more accessible technology for producing typescript.

Fig. 3. An inscription in Crosby's hand, discovered in the front of Harry's personal copy of *Sonnets for Caresse*.





## Historicizing Harry Crosby

Chapter 1 begins by situating Harry Crosby in the historical moment of the 1920s: while the precursor elements of the “Lost Generation” in particular have borne much scrutiny, a theoretical shift in writing as a concept occurred in the decades immediately prior. This change, which underlies and enables avant-gardism, is emergent from and signaled by changes in technology to record and reproduce forms of communication that coalesced around the fin-de-siècle. The small press was one of a tight constellation of developments, along with the camera, the typewriter, and sound recording devices, which both made possible new manners of artistic creation as well as forcing a reexamination of prior modes of expression. Harry Crosby had different relationships with these various technologies, such as his infatuation with photography, but from a theoretical perspective, it is the typewriter that this dissertation will focus upon most, for it informs the poetic landscape most significantly due to its impact on the concept of writing as manifested in the praxis of the small press, despite Crosby not having personally used typewriters.

Chapter 2 will deal with the theoretical foundations of the case for Harry Crosby’s recuperation. Raising the issue of Crosby’s neglect requires a reexamination of the implicit values of literary scholarship which led to that neglect, and thereby the continuation of a deep extant debate about definitions of very nebulous terms: some are entirely subjective, such as “good,” while others occupy a liminal state between concrete and abstract, such as “literature.” The use of the word “canon” is itself problematic, and potentially even an error that has been uncritically repeated and magnified, as Wendell Harris elucidates:

As Rudolph Pfeiffer has pointed out, the first application of the word to selections of authors – by David Ruhnken in 1768 – was catachrestic (207). A more nearly precise word than selection was so much needed that canon quickly became almost indispensable, despite its entanglement with concepts of authority and rule not necessarily relevant to literary canons. Not surprisingly, the normative sense of the term has clung alongside its elective sense: selections suggest norms, and norms suggest an appeal to some sort of authority. (110)

Further, in those who have adopted the notion of a literary canon whole-cloth, resistance to the notion of changing the rubric for determining a central canon seems all the more paradoxical in perspective with this lack of a firm definition for what is being defended, thus reproducing further disparity between the function of criticism and its practice.

Chapter 2 explores the notion of literary value as a conceit derived from the material realities of publication of poetry collections and anthologies: “all the canonizing discourses and institutions,” in the words of Cary Nelson:

[...]from book reviews to scholarly journals, from normalizing critical histories to anthologies and reference works, from student handbooks and class reading lists to graduation requirements that emphasize “major” authors, from faculty hiring priorities to tenure decisions that privilege certain authors and disparage others, from convention programs to publishers’s lists (*Repression and Recovery* 40).

A veritable industry<sup>8</sup> revolves entirely around the maintenance of an established literary hierarchy, and its proposed *raison d’être* is predicated on the idea that its roster of major

authors have intrinsic literary value, that their works are kept current by perpetual reprinting, and that their arbitration of value emerges from a position that is tested, theoretically sound, and undisputed.

Standing as a counter-point, the model of myriad canons opts for inclusion at the expense of coherence<sup>9</sup>. Cary Nelson characterizes this drive as “the paradoxical notion that multiple alternative canons can coexist as options in the culture – a liberal fantasy that disguises the actual struggle for dominance” between competing agendas on a field of limited resources (*Repression and Recovery* 52). A system of ten canons instantiated by Wendell V. Harris gives a more nuanced look at the complexity of the canon issue, further elucidated by the analogy of the glacier as laid out subsequently by Christopher Kuipers in “A Field Theory of the Canon,” by which we understand a central diachronic body of literature that has been firmly accepted, surrounded by works whose status is more fluid, but which either may potentially be incorporated into the diachronic core, or else may actually have been on the periphery of that core to begin with and subsequently drifted outward, but which have retained scholarly attention.

### Criticism, Value, and Categorization

The investiture of a work or author with “canonical” status is a multi-stage process which starts, but does not end with, availability in print: this only facilitates the process. Scholars must then focus time and attention on the analysis of these works, making textual criticism an unavoidable part of the process. This dissertation, therefore, airs critiques of assumptions frequently bound up in the act of close reading even as it

must engage in the act, just as it does not purport to settle the debate regarding canonicity more generally: there are merits to both arguments for and against the extant frame of reference by which academic curricula are constructed, and no plausible argument could be made for not reading poetry as part of the criticism of poetry. The canon which dominated the literature classroom for most of the twentieth century, presumed and presuming itself an authoritative a priori axis around which scholarship must revolve, has already been adequately critiqued in many other sources, even if those critiques have been adopted but slowly and begrudgingly, yet there should be some discernible benchmark by which to construct a survey or seminar course that does justice to its content, even if the notion of “value” must always remain open to question and adjustment. Marjorie Perloff warns of the error in the tendency to replace literature in the curriculum categorically and without due consideration: such an operation is just as essentialist as the system it replaces<sup>10</sup>, treating authors and works as tokens based on assumptions of monolithic homogeneity and inherent cultural characteristics (*Poetic License* 2). In a way, her cautioning statement concedes to Bloom’s critique of the “Schools of Resentment,” because in suggesting that there are scholars who wish to indiscriminately replace works in the central canon with representatives of minority groups, the implication is that doing so will harm or diminish the value of the canon, assuming that there is in fact an inherent quality of value to the canon that may be damaged. Her admonishment will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, but it is her praxis of, in a sense, recuperating close textual reading away from the agenda of reinforcing the hegemonic critical taxonomy that informs Chapters 3 and 4, where a

number of Crosby's poems are explicated to demonstrate elements of his poesis relevant to critical evaluation that have gone unnoticed due to obscurity.

Chapters 3 and 4 attempt to put into practice theoretical critique of close reading derived from those proffered by Jerome McGann, Marjorie Perloff, and others, and as such rely heavily upon the theoretical discourse covered in Chapter 2. Approaching literary analysis from the perspective that there has been a failure of criticism on the subject of canonicity and inclusion may be novel but not entirely unique: such positions have already been advanced by luminary scholars such as Jerome McGann and Paul Lauter. Lauter, for instance, draws what remains an important distinction in understanding how the present context has emerged:

This division between the concerns of what I have come to call "canonical criticism" and those of what is called "theory" is, I think, one fact of current literary practice in the United States. [...] [C]anon criticism was initially an effort to carry the politics of the 1960s social movements into the work socially-engaged academics actually did, especially into our classrooms. Consequently, canon criticism first influenced curriculum and thus gradually the margins of publishing and scholarship. Somewhat later, it came to affect the selection of texts about which graduate students and critics write; more slowly still, which works became sufficiently revered to find their way into footnotes, indices or other measures of academic weight. (155)

There is no doubt that this slow process remains ongoing; Lauter might certainly argue, rightly, that the goals of canon critics remain unfulfilled, and perhaps will be so for quite

some time due in part to the very pace at which the curriculum adjusts to pressures, again recalling the glacial metaphor Christopher Kuipers applies to the diachronic canon.

A running thread of argument throughout Jerome McGann's work, meanwhile, takes to task the practices and foundations of the traditional literary critical model extant in the academy; on a number of occasions in his texts, McGann makes cases for the reclamation of neglected poets and reexamination of the assumptions that pervade the discipline, and McGann's points are explicitly acknowledged here as underpinning the rationale for Harry Crosby's recovery as well. He opens *The Textual Condition* with the impassioned stance that textuality is of a piece with all other quintessentially human activities – like love, physical or otherwise, the text is a social activity, an idea particularly relevant when Crosby's central position in the social web of the Lost Generation is examined. "We make love and we make texts, and we make both in a seemingly endless series of imaginative variations" (*The Textual Condition* 3). That certainly fits the descriptions of Harry. But more importantly, McGann takes to task the model of literary criticism which forgets or denies the social dimension of being a reader:

Today, texts are largely imagined as scenes of reading rather than scenes of writing. This 'readerly' view of text has been most completely elaborated through the modern hermeneutical tradition in which text is not something we *make* but something we *interpret*. (*Condition* 4)

It would be facile and literal-minded to think of the texts that Harry Crosby created as simply the material reality of those elaborate Black Sun Press de luxe gold-leaf-and-morocco quartos – yet literary scholarship has committed the next lesser error by continuing to relegate poetry to obscurity based on isolated cross-sections of the whole

work, combined with a correctible impulse to consign poets to oblivion based on scandalous incidents in their biographies, although an impulse that is correctible with sufficient recuperation (as with Oscar Wilde, who suffered great social stigma and critical denigration in his own day but now is more highly appreciated thanks to biographers such as Richard Ellmann) or qualification (as in the careful balance between the praising technical qualities of Ezra Pound's poetry and avoiding validation of his sympathy for fascism). It is not that Harry Crosby has failed to live up to an objective notion of poetic merit as provided by the New Critics, but that the model which frames that notion of merit is itself flawed.

It is a model in which there is only one agent, the solitary 'reader,' whose pursuit of meaning involves an activity of ceaseless metaphorical production. These metaphoric constructs are the reader's 'insights' into the meaning he desires. For the traditional interpreter, the constructs represent a version or vision of the Truth, one that is more or less adequate, more or less exemplary. (*Condition 6*)

McGann sums up perfectly how Harry Crosby was, above all, textual — both as an element in the historical social text of the narrative of the Lost Generation (albeit downgraded by successive scholarship), and as a lover and weaver of increasingly experimental material texts (the majority of which remain unread) — and Crosby's production of these varied sorts of texts will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 3 and 4 in a way that aims to satisfy both those critics who insist upon fitting Crosby into a taxonomy as well as those who might find in Crosby a poetic voice that challenges the consensus view of modernism. Chapter 3 deals specifically with the texts of other

authors, writing about or in response to Harry Crosby: establishing a continuity of Crosby's influence begins with his contemporaries, especially those who have been accepted subsequently into canonical acceptance themselves, such as William Carlos Williams or E. E. Cummings. Chapter 3 also moves forward to explore poetic responses by later authors who discovered Harry Crosby and were inspired to address his work or (more often) life in their own way. This series of responses through time creates a framework by which we can comprehend Crosby's place in the greater narrative of twentieth century literature. Crosby's career arose amid and was shaped by a vast array of technological and historical happenstances, as detailed further in Chapter 1, and he left his own imprint upon them as well. He wove literal and metaphorical texts through his life by living it: fashioning his own mysticism and his own literary sensibility to deliver it, by absorbing, imitating, and then rejecting the Romantics in favor of, of all movements, Surrealism and a prototypical form of what would evolve into Beat and Language poetry. He remains too complex to reduce entirely to a taxonomical figure ready to plug into an anthology's table of contents, which has made it easier for editors to leave him out, but he also enjoys underappreciated fundamental commonalities with other late Western modernist poets who have been accepted into the dominant canon, and Chapter 4 demonstrates the necessity of a more thorough examination of Crosby's work in order to properly understand it and place it accurately in literary history.



### A Reconsideration of Literary History as Tactic

Literary history, fraught as it is with its own internal debates, may yet also provide a solution, albeit an idealistic one: we can construct our sequence of literary study based on the historically verifiable influences and impacts of authors, appeasing those who wish to open the canon to works of popular culture as a method of cultural study, as well as the empiricists who wish to make of literary analysis a discipline more akin to the formalized and replicable scientific disciplines. The difficulty here is that, historically, many individuals from underclasses or marginalized groups have been actively suppressed by the privileged in power: there is a growing awareness of the documented cases of women and of authors of color being deliberately prevented from writing or having their writing distributed for political reasons (using the term in its broadest sense).

One example of the difficulty of classifying Harry Crosby is his complex relationship with regard to the notion of decadence (whether capitalized or not). Matei Calinescu delves into the evolution of decadence as a concept folded into the larger panoply of modernism, and traces its sometimes vacillating position against the cultural context of romanticism and the value of aesthetics; by the time the formal *Decadisme* movement coalesces in the 1880s, it has passed through several iterations, particularly as related to the fraught notion of “progress”.

Another dilemma is the tendency in all forms of historical scholarship (not just the literary variety) to prioritize the synthetic output of a historian’s analysis as the primary text, taking it *prima facie* that the interpretation of the actual primary texts

involved is an accurate one. As the melodrama of Harry Crosby's narrative accumulated in the years following his death, it became "more real," in a Baudrillardian sense, than the real story. In this aspect, Crosby has a hand in his own neglect, since, as will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the construction of his poetic persona lent itself to this sort of misinterpretation, and not without some deliberation. Such is one of the hidden tragedies of Crosby's sudden death: having meticulously presented his wild-eyed façade to the world while reserving the facts of his craft to only a few close compatriots, there was no real opportunity to differentiate the performance from the performer. Caresse Crosby seems not to have shown much interest in pursuing such a path of reconciliation, however, and as a perhaps unintended but direct result, Harry's poetry began to disappear from circulation within two scant years of his demise, passed over by critics and anthologists who felt that they knew all there was to know about the poet from the scandal hanging over his death and not from the writing he produced.

Chapter 2 will discuss critical theory regarding the significance and sources of neglect as applicable to Harry Crosby in the study of literature. Fundamental to this discussion is the understanding that neglect is self-perpetuating and recursive: omission of a poet from the major avenues of accessibility – presence in the renowned literary anthology textbooks, or the existence of an independent collection – suppresses scholarship, and lack of scholarship means that editors of such volumes will be less likely to consider the author for inclusion in future editions.

The line of inquiry in Chapter 2 explores the weakness of the persistent paradigm of "value", derived of New Criticism, which obscures a more mundane value system based on the monetary and material factors of publication, which are themselves shifting

radically in the digital era. Rachel Donadio opines, “Reading lists, though, are a zero-sum game: for every writer added, another is dropped,” but this is less true than it has traditionally been, with the advent of digital publication, whereby all material can hypothetically be added without the concomitant costs in paper and ink that would accompany a corresponding physical expansion of a given anthology (“Revisiting the Canon Wars” 16). The main weapon of editors looking to preserve the boundaries of their anthologies on the basis of material cost has been blunted: rebutted by the successful recuperation of a number of neglected authors through conventional publication, the ideological framework of objective literary worth faces a further and more fundamental revision as electronic media stand to make accessible poets and works previously excluded from consideration without even the consent of traditional publishing operations and their editors.

Literary scholars yet toil, often unaware, under the pervasive influence of the dictates of the New Critics, both in the overwhelming impulse to award creative text primacy over historical context, and in the adoption of literary value as a concomitant measure of perceived material value with regard to the production of literary anthologies an equivalency that grows more and more evidently false as communications technology reduces the status of the fixed print volume as textbook in the classroom, superseded by electronic texts divorced from some, though not all, of the material concerns of publication. Where Chapter 2 discusses flaws in the assumptions that shape the boundaries between canonical and neglected literature, it may thus seem counter-intuitive that the third chapter directly addresses primary texts, not only by Harry Crosby, but by poets in his peer group as well as subsequent poets who, for various reasons, felt

compelled to compose their own poetic responses to Harry Crosby. It is the aim of this dissertation to make the widest possible case for Crosby's significance and reclamation, and this requires a certain degree of neutrality regarding close reading — recognizing the necessity of the technique while being cognizant of its baggage. In this way, Crosby's work is addressed both historically and in terms of the notion of intrinsic elements held to be markers of literary value in form, offering a defense of Crosby's inclusion from both sides of the argument. These readings are composed with an eye toward establishing a cohesive sense of Crosby's poiesis in the latter case, and in demonstrating his resonance and influence upon other poets in the former. Besides close reading, the chapter's textual analysis extends to bibliographic discussion of the state of Crosby's work, in conjunction with data presented in Appendices I and II. Also, as it is impossible to read without theory, some discussion of the principles commonly accepted as "modernist" will be discussed with a particular eye toward how Crosby articulates them, modifies them, or rejects them at various points in his poetic output.

## CHAPTER 1

CROSBY'S HISTORICAL CONTEXT: MODERNISM, PUBLISHING  
TECHNOLOGY, POLITICS AND PARIS IN THE 1920S

To say Harry Crosby was important for this time, or even because of his time, requires us to understand his time. Frederic Jameson's oft-quoted maxim, "Always historicize," serves a very straightforward purpose here: Crosby's talents were amplified by the historical moment in which he flourished, and might not have had the chance to come to even meager attention without an intellectual and technological biome in which to exercise his unique blend of traits. This is not to say that Crosby's usefulness as a poetic example is solely that of his location on the timeline of literature, but just as it is impossible to understand his work without knowing the work of both his early sources in the Romantics and later his contemporaries, a scholar should also know the extant technologies involved in printing in order to situate him properly. Poets often have aesthetic reasons for affecting stances toward technology (either to reject it, to embrace it, to engage it in order to modify it, or even sometimes to create it). Just as we are able to draw conclusions regarding poesis from the choice of writing implement or paper, it may be helpful to understand as a statement of poetics what equipment the Black Sun Press chose to produce its editions.

One of the most under-recognized contributions of Harry Crosby to the modernist output of the 1920s was to provide an outlet in the form of the Black Sun Press for writers to put their work into print apart from the major publishing houses. Understanding

and situating the Black Sun Press in proper temporal context requires an awareness of the development of print technology that made its foundation possible. So, too, did the development of print and quasi-print technologies – namely, the typewriter – have a wide impact on the concept of writing in general, which should be explored to see how the modernists overall, and Crosby specifically, were shaped by forces that are not immediately apparent. This shift encompasses all meanings of the word ‘writing,’ for it applies both to an act and the product of that act. As is the case with many of his contemporaries, Harry Crosby’s poiesis was shaped by the changes wrought by technological advance, particularly as he taught himself to write poetry by absorbing the influences in his intellectual environment, and thus was more sensitive and incorporative of those fluctuations and experimentations than one who has the insulation of a more formal training.

### A Life Cycle of Technologies in Society

The path which brought the state of the art of printing to its exact iteration at the arrival of Harry Crosby in Paris after World War I can fill, and already have filled, many volumes, but it is worthwhile to delineate particular factors relevant to our understanding of Crosby’s particular niche in terms of the complex process by which canonicity and publication interact. Because the availability of printing technology obviously made possible Crosby’s career as a publisher, but also his poetic ventures and even his autodidactic literary education, and because the formation of literary canons has historically hinged upon the availability of texts in print and the willingness of editors to

devote or deny their publishing resources to a given author or work, we must examine the specifics of how the printed word came to the point at which it stood ready to greet the “Lost Generation”.

This author asserts that one can view the cycle of maturation of a technology as a five-phase progression, to which the history of printing technology, much like any other technology, has adhered: innovation, liberation, resistance, normalization, and re-emancipation. Two such examples of this pattern serve well to elucidate the artistic and technological context into which Harry Crosby and the “Lost Generation” emerged: the camera and the typewriter, both of which had entered a state of primacy in public consciousness at the dawn of the 1920s. The typewriter serves as an obvious analogue to the various currents within the development of large-scale publishing technology, while the camera also serves as a relevant example because of its close association with Harry Crosby, an amateur photographer himself, and as a visual medium employed in iconic fashion by the loose cluster of artists and artistic movements for which avant-garde serves as a broad umbrella term, the French artistic community with whom Crosby associated with on a professional and a personal level. Thus, the typewriter’s relevance regards the state and concept of writing as an act during Harry Crosby’s historical context, while the camera is relevant to Crosby’s personal poetic style and mode of expression.

A new device is almost never truly new, but merely an iteration of previous technologies. Darren Wershler-Henry attempts briefly to sketch the origins of the typewriter in such terms in *The Iron Whim: A Fragmented History of Typewriting*: “Three distinct fields of invention contribute to the appearance of typewriting: printing

with moveable type; the construction of automata, the early mechanical precursors to modern robots; and attempts to produce prosthetic writing devices for the disabled, especially the blind and the deaf” (34). Wershler-Henry acknowledges, however, that we cannot really know the source of the device we recognize as the typewriter, or indeed many modern contrivances:

The first sentence of the first chapter of Wilfred A. Beeching’s *Century of the Typewriter*, one of the better-known popular histories of the machine, reads, ‘It would be impossible to write the history of the typewriter from its actual inception, for there was no true beginning.’ This situation is not unique to typewriting. Most discourses come into being gradually, replete with many false starts, redundancies, and parallel moments of innovation as similar ideas occur to inventors and thinkers at different times and in different places. As a result, moments of origin are inevitably shrouded in myth, hyperbole, and inaccuracies of various kinds. (34)

What we can trace, however, is the impression that the typewriter and other devices leave upon the culture into which they emerge. Upon the realization of a new method or device, following a period of obscurity and proprietary protection in which only the inventors control the technology, an initial free-for-all explodes the technology’s boundaries once it finds its way into the hands of early adopters: the capabilities and limits of the technology are tested, and its niche is mapped out with regard to its interaction with and impact upon other extant technologies. During the same period at the dawn of the twentieth century, the typewriter enjoyed an age of experimentation and enthusiasm just as the camera and the airplane (two devices that captivated Crosby and others of the era). The typewriter



was not new – no less a figure than Mark Twain had pecked out a wry letter of endorsement on a Corona some decades earlier – but the distribution of a technology to the hands of artists willing to experiment proves one of the crucial tipping points in the timeline. Journalists during the First World War in particular found the increasingly portable and durable typewriter models entering the market a welcome development, and some of the earliest literary proponents of the typewriter started their careers in reporting, bringing their habits (and their mechanical writing companions) with them into their artistic careers. To name just two such examples, Ernest Hemingway was known to be fond of Royal portables after using several different varieties, while George Orwell appears in several photographs with a Remington portable designed to be compacted for travel (a popular feature which no doubt hastened its adoption by correspondents in the field).<sup>11</sup>

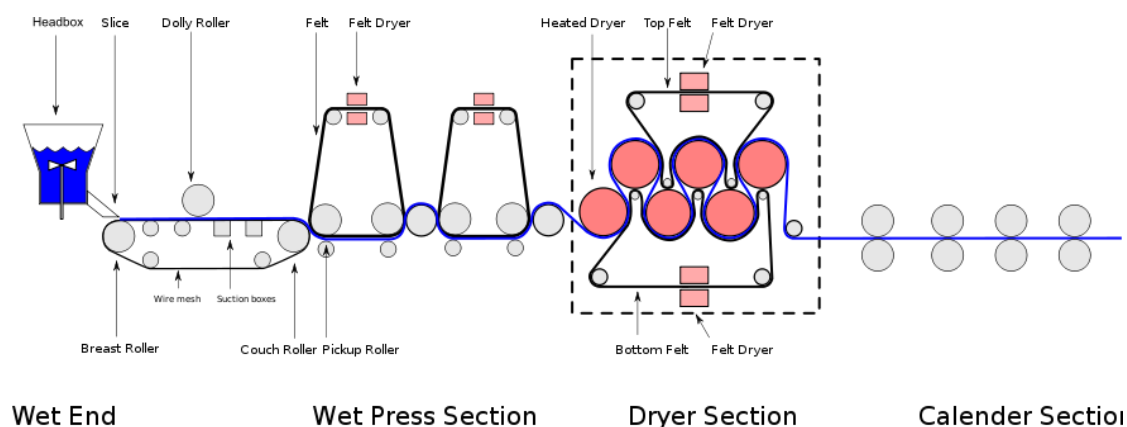
Much of the most radical experimentation with these technologies occurs during the early period in which the device is in production; it is, in some part, a reflection of how novel the technology is that its users don't know its boundaries. Essentially, early adopters don't know what a new technology can't do, and push it in intriguing ways. Man Ray's superimposition of photographic exposures, or the use of the typewriter to break the orthogonal strictures of text layout, testify to the ways in which users often find encouragement in breaking with convention upon the receipt of a new technology.

Such devices often undergo a bifurcated evolutionary path at this point: they become both larger and smaller. The larger iterations of such devices find their way into commercial use, with design focused on maximizing the power or output of the device for mass consumption. Larger cameras were devised to not only take larger photos for

use in advertising, but also to generate the thousands upon thousands of photos necessary to produce motion pictures; both applications sought to distribute the capabilities of photography to as many eyes as possible. In the printing world, meanwhile, the Fourdrinier continuous paper-making machine (first patented in 1801, though based on a design patented in France in 1799, the basic function of which is depicted in Figure 4) exploded the production of paper to an unprecedented scale; formerly, paper had to be constructed by hand, using individual flat frames into which wood pulp was pressed into sheets, from which individual pages were generated by folding that large sheet<sup>12</sup> into several smaller leaves. Indeed, the names for the traditional book sizes arise from the divisions of this sheet: “folio” means folded (once), “quarto” means quartered (or folded twice), and “octavo” means eight, the number of pages created by folding a quarto again.

The ability to produce paper by the roll in enormous quantities, rather than by the individual hand-pressed sheet of definite and limited size, spurred printing presses to take advantage of the newly generated printing space; the end result was, on one end of the

Fig. 4. A basic diagram of the Fourdrinier machine for continuous paper production. Pulp from the headbox is formed on a mesh screen, sent over a series of conveyor belts and drums that press and dry it, and collected on rolls as paper stock.



spectrum, the production of experimental sizes and formats for bound books, unchained from their obligation to adhere to the standard divisions created by the even folding of sheets from folio downward, and, on the other end of the scale, the tabloid newspaper, likewise aimed at dispersing the contents of print as widely as possible to the mass-market. The commerciality of this trend cannot be overstated: one may reflect on a construction which endures even today in our language, the notion of the “print shop,” and how it evokes a sense of a dedicated business space dominated by large printing machines, while busy workers scurry through the warrens of paths that surround them.

On the other track, smaller devices provide many different sorts of allowance for individuals to experiment with the technology: miniaturization yields portability; refinement of design leads to ease of use, standardization between models (and proliferation of the best designs, by imitators legal and illegal alike, which puts more devices into the reach of more owners), and ultimately a do-it-yourself spirit in which the amateur is encouraged both by the simplicity and the commonality of the device to open it up and make their own modifications to yield new results. The availability of photography to the individual provided one of the test beds of surrealist and dada visual experimentation. Similarly, the typewriter opened paths for literary production to individuals who might not otherwise have been able to write reliably for any number of reasons – infirmity, lack of time or endurance, or an active lifestyle not suited to desks or inkwells.

But is the typewriter technically a printing technology? Not as such: it is a communication technology, a distinction which bears mentioning. A reporter’s sheaves of pages from the field would not be directly spliced into the columns of a newspaper at the

home office, it is true: though the lay person of the time envisioned a fantastic spiral of technological innovation at the dawn of the phonograph and the typewriter, in which a spoken dictation would be automatically transcribed into clear and perfect text, that sort of innovation would not be possible until computers. The typewriter facilitated the transmission of information in a form that was rapid (being generated faster than manuscript) and robust (more legible than handwritten missives, and thus more reliable as communication). What is interesting about the typewriter's ascendancy is its liminality, that it represents a rupture between print – the application of pre-formed letters to the page – as an *end* product and ubiquity as the dominant mode of written expression, and the ancient art of handwriting, but is not firmly in either category while having profound repercussions in each. A cultural shift is instantiated once the typewriter emerges, change which is still occurring: handwriting continues to recede to a position of simple utility, replaced slowly but surely in the whirl of signifiers around us by an increasingly engineered world of type. The quantity of distinct typefaces available now numbers into the thousands, and it is now possible to cue an identity for a company with a distinct font as its 'signature' (an irony given the persistence of handwriting analysis).

This forward progression experiences resistance, however. Those systems which have standing interest in maintaining the status quo, due to an investment in the continuance of the precursor technology, typically fight against its adoption, claiming either an existential threat to their livelihoods or some inherent flaw in the new technology. In discussing the dawn of printing, Warren Chappell notes that the scribes affiliated with the Christian church, holders of a monopoly over the production of texts via hand-written and illuminated manuscripts, fought against the rise of the printing

press. “[...T]here were also laws, sponsored by scribes and illuminators, which forbade the duplication of images” (Chappell 8). The tension between these two forces, innovation and resistance, serve to check one another; the most radical experimentation with the new technology drops off, while more casual users become more familiar with the device. Eventually, certain conventions begin to set in as a technology becomes commonplace. The most mundane applications of a technology tend to win out: photography becomes a way to record an event rather than serve as a medium of artistic composition for most people, just as typewriters became more a method for generating correspondence and business documents than for crafting literature, as far as the average user was concerned.

The ubiquity of a technology eventually leads to its re-emancipation, wherein it becomes inexpensive and familiar enough to allow for a new wave of amateur experimentation. The expense of early cameras or typewriters would have daunted the average individual, discouraging financial investment in such an item, particularly when the earliest models were also imperfect and prone to quirky function or breakage. As the mass-produced, fine-tuned versions hit the market, and the presence of such devices becomes a commonplace, then the distancing factor falls away, and the typical citizen begins to consider, even if idly or as a hobby, exploring the possibilities in the new technology once more.

### The Typewriter, Print Innovation, and the Poetics of the Black Sun Press

The path from the development of publication technology to the neglect of a modern poet consists of numerous elements interwoven and sometimes convoluted. Let us explore the relationship of Harry Crosby to the typewriter with one seemingly inconsequential fact from the midst of the chain: Crosby did not use a typewriter to compose his poetry. Rather than dismissing this as inconsequential, however, this turns out to be a more significant fact than will be immediately apparent, for to understand the small press, with which Crosby is intimately linked, we need to understand the parallel evolution of the typewriter as a miniature locus for the production of text, a miniature simulacrum of the larger curve of technological invention occurring in the field of printing. The notion that Crosby rejected a novel technology that had, by the 1920s, become accessible and portable also gives us insight into his poiesis, which will be discussed further below.

Indeed, we must elucidate a number of subtle pieces of information conveyed by that statement; first of all, that we have inherited a more winnowed notion of what is conveyed by the word “typewriter” than we realize.

The word *typewriter* itself was the site of a similar confusion. For more than twenty years it referred to both the machine and its operator. The author of an 1895 *Atlantic Monthly* article entitled “Being a Typewriter,” clarified glibly that she had in mind “the human being, and not the machine.” The word “typewriter” was also used as a verb, meaning “to type,” and typescripts were said to be “typewritered.” These lingering,

linguistic confusions between the device and its function, between the typist, typing, and the typewriting machine, indicate the lengthy negotiation of typing as a modern activity and typists as a labor cohort. (Gitelman 208)

Harry Crosby was a product of Boston high society, and would have had some familiarity with the idea of having a servant or hired secretary to whom to dictate his work. He certainly had the means to afford to own one of the machines, to retain an assistant to operate it, or both. He even demonstrated an inclination towards experimenting with new technologies: he was famously fascinated by flight – not only did he use “aeroplanes” as a motif in some of his later writings, he took flying lessons and (posthumously) received certification as a pilot – and dabbled with photography as well, taking cues from surrealist artists among his acquaintances who were exploring the negative as previous generations had explored the canvas.

We will see the result in his poetic compositions in more detail when examining some of his textual output in Chapter 3, but his rejection of the typewriter situates Crosby at a peculiar vantage with regard to his historical moment that must be examined first in order to grasp the ramifications of some of his experimental poetic moves. “It seems evident that any theoretical proposition about the character of typography as a visual form of written language must take into account the status of writing within the critical evolution of semiotic and phenomenological discussions” (Drucker 10). The reason for this is due to the interlocking nature of the two sides of that particular phenomenology. As Johanna Drucker succinctly declaims, “the founding premise of modernism was premised upon the capacity of works to claim the status of *being* rather than

*representing*,” and that ability to *be*, the materiality of writing, arises from concurrent developments in technology that framed how writers and readers conceptualize what writing is and could be – what Drucker calls “the self-conscious attention to the formal means of production” (10).

Until the invention of the typewriter, the production of standardized print resided solely in the locus of the press; the typewriter, therefore, represents a rupture between ‘closed’ and ‘open’ production of printed material. Before that rupture, control of the manufacture of books intended for a wide market was monopolized by those who owned printing presses, as the labor-intensive methods of woodcut, etched plates, or handwriting could not compete with movable type for speed and volume of production. The size and expense of simply obtaining a printing press – that is, to build one’s own press, in the earliest days of printing, or to purchase a manufactured press, in later years – was a barrier to entry that limited direct access to the ability to print: one had to possess a certain amount of privilege, almost always in the form of capital. Furthermore, printing presses are not a one-time expense, but require additional expenses to run in the form of ink and paper and labor; older presses also required the casting of typesets, which required cleaning and maintenance, and periodically had to be replaced as the surface of the individual glyphs wore down with use. Simply buying a press was not sufficient to make one a publisher, in other words: one had to have a significant outlay of capital to maintain a publishing operation. The reality of these factors meant that those with the means to acquire the technology implicitly served also as the gatekeepers of publication: as only they could afford to print books, they decided what material saw print.



Concomitantly, those who wished to produce material and subsequently have it published had to negotiate with those who owned printing presses, either by currying favor or engaging in a business transaction. It would be quite difficult, from the fifteenth century until the dawn of the twentieth, for a person to simply produce a book independently without either possessing the resources to own and operate a press or else the favor of someone who did; although printing presses become more ubiquitous with time, and consequently more accessible either directly (through purchase) or indirectly (through the greater number of publishers with which one can negotiate), they remain a ‘closed’ technology in the sense that one must seek out the holder. This mindset persisted until the typewriter, which made ‘open’ not only the availability of production of type but also the mental approach of artists and authors to print as a medium. As Johanna Drucker documents extensively, particularly in *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art*, it is just this material shift that provided crucial impetus to the avant-garde of the 1920s, for the liberating act of making type not only producible by the individual at a speed that enables at least limited market penetration, yet at the same time customizable and individual in nature, creating a hermeneutical loop of cause and effect – the avant-garde explored new printing options because they were available, but their availability was necessary to inspire and provoke their exploration. Making print composition manipulable by the artist, rather than the printer, was just the sort of boundary-breaking change in praxis that the avant-garde needed, and artists took eager advantage.

On the surface, then, the presence of the device known as the typewriter would have seemed a boon to Crosby’s creative output. In her excellent work *Grooves, Scripts and Writing Machines*, Lisa Gitelman “suggest[s] a connection between spiritualism and

typing” that seems to frustrate the matter (211). She elucidates how popular conceptions of the phonograph and the typewriter challenged and then shaped the public perception of what it means to communicate. The confluence of the spiritualism movement, and its fixation on “automatic writing,” with the creation of devices that seemed to be able to perform miracles that divorced speech or writing from the human experience – to speak the words of the dead or the absent, or to generate type extemporaneously – meant that old notions had to be reexamined. Touch typing turned people from thoughtful scribes or engaged wordsmiths into mechanical conduits for the dictated speech of one who did not even have to be nearby or speaking at the moment. Gitelman explores how the concept of the spiritual medium informs the fin-de-siècle not just as a paranormal trope, but as a model for reframing the position of humans to language.

One would think that a device touted as the means to truly pour out the uncensored streams of inner thought as type on a page would be of great interest and utility to a poet such as Harry Crosby, whose poetic ethos was one of brash immediacy and contrarian honesty:

In spiritualism and psychical research, communication with “invisibles” was registered differently through the person of the researcher/sitter and the person of the subject/medium. Multiple tiers of inscription provided different accommodations of the same evidence: automatic and nonautomatic writing both vouched for the truth of implausible phenomena.... Typing too emerged with force as a multitiered relation, so often separating the businessman-author of a text from its mechanical inscription. Like the literary author or journalist, increasingly alienated

from the mechanics of the printing press, business correspondents and other writers became increasingly divorced from the mechanics of producing their own authored texts. (Gitelman 211)

Like the spiritualist, Crosby strove to touch some elusive state outside of normal experience; Crosby used no spiritual medium, however, espousing a much more direct sort of personal openness in line with much older mystical sources. Just as he needed no intermediary between himself and his poetic source, he likewise tore down the veil between the poet and publication, choosing to be his own publisher as much as his own medium. Contrivances such as the typewriter would ultimately be less useful than they appeared because of the emergent distancing effect they ultimately generated. Crosby was romantic (in its capitalized sense as well as otherwise) with regard to writing, and embraced an ethos and poesis predicated upon authenticity over craft<sup>13</sup>. He opted to reach back across the rupture to embrace the artisanal qualities of the printing press, seeing older forms of print as less mechanistic and more soulful, perhaps, than the immediacy of the typewriter<sup>14</sup>, which lent itself to less composed and more ephemeral output.

But how does that account for the foundation of the Black Sun Press? The facile, superficial answer – to continue to regard the Black Sun as Crosby’s “vanity press” and, as such, a mere novelty – does not satisfy. As a theoretically significant act, however, the Black Sun Press is of a piece with the sentiment of the day – the primacy of the artist as an independent agent of expression (to take up the emphatic term from the “Proclamation of the Word” essay from *transition*) – and resulted in the launching or sustenance of a number of flagging or struggling literary careers: James Joyce, Kay Boyle, and Hart

Crane were just three of the individuals who benefited from Crosby's publication when their work was eschewed by the conventional and conservative printing establishment. In that theoretical significance, too, must we acknowledge the effect upon the printers of the early twentieth century of the impact of the typewriter, which dissolved the formerly impenetrable barrier between 'printed' and 'written' — as the device's name indicates, it allowed for the '*writing*' of type, which is to say the pouring out with immediacy of typed material, a completely different form of craft from the normally laborious act of *setting* type. This conceptual rupture between the two categories no doubt contributed to the very idea of the little magazine and the small independent press, as the zeitgeist of unfiltered production in the moment liberated from the lumbering editorial and approval rituals of major publication gave them the edge as loci in which avant-garde art could be produced, given the necessity of responding immediately to the foremost edge of culture.

#### Toward the "Little Magazine"

Control of the material fact of publication was the primary factor shaping the concept of the poet and the anthology from the advent of Gutenberg's press to the cusp of the twentieth century, when technological advances liberated printing capability. One looks at the typewriter for practical examples of how the various elements that made printing revolutionary in its earliest days had become commonplace and ubiquitous. Movable type, the production of which was originally a highly specialized subset of metallurgical craft, had become refined enough to allow for mass production of typebars; additionally, where typefaces had once been carefully guarded proprietary designs,

bearing the names of their inventors, now that fierce territoriality has been displaced to the production of digital typefaces, and as digital printers can produce any appropriately installed font without the need for a crafted typebar or head, the actual craft of physical type has become a marginal concern, not quite as staunchly defended. Similarly, paper had once been rare enough to hoard, treated with botanical extracts to ward off decay and ravenous insects due to its scarcity. Now, one could expect to have stray sheets on hand, inserting them at leisure behind the platen to dash off a memorandum. Ink, which was once imported in the same shipments as Eastern spices (and valued not unlike them, either), became common enough to be dispensed onto disposable gauze or cotton ribbons to install in typewriters.

The typewriter was only the most individualized manifestation of the arc of miniaturization and mass production of publishing equipment at the time; the Industrial Revolution both streamlined the printing press into a more compact and efficient device and made it accessible through the cost-lowering effect of mass production. The ability to transition the business of printing from inhabiting a dedicated workspace to, in the 1920s, running a literary press from the room below one's apartment – as was the case with Lescaret's press on Rue Cardinale, atop which the Crosbys settled to form first Editions Narcisse<sup>15</sup> and then the Black Sun Press – liberated the publishing business from a centralized locus of control under the established commercial publishing houses. Part of what allowed print technology to escape, at least temporarily, the sole auspices of the major publishing houses was the rapidity with which print technology improved from the 1860s to the 1920s – a speed which frustrated and delayed the stolid publishing houses' attempts to maintain their privileged position<sup>16</sup>. In particular, the acceleration of

advancement which accompanied and was facilitated by the Industrial Revolution, both in terms of the ingenuity to design and capacity to generate new technologies, radicalized printing in ways that had not been seen in the four quiet centuries since the invention of the press.

Yet, as the Sun set on the eighteenth century, the print shop operated much the same as it had in Gutenberg's era. To be sure, there were advances in typesetting techniques, and both printers and illustrators consistently worked to improve the quality of their images, but on the whole the operation remained largely unchanged. The same was not true in the following century. Beginning in the nineteenth century, changes to books and book production took place at a rapid clip. Major innovations were introduced in every facet of the printing operation: typesetting, composition, inking, impression, and binding. (Howard 113)

Part of this innovation was speed: the proliferation of steam power, in particular, made industrial presses possible, and with them unprecedented speed. The principle of automation made it possible to sustain a continuous rate of production far exceeding that of the hand-set, hand-operated printer. Iron presses, which were both more stable and capable of being mass-produced, replaced older wooden models which were clunky and had to be built individually. Even smaller cottage printing operations benefitted from industrialization, as the presses themselves increased in quality and efficiency while decreasing in size. While the means of production of printed text would still not be truly "portable" until the advent of folding or otherwise traveling models of typewriter, the

diminution of the printing press made it possible to disseminate the locus of publication from a few centralized print shops to any number of scattered places.

Advances in both the availability and capabilities of printing have invariably spurred theoretical reassessment of the material condition of literature, both among scholars and among practitioners. In general, the ability to close the gap between the conception of an expression by an artist and the material production of that expression profoundly changes the perception of production from that moment forward; just as the shift of the dominant mode of book production moving from handwritten manuscript to movable type press altered what readers perceived as “the book,” so too did a panoply of rapid production methods, typewriting among them<sup>17</sup>. Robert Carlton (“Bob”) Brown's poems, such as his “readies” (a term analogous to the slang term “talkies” referring to films) utilizing photoreproduction of written forms on a “reading machine” not unlike a tachistoscope, demonstrate the other key part of the equation: the ability to reproduce a textual artifact in situ and in toto visually without recourse to the mediation of a printer composing type on a press. The possibilities of photoreproduction became realized as a means to manifest a visual poetics incorporating the aesthetic of the hand-drawn, free-form, and ephemeral, just as Susan Howe and Charles Olson found separate but complementary applications of the freedom of the typewriter to transform poetry from conventional stacks of lines in sequence to an interactive textual medium. (Discussion of Crosby's poesis relative to poetry produced after his death will be handled in Chapter 3.)

The proliferation of this inexpensive print technology – though with accurate and extemporaneous visual reproduction still lagging behind, apart from experiments with photographic techniques – allowed the “little magazines” to flourish in Paris after World

War I; in fact, they directly owe their existence to such liberating advances. Two convergent factors led to this proliferation in the artistic ecology: the rise in literacy in the wake of educational reform, and the forward march of technology to meet the demand for books caused by that groundswell of readership (Howard 114). Though the novel took shape during the Victorian era, it is not the market-driven two-volume opus that actually spurred printing innovation: instead, this hunger for reading material caused an unintended blossoming in the importance of periodicals:

By the nineteenth century, newspapers were firmly woven into the cultural fabric, their circulation stimulated by the expanding audience of curious readers. Indeed it was this mounting demand for newspapers that drove much of the period's technological innovation. Unlike the production of books, printing the news was a time-sensitive business. Printers were pressured to develop quicker methods of setting type and making impressions. In the end, it was the newspaper industry that pushed the technology forward. Books were the beneficiaries of these advances.  
(Howard 114)

And so, too, did little magazines benefit from faster, more reliable printing. In turn, the literary movements which incubated in those magazines and later came to define a number of constituent strains within the gestalt known as 'modernism' show the signs of having been nourished by the availability of printing equipment, not the least of which is the self-aware theoretical engagement of modernism with issues of publication and reproduction.<sup>18</sup>



The historical moment in which printing is liberated into the reach of a vast swath of the public also acts as an outside force which alters the vector of literary theory. The notion of a "literary canon" had, until then, been couched in terms of literary merit, though those standards of merit frequently changed and even contradicted themselves. As Joyce Piell Wexler explores the modernist writer's tension between commercial viability and artistic integrity in *Who Paid for Modernism?*, she identifies in the Romantics ideas of aesthetic praxis that remain current today, particularly ideas that cause a constant, subliminal unsettlement in the literary critic: the critic accepts the premise that a work need not be a commercial best-seller to be categorized as aesthetically worthwhile – in fact, the assumption is that “good” art is frequently obscure and unpopular – even as the prior inclusion of a particular poem in an anthology signals to students the *prima facie* evidence of its worth. When a poem is reprinted, it enters a self-perpetuating state in which the likelihood of future reprinting increased markedly, both in subsequent editions of the same anthology as well as in other anthologies to come. Because of the nature of scholarly presses and the specific audience to which literary anthologies are directed (namely, academic professionals teaching courses, and the students enrolled in those courses, make up the vast majority of these sales), printing anthologies has become a highly automatized process, with detailed sales figures predicting to a high degree of accuracy the number of copies that will sell and the point at which profit will be maximized. Though the market for literary anthologies such as the Norton editions is comparatively small, it is highly focused, and these volumes command a respectable share of that market, performing at a profitability level that would be difficult to achieve in mass market publishing.

The reason for this can itself be traced to the historical necessities imposed on the production of literary work by the technology required to distribute it to the audience. Just as literacy only really became possible with the wide availability of books produced by movable type, the concept of a hierarchy of great works stems from a very practical decision point - that of the editor and publisher, conscious at all times of the costs involved in printing and distributing books. Because paper was a labor-intensive craft with relatively low output of high quality material until the 1800s, books were more rare and expensive per unit. Publication of a collection of work was constantly overshadowed by the specter of economic realities: anthologies were limited in scope and size by the materials it would take to publish them. As a justification, editors found themselves appealing to the aesthetic qualities of works included as compared to those cut from publication for the sake of keeping the publication costs low. Wexler's introduction exposes how dichotomous this relationship has actually been, despite the best efforts of editors to synthesize art and money at least nominally and then defer further examination. (We may observe the institution of the editorial headnote as evidence of this constant need for defense against accusations of partiality: early collections included no such apologia.)

The advent of European modernism eroded these limitations. From a theoretical vantage, first of all, the embrace of a declared avant-garde movement, replete with manifestoes and movement names, carried with it an impetus to reject any traditional model for the sake of rejection or experimentation, which included the assumptions of the print houses.

The rise of the “little magazine” attests to how the liberating effect of the printing press’s miniaturization and ubiquity allowed artists to enact what would otherwise have been a purely intellectual divorce from the apparatus of the publishing world. As Warren Chappell notes, however, the real bottleneck in terms of jump-starting print in Europe was not the press, but the paper to put on it (12). Papermaking houses in Europe were artisanal affairs trying desperately to catch up to the expertise of their predecessors in the Muslim world or in China; Spanish paper production, which began in the twelfth century, was already around 500 years behind the state of the art, imported through northern Africa (“The Spread of Papermaking in Europe”). As with so many other facets of civilization, the Industrial Revolution in Europe altered the paradigm of paper production to its core, in the form of the Fourdrinier machine. Rather than generating individual sheets by pressing pulp onto frames and then folding or cutting it into quarto, octavo, or other leaf sizes suitable for bookbinding, the Fourdrinier machine produces enormous continuous rolls of what we now term newsprint. Sheets may be cut out of these at any number of varying sizes, causing a shift in the range of book dimensions that became divorced from the even folding of sheets.

#### Contextualizing the Black Sun Press in Modernism: *Ulysses* as Benchmark

Harry Crosby’s publishing situation was unique but not extraordinary for interbellum Paris. Small publishers proliferated during the period, creating a peculiar market atmosphere which caused a great deal of shifting for both newly discovered talents and for known and accepted authors. We can take the case of James Joyce’s

*Ulysses* as representative of the context of publishing modern literature in the 1920s, in order to more fully understand the dynamics of just what the Black Sun Press was intended to circumvent or overcome, and how significant its efforts were. The difficulties Joyce faced in completing and releasing *Ulysses* form one of the most persistent legends in literary historiography, and would form a pattern that repeated itself in the labor of bringing *Finnegans Wake* to publication — a feat in which Harry Crosby took a direct hand, in stepping forward to publish the first fragment, *Tales Told of Shem and Shaun*, before any other editor dared accept it. While *Ulysses* predates the foundation of the Black Sun Press, knowing about its travails in seeing print allows the reader to better understand the context in which the Black Sun Press was founded; indeed, the Black Sun Press may be seen as a direct response to such a literary climate.

In *Institutions of Modernism*, Lawrence Rainey examines two major institutions, as he terms them, in the development of modernism: the coterie model of literary community, and the capitalist engine of publication. Rainey devotes the second chapter of *Institutions of Modernism* to a novel reexamination of the events surrounding *Ulysses*' publication, emphasizing the significance of the limited edition text (the sort in which the Black Sun Press would later specialize) as an innovation which brought serious literature to an increasingly competitive mercantile arena to jockey for readers' attention. He begins with the end of the tale: the triumphant appearance of the victorious novel:

Seventy-five years ago, at seven o'clock in the morning on 2 February 1922, Sylvia Beach waited at the Gare de Lyon in Paris to greet the morning express train from Dijon. As it slowed beside the platform, she later recalled, a conductor stepped down and handed her a small bundle

that contained two copies of the first edition of *Ulysses*. Beach, the proprietor of Shakespeare and Company, an English-language bookshop in Paris, had just become the publisher of what would become the most celebrated novel of the century. Elated, she hastened to the hotel where Joyce was residing and handed him his copy, a present for his fortieth birthday; then she hurried back to her store and ceremoniously placed the second copy in the window. (Rainey 42)

Rainey confesses that, as narrator, he exerts an inevitable interference in presenting the chronology and commentary of contemporary accounts surrounding *Ulysses*' publication, and focuses heavily on the perspective and actions of Sylvia Beach in framing the narrative – but, as he is quick to point out, all literary history does the same, interpreting facts in order to construct narrative. It stands to reason: the above tale is in fact already interpreted when he receives it, being

[...] Beach's account, [which] confirms our most common assumptions about the publication of *Ulysses*, and hence about literary modernism.

Joyce and Beach are cast as heroic figures who have succeeded despite a benighted legal system, philistine publishers, and a hostile or indifferent public" (42).

Readily apparent comparisons to Crosby's languishing status in literary scholarship should come to mind, though we must also be wary of accepting the narrative too uncritically. It is easy to overlay a moral righteousness in hindsight to the crusade to bring a work of art to a public not prepared for it. What ultimately triumphed was not the inherent worthiness of *Ulysses* as a work of art, but the clever tactic of issuing Joyce's

controversial novel through an alternate distribution method (that of the “private edition,” a short run exclusive to subscribers who pre-ordered the novel – an exceedingly rare and novel option at the time – which prefigures much of the business model for the Black Sun Press once it had gained its market footing). Had Joyce and Beach instead continued to attempt to hammer away at the major publishers to accept Joyce’s work, it is likely the effort would have been in vain, no matter how well-established *Ulysses*’s craft and skill as a work of literature appear to us as readers today.

There are some crucial differences to this analogous relationship: unlike the Black Sun Press, Shakespeare and Company was not dedicated to serving as a professional publishing outfit, but rather a bookshop that used its clout and resources to selectively issue books. Depending upon one’s definition of publishing company, also, one can argue that Beach simply patronized the publication of *Ulysses* through that printer in Dijon, whom Noel Riley Fitch names as “M. Maurice Darantière” (13). We know that Roger Lescaret was the printmaster for the Black Sun Press, operating from his small studio at 2 Rue Cardinale, but we know little of the printer in Dijon; Darantière’s main claim to historical remembrance seems solely to be the first edition of *Ulysses*. Descriptions of how ‘Shakespeare and Company published *Ulysses*’ would no doubt be far more accurately couched as Beach underwriting or funding the publication of the book and serving as its sole distributor. Conversely, although Harry Crosby was known to personally distribute copies of Black Sun Press volumes to friends, to acquaintances, and sometimes even to slip them surreptitiously onto tables at sidewalk booksellers in Paris, the Black Sun Press did not directly sell its output to audiences, instead dealing with known American importer Harry F. Marks in some cases, and mostly distributing the

Crosby Continental Editions via established European booksellers with whom the Crosbys already had a working relationship (Shakespeare and Company being one).

The other salient point of Rainey's analysis of the peak period of modernism is in the concept of patronage – applied to his reading of H.D., but relevant also to the case of Harry Crosby, who served as a noted patron. This rare inversion is interesting to the historiographer of modernism, as there were relatively few figures in the “Lost Generation” who had as extensive a hand in what we might term the manufacturing of literature (using the term in its most literal sense, as it translates from Latin as “hand-making”). As mentioned in numerous accounts, Crosby can be directly credited with launching Hart Crane's literary career<sup>19</sup>, and intervened significantly in the gnarled publication snafu surrounding *Finnegans Wake*. Other noteworthy modernists also benefited from Crosby's largesse: Kay Boyle's first publication, her collection *Short Stories*, was a Black Sun offering; combined with her translation of *Mr. Knife Miss Fork*, Boyle's respectable literary career is likewise indebted to Crosby's patronage.<sup>20</sup>

Both of these factors can be observed in the case of Harry Crosby's relationship with the modernist movement, the latter in context of the greater understanding of how Crosby's wealth facilitated literary modernist development that would have been far more difficult, possibly even untenable, without his intervention.

### Epistemologies of Value and Canonicity

As much as the institution of the university press presumes to free academe from the (perceived) lesser concerns of commercial publishing, the business of scholarly

publication operates under identical strictures – perhaps under even greater pressure, too, due to academia’s perennial gulf between funding sources and desired expenditures. The university press must sell books to remain solvent, and selling books requires appealing to a market of buyers. While strategic marketing toward niche consumers of books interested in rarefied topics is possible, it is not typically sustainable as a business model, which is the ultimate point of contention – even the most experimental or progressive university press is likely to exist under the aegis of a university run these days not by a president but a chief executive officer, concerned with the steerage of the academy as corporation rather than as institution of higher learning.

The tension generated by this situation will ultimately resolve itself to be one of divergent philosophies: the production of literature may not move entirely into the realm of the communal digital flow of information, but definitions of worthwhile writing will inevitably need to shift to accommodate new media. As the study of literature has already become commoditized to the point that the worth of both subject and discipline are flatly questioned by society at large, the notion of recuperating Harry Crosby’s work to serious study faces the challenge of reconciling the career of an individual gifted with inherited wealth but who forsook the pursuit of money for his artistic inclinations with an implicit suggestion that the “market of ideas” will somehow winnow the production of textbooks and anthologies to a roster achieved by consensus — especially the financial consensus of the list of volumes that sell the most copies, which leads to the unfortunate unspoken conclusion that the production and analysis of literature lack validity without a financial incentive. Critics may resist association with the concept of a “free market” in which value is determined by deterministic or intrinsic elements, the fact remains that the



practice of criticism as currently enacted steadfastly hews to assumptions rooted in that Victorian premise. Even while our notion of “the curriculum” has evolved into “curricula”, and the panoply of options available to piece together a narrative and taxonomy of literature for academic consumption, scholars are now placed in the position of questioning the assumptions that led to such large-scale literary rejections as the ones catalogued in Cary Nelson’s *Repression and Recovery*, and which include Harry Crosby among their casualties, while paradoxically trying to retain metrics of literary value for purposes of allocating finite class time and textbook print area to maximize efficiency.

A major reason criticism has failed to properly apprehend Harry Crosby has been that the poet himself cultivated an artistic sense of rejection on some level, rejecting categorization by shifting his poetic techniques radically from one volume to the next as he absorbed new influences. Crosby was influenced by his peers in Paris experimenting with form, particularly their sense of distancing and challenging the audience. Malcolm Cowley’s choice of Harry Crosby as avatar for the “Lost Generation” seems to fit at least an outward shape of both the person and the literary movement, however ultimately misguided. The moniker “Lost Generation” itself was applied by one of its foremost members, after all: Gertrude Stein, as attributed by Ernest Hemingway. In the shadow of the Great War, a movement of people dispossessed from their homelands (mostly the United States), yet never fully integrating into the wounded, fragmented cultures of Europe in the interbellum, gathered – primarily in Paris – to write. This expatriate community provided the world with literary works which would come to characterize the arc of the twentieth century; the phenomenal productivity of many members of the “Lost Generation” arose from the communication between varieties of genius active in the

community, provoked by the alternately shocked and exhilarated attitude characteristic of those who live to see the end of a war. A number of key figures played well-documented roles in the evolution of the movements now loosely configured as modernism, but a number of other important people also turned the wheels of literature without corresponding recognition by posterity. Harry Crosby interposed himself among the “Lost Generation” as a fellow poet, a patron of publishing, a critic and editor; his achievements, however, remain better known than their executor. But more importantly, Crosby, like so many of his cohort, often chose a path that was artistically difficult deliberately to confound the conventions of the audience and critics — a trait absorbed no doubt from contact with certain communities within the French avant-garde, and which problematizes any attempt to access the “Lost Generation” from the outside.

Harry Crosby cultivated his distaste for blind adherence to convention in all areas of his life, particularly his work as a poet and publisher. This is noteworthy, although not especially surprising: he escaped a stifling existence as a scion of a family of Boston socialites to reinvent himself. One should be careful to distinguish Crosby's attitude from that of the simple contrarian, though. Steeped in formalism and tradition, but drawn to the allure of the rebellious and iconoclastic, both the poet and his poetry strove toward a synthesis of the two poles, drawing from both while continually resisting each. While it is easy to dismiss Crosby as a renegade simply concerned with thumbing his nose at traditional mores, his discerning adoption of a personal inventory of traditional motifs and techniques demonstrates that such a simplistic dismissal would fall grossly afar of the mark. As a result, however, of this conscious positioning between recognizable modes of literary expression – poetry and prose mingled organically and heterogeneously, classical

forms alongside concrete poetry alongside free-roaming rants – Crosby has remained relegated to a footnote in the discussion of the “Lost Generation”.

Convention includes the accepted labels utilized by scholars to categorize works. Crosby's poetic methodology does not occupy a neatly partisan position in any one group identified by poetic technique or content. This, however, does not mean that Crosby's work defaults to a dull, moderate place in the middle of the metaphorical pendulum. On the contrary, scholars ought to find intriguing the strongly hybrid nature of the work published by Crosby during his brief career. For instance, Crosby absorbs his French contemporaries' interest in formal invention with gusto, but does not engage in the political commentary that critics treat as a marker of avant-gardism. Formal rules implemented in one stanza may be discarded in the next in order to convey a rising passion or disorder of emotional state. Poems may adhere to the meter and rhyme scheme of a conventional form, but not its strictly delineated subject matter.

In this compulsive rejection of restrictive poetic conformity, we find threads of kinship between Crosby, his temporal contemporaries of the Parisian expatriate community, and current experimental poetic practice, which will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 2. Charles Bernstein notes that the relationship between form and innovative poesis is hardly as simplistic as mere rejection:

Poetry is aversion of conformity in the pursuit of new forms, or can be. By form I mean ways of putting things together, or stripping them apart.... If form averts conformity, then it swings wide of this culture's insatiable desire for, yet hatred of, assimilation -- a manic-depressive cycle of go

along, go away that is a crucial catalyst in the stiflingly effective process of cultural self-regulation and self-censorship. (Bernstein 1-2)

It is the purest form of dissent, as far as critics and students are concerned, for the poet refusing to adhere to expectations of stylistic continuity, for it is an act of dissent not just against culture but against criticism and study. Ostensibly this need to order the literary history in a convenient system arises from the necessary practice of historicizing literary works; the Jamesonian mantra "always historicize" was formulated in part to help exorcise the influence of the New Criticism, but ironically it was John Crowe Ransom who expounded that "criticism must become more scientific, or precise and systematic" in the essay "Criticism, Inc." (587). At the knowing risk of dragging in a metaphor still current in literary scholarly circles almost to the point of cliché, there is a specter haunting criticism, but it is that of Ransom, not Karl Marx. As Majorie Perloff discusses in the introduction to her collection of essays *Poetic License*, the push against the urge to oversimplify the arc of literary history to discrete and clearly-defined movements often overcompensates toward the far opposite end of the spectrum, creating a new framework which appears to be the same as the replaced framework but with different authors and works, not actually being more inclusive – only differently inclusive (2-3). However, neglect is often more subtle in its origins and perpetuation, and thus we must examine the involved factors more closely.

## CHAPTER 2

### HARRY CROSBY AND THEORIES OF INFLUENCE AND NEGLECT

The most direct form of literary criticism, and the easiest to explain and to teach to students, focuses on one axis of a multidimensional field of information: the limited text, with perhaps its liminal context with regard to the writer's other works or a historical moment included as a means of elucidating points that are not readily interpretable without such information. That is because the text (in a superficial sense, leaving out more sophisticated conceptualizations of the idea of "text") is discrete; one can present it to a classroom as a self-contained artifact in a brief period of time, whereas educating students on historical conditions incumbent upon the production of the text is more laborious. In creating an understanding of the importance of an author, however, other parts of this field (to use the word in Pierre Bourdieu's sense) must be accounted for. For one, the elements of the author's craft often affect their work in significant ways, and as Jerome McGann has asserted, the material context of a given work upon production is more than simply the sum of the material or the context alone (see note 4 below). It is worth exploring not only the limitations of the conventional critical approach – a virtual sub-field of criticism now exists to engage such lines of inquiry – but also what resides along those other axes of influence and how they can both inform criticism and why they may have thus far been overlooked so often.

The academy, while it concerns itself with performing criticism, takes a dim view of being itself criticized, however, even as it begrudgingly accepts the periodic dressing-

down of its membership, only to then relapse immediately into its entrenched behavior before the promise to recant is even finished. No: a new intervention against the stagnation of criticism is not needed; the extant argument is still valid and has not been adequately addressed, and so must instead be reiterated until recuperation occurs. To wit: criticism has fallen prey to a common trap, like the linguistic binary oppositions identified as part of the conceptual framework of deconstruction by Jacques Derrida and his philosophical coterie, education likewise tends to adopt an either-or attitude, swinging to either side of the fulcrum rather than coming to rest in the middle. In this case, we see two movements in literary criticism. The first proceeds from the attempt by the New Criticism strain of formalism *a la* Cleanth Brooks and W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. to reduce poetry to a page-centered phenomenon of textual construction, toward the “slippery” language of the post-structuralists, of Barthes’s liberation of the locus of reading to any cultural incident or artifact<sup>21</sup>. The second contemporaneous shift has been from a vision to construct one general canon occupied largely by authors belonging to one or more privileged groups and their attendant texts oriented around middle- or upper-class males of western European-descended cultural context, to an energetic repopulation of the canon with representatives of marginalized perspectives – women, Asians, indigenous Americans, the poor, and so on. It is this drive that has created the notion of a multiplicity of coexistent canons, personal and selective ones, to use Harris’s schema.

The tactic adopted by this dissertation on both the subject of the canon itself and of the methodology used to identify texts for inclusion in the curriculum is an agnostic one: the arguments here are presented to make the broadest possible appeal to both viewpoints in the debates over these subjects, so that scholars invested in the idea of

objective literary value and those who critique that stance can both find a reason to reconsider Harry Crosby's place in modernism. It is unavoidable to use the language of literary worth, given the extent that such notions pervade literary criticism to this day. As such, it may seem problematic at one turn to speak of the necessity of rejecting the notion of examining Crosby's work in terms of whether or not it merits inclusion in the canon, and then at another turn to frame the analysis of his texts or his historical position as a case for such merit. Although the notion of the "free market of ideas" has its weaknesses, primarily the fact that the actors in that hypothetical marketplace inevitably start from unequal vantages of privilege rather than a mythical level playing field, it is nonetheless the central argument of this dissertation to appeal to the conceit that Harry Crosby has not been even been given due consideration for relegation to "minor poet" status, but instead that such a designation has been affixed to his work and his contributions to interbellum Parisian expatriate literary creation inaccurately and then repeated without reexamination.

So, too, must a proper inquiry address the inevitable question of defining the canon. As alluded to earlier in this dissertation, scholars of canon formation have identified the complexity of the canon as a major complication in the debate: models such as those adopted by Wendell Harris and Christopher Kuipers identify as many as ten separate coexistent sets that constitute the superset generally recognized as "the canon." As a result, addressing the situation of any work or author with regard to the canon requires one to acknowledge the different sub-canons to which the subject may belong, how one enters these sub-fields, which sub-canons hold priority for purposes of entering the dominant mainstream conception of the canon, and many other thorny details.

### Crosby as Social-Informational Nexus

The Black Sun Press was necessarily a product of its technological moment, and its capabilities shaped the output of the author who founded it. Access to certain technologies facilitates literary production, but does not guarantee it. To place Crosby into the proper context not only requires an understanding of the shifts in information technology as modernism took hold in Europe, as discussed in the previous chapter, but it also hinges on the ways in which the epistemology of information changed during the fin-de-siècle. Alex Wright advances a model of dialectical tension between hierarchical and networked systems of information; these two modes of understanding appear iterated throughout innumerable natural systems. The disintegrative quality of thought in the “superorganism” of European civilization arises directly from this tension — specifically, a legacy predilection for hierarchical information structures that eroded under increasing awareness and acceptance of the increasingly networked nature of the society itself.

The network in question here is not one of circuits but of artists. The major writers of the "Lost Generation" formed a tight-knit community in Paris, and Harry Crosby was a central figure among the literary and social circles which arose — but not one who could be considered a “leader” of the group, as one would expect from a traditionally hierarchical arrangement, in the sense that Ezra Pound is retroactively and artificially installed by scholars as the “leader” of Imagism despite the more complex relationship involving the movement, Pound, and Gertrude Stein.

Harry Crosby’s role as a central node in the networked system of Paris’ literary expatriates stands in contrast to the hierarchical nature of conventional publication



companies, which sort their input through a chain of scouts, proofreaders and copyeditors into an ever-rising set of managerial editorial offices, each layer of which becomes more and more concerned about the physical and financial dimensions of their publication output rather than its literary quality<sup>22</sup>. This arises in part because of how divorced these agents are from the intake of new literature, as well as because of the division of roles imposed by the hierarchy in which they stand; there is implicit trust that the lower-level editors have done their jobs ‘properly’ in separating the proverbial chaff from the wheat, as well. Further, it remains an open secret, considered gauche to acknowledge openly, that quality of work and volume of sales are not directly proportional quantities – the reality of taste and artistic merit remains far more nuanced than the persistent arbitrary divide between the popular and the literary.

Pierre Bourdieu dissects the complex tension between mass consumption and elite aesthetics, noting how sometimes a work may pass from one pole in the system to the other, a shift that is visible in the slow erosion of the barriers of university departments against the influx of popular culture studies. As an anthropologically-grounded exercise, it has become far more palatable to academics to engage in the reading of cultural texts derived from the mass market over the past generation or two of scholarship, and arguments against the artificially-enforced elitism of literary studies curricula are proliferating with regard to any number of previously excluded artists, works, and areas of study.

Bourdieu’s theory meshes well with John Guillory’s argument regarding the canon, in that both deal with capital as a quantity both intangible and material. Guillory specifies that his attention is on “cultural capital,” a commodity distributed by the literary

academic establishment to constituencies within literary taxonomy: this capital comes into being both at the moment of inclusion in the pedagogical canon and as a continuing consequence of remaining within that set. Further, Guillory links one's cultural capital with, on some level, a concurrent amount of real capital – the ability to produce texts, emergent from the ability to read texts.

Acknowledging the conditional force of literacy in the history of canon formation would thus disallow us from ever assuming that the field of writing is a kind of plenum, a textual repetition of social diversity, where everyone has access to the means of literary production and works ask only to be judged fairly. The fact that the field of writing is not such a plenum is a social fact but also an institutional fact. Linda Nochlin arrives at much the same conclusion in rejecting the premise of the question, “Why are there no great women artists?” The answer to this question lies not in the supposition that there must exist many unjustly forgotten great women artists but in reckoning the social consequences for women of “our institutions and our education.” An “institutional” fact such as literacy has everything to do with the relation of “exclusion” to social identity; but exclusion should be defined not as exclusion from representation but from access to the means of cultural production. (18)

This gives us pause, however, for it is indisputable that Crosby did, in fact, possess such access: indeed, it is perhaps one of his most defining characteristics to have been a child of Boston money and to have used his wealth on behalf of his literary peers as patronage and production. While Guillory's point is salient with regard to the recuperation of works

by many members of oppressed social minorities, it does not quite apply to Crosby, and so we must look for a different explanation.

That explanation seems to arise from a differentiation between Crosby-as-poet and Crosby-as-community-patron which we can lay, again, at the feet of the New Critics who attempted to divorce social and historical context from the reading of textual artifacts. To read Crosby's texts in isolation is to egregiously misunderstand where they lie in his arc of poetic development, or even to disregard the nature of that development or its brief and interrupted span. A view of Crosby limited only to his works in print is barely a view at all, and yet the most common excuse provided for Crosby's exclusion is the perceived lack of quality of his poetry – even those ostensibly on Crosby's side, such as biographer Geoffrey Wolff or critic Sy Kahn, seem to apologize for even mentioning Crosby's poetry – whereas a more complete approach to situating Crosby within modernism as a movement must include and accommodate the practical details of Crosby's role as social node, well documented both in his diaries and in the recollections and memoirs of many other contemporaries<sup>23</sup>. Crosby frequently hosted dinners, either at the elegant venues in the city or at his Ermenonville estate known simply as "the Mill", and introduced a number of artists to one another as often as he was introduced. Crosby's diaries and those of his compatriots form pieces of an intriguing puzzle of social networking, sometimes thrilling in the case of bold artistic advances, and other times amusingly quotidian. Crosby relates how James Joyce was scared of his pet whippet, which had to be confined to a linen closet whenever Joyce visited; another anecdote recalls a marital spat between the Crosbys resulting in a pub outing with E. E. Cummings and William Carlos Williams.

What these anecdotes suggest, peering behind them to the broader underlying pattern, is an idea we might distinguish as “social capital.” Bourdieu identifies a system of social capital that stands parallel to the more traditional monetary capital described in the lineage of theories descended from Karl Marx. It has been easier for scholars to examine the importance of Harry Crosby’s capital in the conventional monetary sense on his place in the “Lost Generation” with the benefit of hindsight and all of the relevant historical accounts arrayed before us; interestingly, by contrast, Crosby’s attempts to compete for social capital, which are often labeled as frustrated by comparison to the talents of his peers, actually suffered more frustration from his possession of such abundant monetary capital — a fact corroborated by Joyce Wexler’s argument that possessing money ran contrary to the common modernist ethos of artistic integrity (not only, as Wexler specifies, the acquisition of profit from one’s writing as a professional, but, it seems, the mere presence of it at all, even as one’s trust from a wealthy upbringing). It is evident from the testimony of contemporaries that Crosby possessed a powerful magnetism and extroverted charisma, which he often enhanced by being very generous towards others with his wealth. However, there seems to have been a clouding effect to the omnipresent fact of the Crosby fortune, in that many of Crosby’s peers took advantage of his ability to publish their work as a means of last resort, as if reluctant to make use of Crosby’s magnanimity to overcome their own barriers to publication, causing less attention to be paid to Crosby’s aesthetic influence as both a writer and editor. Crosby seems to have actually contributed to this dichotomy through his largesse, offering his manifest assistance to putting his colleagues’ work in print seemingly at the drop of a hat rather than appearing to have a more discriminating eye for talent.

Importantly, though, his offers of assistance yielded long-term benefits for scholarship: *Finnegans Wake* and *The Bridge* might not have survived to see publication against either the skittishness or the stony indifference of the major publishing companies, respectively.

The components of Bourdieu's system of cultural production, habitus and field, provide a framework in which to discuss the peculiar vector of Harry Crosby's career. Because field is a social context definable not as the broader social structures in which classes function, but a specific sphere of interaction in which values from the greater social values are examined, played out, and modified, we may observe that Crosby's field is the juxtaposition of his Bostonian upbringing, the trauma of World War I, and the libertine optimism of interbellum Paris. Already, there is tension: the inevitable questioning and progressive attitude of a rising generation of youth spurred to even more rapid mutation by communication technology that dispersed ideas but had not yet homogenized them, as well as the heightened sense of mortality evinced by surviving the war. The arc of Crosby's early poetic work, dabbling in and then discarding the Romantics' preoccupation with mortality and transience, in favor of a vibrant and manic taste for life commingled with ecstatic seeking after self-realization in transcendent death, is more fully examined in Chapter 3, but may be seen as Crosby's exploration of his Puritan aesthetic heritage and subsequent denial thereof; Crosby's development actually follows a line chronologically from the Romantics he used as his template for beginning the craft of poetry, through the antinomian Decadent period, and nearly achieving speed alongside his avant-garde contemporaries before his death.

### The Black Sun Press as Material Poetic Performance

Certainly, the lavish production of the Black Sun volumes suggests a poised theatricality as well as decadence in the generic sense: the artisanal linen paper, foil-clad slipcases, and Morocco leather bindings all connote an Epicurean indulgence in the artifact of the book, serving as a sort of unspoken manifest genealogy of taste, pointing to the influence that the Decadents and Romantics – whose names appear as invocations in Crosby's verse: Rimbaud, Baudelaire, among others – had on Crosby's persona. While aspects of Crosby's composition suggest that he was looking forward, in the sense of advancing art beyond static boundaries as per the mission of the avant-garde, the Black Sun Press demonstrates an aesthetic style which might be described, at the risk of an inadvertent pun, as 'fusion': the willingness to adopt unusual typographical techniques for the verse itself, yet contained in volumes which venerate the rich history of the art of bookbinding. This hybridization extends to the formats of the volumes as well as their material construction: the Black Sun Press issued *Mad Queen* in a quarto edition hardbound with gold foil-covered boards and secured with a red ribbon, breaking from an increasingly accepted octavo standard in fashion at the time. At the other end of the spectrum, an edition of Crosby's poem "Sun" was published in a miniature edition barely two inches at its widest dimension, yet bound in fine green leather, stamped in gold print, and pressed on vellum sheets no larger than an index card before being converted into signatures. Such attention to detail, down to the selection of the various marbled or moiré endpapers, clearly fell solely to Harry Crosby's attention: starting immediately after his death, with the publication of the four-volume collection of his poetry, the Black Sun

Press editions are markedly less elaborate in their material components - the slipcase is a workman-like red cloth affair, with the individual books bound in paper and glassine dust covers.

Harry Crosby's poiesis was expressed in physical forms that exemplify his *habitus* – the personally socialized traits that arise from one's field – in their pushing of boundaries, which made him enigmatic and therefore more intriguing to members of his social network. His poetry was about the body, particularly the desires of the body, and the act of maintaining his field was a very physical act: he made circuits of various Parisian locales daily, frequented as well as hosted parties, and just generally physically *present* in ways that many of his contemporaries recount as striking or memorable. But the body also figures into Crosby's poiesis in the act of sacrificing the body; Crosby's persona feels the command of the sun burning in his flesh, consuming him, and he speaks of metaphorical or literal immolation in the service of a higher ideal, embodied in the Sun that occupied the center of his mythology, and his fantasies of suicide were often referred to as shooting like an arrow into the sun (the image that even became incorporated into his signature).

Further, the symbols and sun tattoos with which Crosby engraved the surfaces of his life, and even his own flesh, plus the dialectical rejection of the purely intellectual in favor of the visceral and the manifest followed by a synthesis of the two, represent an attempt to impose control over habituated social structures: Crosby chose to make material signs of his aesthetic philosophy out of his body, physically bearing his ethos into his interpersonal dealings via his own body, just as he chose to produce material literary artifacts of gold foil and morocco leather and linen paper that conveyed his

preferences. The word “fusion” is an apt descriptor of this approach, both for its sly reference to the burning of the sun and for its implication of the liminal which becomes a new category by dissolving and reconstituting the states between which it is initially located. Harry Crosby’s habitus takes the contradictions of his field and reconciles them – if one thinks of the act as recycling his culture into a new form, it is an eminently avant-garde tactic, though not apparently recognized as such because Crosby accepted and internalized elements of the field from which he emerged, rather than becoming entirely alienated from his own context, as characteristic of the most memorable examples of the avant-garde, dada foremost among them.

Crosby’s work was just distancing enough, however, to apparently not have amassed the cultural capital necessary to extend his own literary legacy forward. For one, the most noteworthy outpouring of appreciation for Harry Crosby came about directly following his death – a problematic situation, to put it lightly, as it is impossible to extricate exactly how much of the sentiment is due to mourning grief and how much is critically viable observation. Alternately, it is possible that his social capital been denied by established critical perspectives for another reason: despite the warnings of Jacques Derrida to be cognizant of the trap of the binary, and Paolo Friere’s admonishment toward the oppressed to shun the adoption of the model of the oppressor, literary theory is still attempting to come to grips with intersectionality theory, brought over to literary studies by bell hooks and Audre Lorde from the work of sociologists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, particularly its usefulness beyond feminist criticism. A more intersectional view is necessary, which includes greater nuance and contextual understanding, rather than strict adherence to categorical taxonomic distinctions.



One could argue that Harry Crosby, renowned for his social acumen, grasped the nature of networks intuitively, possessing an innate tendency for such thinking himself, and that his central position as a node of the social network we now refer to as the “Lost Generation” arose from that peculiar talent combined with his charm and assertive nature. The evidence of his poetry further bolsters this conclusion: the early poetry is imitative of traditional (hierarchical) poetic forms, and while they are adequate specimens, it was in rejecting these forms to create his later experimental work that we find the energetic inventiveness and multiloquism that provoked the attention of his contemporaries and bears interest for scholarship today, some of which will be examined further in Chapters 3 and 4.

The Black Sun Press clearly operated as a linchpin of the literary community in Paris, and produced a surprising number of major texts in the face of the vicissitudes of publishing of the day. In the shadow of obscenity allegations over *Ulysses*, which resulted in the book’s banning in the United States until 1933, James Joyce suffered a lengthy period of reluctance from publishers. Apart from short passages appearing in *transition* and Ford Madox Ford’s *Transatlantic Review* under the title “Fragments from *Work In Progress*,” the work eventually known as *Finnegans Wake* was both suspect due to *Ulysses*’ reputation and its own alienating, experimental prose. Crosby, undaunted (and perhaps even excited) by the notoriety of Joyce’s work, put the Black Sun Press at Joyce’s disposal in order to release chapters of *Work in Progress* as actual books, and “Tales Told by Shem and Shaun,” appeared in print for the first time as its own textual artifact (rather than serialized in journal form) under its imprint.

Similarly, the Black Sun publication of Hart Crane's *The Bridge* serves as a crucial example of Crosby's integral role in advancing his peers' literary careers to the benefit of later scholars who may not recognize the significance of his contribution. Whereas James Joyce was an established literary figure when his work came to the Black Sun Press, Crane was still emerging as a poet. Crane's first collection, *White Buildings*, followed publication in a number of journals considered influential but with small circulation. Crane was held in regard by his peers but garnered very little attention beyond that of other artists; Eugene O'Neill, in particular, considered Crane "the most important writer of all in the group of younger men with whom I am generally classed," and was initially tapped to write the foreword to *White Buildings*, though according to Paul Mariani's biography *The Broken Tower: The Life of Hart Crane*, O'Neill spent months anguishing over how to articulate his appreciation due to Crane's difficulty: "He liked the poems, he said, though why he couldn't exactly say. Damn it, he was a dramatist, not a literary critic, and Liveright was putting him on the spot asking him to do what he couldn't do" (145; 227). One finds extensive similarities between Crane and Crosby – both men were enamored of temporal pleasure, and both labored to produce poetry that intrigued but also confounded their contemporaries. Crane, however, was dependent upon the material resources of others to produce his work, while Crosby possessed the means to produce his own – and others, such as Crane's – work without impediment. Crosby is inextricably tied to his bourgeois status: we may be able to indeed pinpoint critical suspicion of Crosby to the subconscious effect of his wealth both on Marxist critics predisposed against the flagrantly bourgeois Crosby on the one hand, and the other hand to critics attached to the myth of the "starving artist," a romanticized ideal

of purity that comes from struggle to produce. Because Crosby was able to produce artistic output with relative ease, it is unwittingly treated as less “pure” in poetic terms than that of his more beleaguered peers: writers such as Charles Giuliano or Neil Pearson, and even his biographers – particularly Wolff and Cowley – apologetically refer to Crosby as “minor” or “dilettante”, as if attempting to dismiss or diminish their own interest in him.

Looking at Crosby’s career, we see two flags that we may adopt to discuss the Black Sun Press, and indeed Harry Crosby: bridges and transitions, the former from Hart Crane’s influential breakthrough publication, championed by Crosby, and the second from the little magazine of which Crosby was co-editor until his death, which provided fertile ground for the development and distribution of the disparate avant-gardist movements of the moment. Part of the dilemma in establishing their importance thereof in the social system we have taken to calling the “Lost Generation” is that Crosby and his publishing operation occupy a transitional space bridging other figures. Poet and reviewer Allen Mozek, in his review of Jerome Rothenberg’s anthology *Revolution of the Word*, comments upon some of Rothenberg’s more noteworthy inclusions in the anthology, and addresses this point succinctly:

Harry Crosby? Here is another expatriate, like Stein and others such as Eugene Jolas and Marsden Hartley. Crosby ran Black Sun Press with his wife while they were living in France. The last book published by Black Sun, it should be noted, was Charles’ Olson’s ‘Y & X’ (more on Olson later!). He provides a link between the experimental traditions of Europe and the States. (“Revolution of the Word”)

Because literary criticism has become concerned primarily with categorical vessels that can be labeled according to their positive characteristics, those individuals, works, and phenomena that occupy a liminal position in the negative space between those fields becomes marginalized. To make a concrete analogy, when asked whether the Brooklyn Bridge is in Manhattan, or in Brooklyn, one's answer is neither, of course. It serves as a necessary interstitial to unify those two boroughs, however, contributing to the greater whole of New York City. So, too, does Harry Crosby, through his own work as well as his oversight of the Black Sun Press's early important output, not only serve as a node of the "Lost Generation" social network, but as a connection enabling that literary community in its intellectual as well as material production.

#### Repetition, Habit, and Habitus: Crosby's Liminal Poetic Stutter as Stylistic Flourish

Examples from Crosby's published poetry further elucidate the breadth of his sometimes coexistent influences, a fact which only heightens the importance of opening Crosby's corpus for further study. Modernist scholars acknowledge that the tension of modernism arises in large part due to the conflicting impulses to mine the past for material and yet be free of the influence of the past. As Lisi Schoenbach synthesizes the consensus of modernist scholarship in establishing her argument in *Pragmatic Modernism*, "Modernism begins when habit fails; breaking free of habit and beginning anew is its signal gesture" (19). Yet this ignores one of the primary tactics of the modernist writer: intertextual and referential discourse that seeks not to simply stage the past anew, but to disassemble it, reconstruct it, and in so doing, establish a new

relationship with regard to the past that exists on one's own terms instead of being dictated deterministically by the ancestors. It is not coincidental that Schoenbach uses the term "habit," as it shares its root with Bourdieu's "habitus" and indeed with "rehabilitate," which ultimately is the goal of such bricolage — the rehabilitation of the past into an acceptable form. Crosby's early poetry rehabilitates French Romantic poetry. The goal of this tactic is to provide a new critical (if not social) environment for expression of the discourse in question, transplanted to Crosby's moment from that of Baudelaire or Rimbaud – and in so doing engages in the apprentice work common to any burgeoning modernist writer.

After completing the apprenticeship, however, the journeyman must explore and master different techniques. Schoenbach points out that the ablation of the notion of habit left a necessary void which could only be filled in one way:

Yet not only did the pragmatists take the questions of modern life into account in their development of a theory of habit, but their version of habit lay at the very heart of their own complex negotiations of modernity. [...] Pragmatism demonstrated an understanding of and a respect for the weight and power of history, yet it refused to associate habit exclusively with the past. As Dewey and James saw clearly, the idea that we could ever leave habit entirely behind depends on an oversimplified and severely constrained idea of what habit really is. Habit, by definition, endures: in the continuities of our personhood, and in the basic mechanics of survival, such as breathing, chewing, and walking. [...] But continuity with the past is never conflated with its mindless worship. James sees little

contradiction between the necessity of habit and the call to adjust to the rapid changes of modernity. On the contrary, he sees in habit the key to the “plasticity” of the living being. (*Pragmatic Modernism* 20-1)

In other words, the denial or rejection of past-as-habit only makes a void which must be filled by a fresh habit of one’s construction. No longer content to sift through the remains of the past, Crosby turns his eye to his peers and assimilates what they are doing: as noted previously, his attentions and interests roamed freely, appropriating what seemed to the casual observer to be a hodge-podge variety of whimsically-chosen tenets, from Pound’s schools of Vorticism and Imagism, from surrealists and avant-gardists, and from photography and aviation and his many personal pursuits. Crosby was in the process of constructing a poesis, a singular voice, by adhering to the well-worn aphorism of the student of writing to write from personal experience.

The suggestion that Crosby’s poetry is performative is not an inductive conclusion but a deductive one: evidence gathered from the various realms of Crosby’s life, personal and private, leads the reader to posit that Harry Crosby himself, on some central level, was a performance, a role. Crosby did not merely worship the sun: taking the cue of religious edifice, he festooned every possible surface with its image, including his own back and the Belgian pistol with which he would end his life. He did not just reject his early poetry upon outgrowing it, but blasted a stack of his own books with a shotgun before turning them into a bonfire. Also, we must not be fooled by connotations of the word ‘performance’ to take Crosby’s solar obsession to be an insincere act staged for an audience: Harry Crosby’s peers frequently attest to the genuine and consuming

nature of this sun-worship. Eugene Jolas' memorial to Crosby in the 1930 edition of *transition* makes the following testimony:

He was a mystic of the sun-mythos. This was not a literary caprice on his part, his very being was involved in it, he felt the planetary concussions, the fire-god was primordial in his soul. This chthonian faith colored his creative writings. His spirit was still fermenting at the time of his death. He was still groping, and we who watched his evolution noted with satisfaction that he was rapidly gaining more discipline and mastery over his instrument. Fate cruelly wrenched the lyre from his hand at a moment, when the creative spirit was burning brightest in him. ("Harry Crosby and *transition*" 229)

John Wheelwright's poem in tribute of Crosby, "Wise Men on the Death of a Fool," available at the *Anthology of Modern American Poets* site, strikes the same sort of classical note as those later lines from Jolas' eulogy:

He fired his borrowed feathers. A night bird,  
 He blazed in plumes of smoke before the crowd.  
 A traveller once wrote home from Africa:  
 "I saw the fowl. But the time was out of season.  
 It was only a chick. And when young, the Phoenix  
 Is no more astounding than a barn-yard cock." (lines 18-23)

Whereas the modern impulse would be to debunk the spectacle of the Phoenix, to cynically declare it a mere peacock and thus strip it of its preternatural qualities, Wheelwright accepts Crosby's talent unreservedly. It seems that in the eyes of his

contemporaries, one of the most praiseworthy aspects of Crosby's career was that his diligent attention to craft did not diminish his genuine core of passionate enthusiasm: the poetic persona of the hedonistic neo-Romantic was a pose without being a deception. Kay Boyle would say much the same in her tribute piece in *transition*: "There was no one who ever lived more consistently in the thing that was happening" ("In Memoriam Harry Crosby" 222).

### Crosby's Poetic Persona, Construction and Performance

If the quality of the books implied great care, though, this was calculated as counter-point to the studied appearance of carelessness in their contents, at least where Harry Crosby's work is concerned. Hemingway recognized Crosby's "gift," as Archibald MacLeish recalled: "He has a wonderful gift of carelessness. He can be careless, just spill this stuff out" (qtd. in Wolff 182). Harry didn't just spill it out, though; those close to him knew that, as authentic as the passion conveyed by Crosby's poems was, it was a synthesis of reckless energy with a careful compositional process. Kay Boyle wrote in a 1930 letter to Charles Henri Ford, reflecting shortly after Crosby's death and comparing the ethos of Hemingway's work with the portrait of Crosby as a person communicated by *Shadows of the Sun*,

This does not mean that the diary that Harry Crosby left will ever be the popular thing, although it has preserved qualities that romance would go black without, and has justified Hemingway's blasted age. Harry Crosby's diary lacks the whimper, the wail, the false bravado of shrugging manly



shoulders and giving up. Because Harry Crosby took each day as a new challenge, his work is a testament where Hemingway's is a blasphemy.

("A Paris Letter to Charles Henri Ford")

Caresse Crosby recalls in her introduction to George R. Minkoff's *Bibliography of the Black Sun Press* that Harry worked tirelessly at his poetry, treating it with the serious discipline owed to a professional's craft – "9 to 1 closed in the library, 1 to 2 lunch, 2 to 5 more work" (ii). Even as Crosby bent to his writing as if it were shift work, however, he took pains to convey the sense to those around him that his work was the result of fits of inspiration, delivered via the ecstasy of his devotion to the sun. The stammering delivery of many of his poems, particularly in *Transit of Venus*, sometimes seems heavy-handed, but they are true to the experience of a speaker overcome with the blinding passion of the love-stricken. The way in which the poems adhere, one after another, to maintaining that poetic sense even when a more prudent poet would have deemed the technique to be played out also recalls for the astute reader that maxim of the 'Revolution of the Word' manifesto that "The writer expresses; he does not communicate" ("Proclamation"). Again, returning to the notion that Crosby's work benefits from being read all together, each volume contains works that not only convey the chosen persona crafted for that phase of Crosby's career as individual pieces, but also fit into the larger expressive performance of that persona as a sustained character.

The two earliest collections, *Sonnets for Caresse* and *Red Skeletons*, position Crosby's persona squarely in the mode of the *poète maudit*, learning through practice the lessons of the poets he idolized. The self-confidence gained through this apprenticeship lends Crosby's persona a more assertive Apollonian figure, bolder and more mature, in

*Chariots of the Sun*. Whether or not this mask is authentic to Crosby's own personal experience, he chooses to discard it at least in part in *Transit of Venus*, whose passionate lover-poet by comparison speaks both in the bursts of language that occupy each page, given distinct titles, and in the compulsion to push forward with the composition of a string of such utterances even when the point has been made, the way an authentic lover might obsessively continue to declare their ardor time after time. This persona bifurcates: the romantic lover continues into the underworld of dreams for the prose-poetic dream journal *Sleeping Together*, while the poet's passion ignites into a tumultuous fury that drives the tirades of *Mad Queen*.

#### Literary Taxonomy as Source of Reputation and Neglect

As sociologists Helmut K. Anheier and Jürgen Gerhards boldly assert, "The field of literature has no formal entry requirements. Consequently, patronage and peer relations become important mechanisms for recruitment of new writers, for gaining access to a literary field, and for attaining status there" ("Acknowledgement of Literary Influence" 139). The model they propose in their two major articles on the sociology of literary networks intrigues the scholar – particularly in the promise of a quantitative formal system for mapping cross-generational literary relationships – but the implications underlying portions of their methodology are deeply problematic, having their source in the scholarship of the dominant and normalized hegemonic field of criticism rather than its periphery, based more on Harold Bloom than Jerome Rothenberg; particularly of note, although Anheier and Gerhards adopt the veiled dismissiveness characteristic of

quantitative researchers towards the study of subjective literary value, the authors nonetheless adhere unquestioningly to acceptance that there is a prevailing notion of literary value, albeit one that lacks “universal criteria” for determination (139). One salient point implied by Anheier and Gerhards is that a writer must be actively receiving the accolades of one’s literary peer network to remain ‘solvent’ in one’s literary credentials. Influence may be “preservable” by understanding as much as possible about the exact contemporaneous circumstances of the subject, then, but at the risk of creating a distancing effect from the observer, removed in time and space from those crucial cultural environs.

Many of Harry Crosby’s close poetic contemporaries recognized him as significant, and interestingly, while Crosby has faded, those lauding him have fared quite well in academic consideration: there exists a variety of figures around whom the various schema of literary modernism have been constructed, whether those individuals and their works are beloved, reviled, or debated. Whatever scholars may think of, for example, Ezra Pound’s poems, to say nothing of the man himself, his significance to what we understand as modernism is beyond question, and so he remains a part of the historical narrative as a result of his integral role among American expatriates in the interbellum literary scene, mentoring and patronizing his peers. The likelihood of finding a shelf of criticism on T. S. Eliot (to give but one example) in any university library worth the title is a relative certainty, and the presence of several other volumes featuring Eliot’s name in conjunction with others, or devoting a full chapter or more to his work as part of a broader sweep, remains a safe bet. Eliot’s work, and the study devoted to it, warrants its own Library of Congress designation<sup>24</sup>. Yet Harry Crosby, of whom Eliot was speaking

when he wrote his oft-quoted statement “Of course one can ‘go too far’ and except in directions in which we can go too far there is no interest in going at all; and only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out just how far one can go,” remains at the periphery of our discussion of poetry of the 1920s (*Transit of Venus* ix).

This liminal position intrigues, and by definition remains a neglected space in literary studies, one which promises to be fruitful to those who explore it<sup>25</sup>. As often as Crosby’s personal foibles are touted as representative of the “Lost Generation” by such interlocutors as Geoffrey Wolff or Malcolm Cowley, Crosby’s work occupies an interstitial experimental space that does not conform neatly to the genus and species of modernist poetic classification: he is too formalist, not bizarre enough, to be treated alongside the avant-garde from whom he borrowed, yet his poetry’s energy is barely restrained, not formal enough for all his grounding in Baudelaire to be included among the “high modernists”. Anheier and Gerhards identify this as a problem with regard to reception by literary critics:

Writers no longer agree on literary form, technique, substance, and style, nor on criteria by which to differentiate good from mediocre and mediocre from bad literature. Critics and other legitimized experts act as judges of the quality of art. Often they seek to discover the influence that can be detected in a writer's work, and tend to compare writers to one another (Becker, 1974, 1982; Van Rees, 1985). In particular, the literary critic fabricates "creative interpretation for the benefit of the creator" (Bourdieu, 1985:18), and usually makes cross-references between the creator and

other writers as competitors or influencers, and thus provides data for the audience of peers as to the writer's alter egos.

In other words, if a work is not readily identifiable as part of a lineage by its referentiality, it becomes an enigma, an anomaly, in the much-desired continuity of extant criticism, and such lacunae are easier to elide or allow to lapse into obscurity than to address. Anheier and Gerhards inadvertently identify the major problem of criticism – the prioritization of the established literary taxonomy over the work which challenges it – primarily because of their outside perspective upon it.

Systems of classification occupy privileged positions in discourse: when a subject is discovered that seems to break an accepted rule, the normal response is to “shoehorn” the subject into the existing framework rather than reexamine and perhaps reclassify everything under the system’s aegis. While an understandable motive on several levels – the importance of the existence of a stable base of knowledge to education and scholarship, not to mention saving the effort of recreating an all-encompassing mode of understanding – the conservative impulse to maintain the status quo at the expense of outliers becomes less defensible as the base of knowledge increases. The empiricism of New Criticism, focused on discrete textual characteristics, bears more than a passing similarity to the focus of biologists on the observable physical characteristics of species in filling in the Linnaean system of classification – suitable for the time period and the available methods and technologies of examination, but insufficient as our techniques and devices become more sophisticated. Notably, biologists are currently struggling with a potentially immense paradigm shift in the taxonomy of species: the emergence of genome mapping and DNA comparison means that the existing 300-year-old hierarchy of

categorizing species based on empirical physical traits is beginning to break down in the face of revelations about the interconnectedness of species on a genetic level (Conniff 52). Similarly, the reclamation of lost authors/works and the diligence of literary historiographers in piecing together an increasingly rich picture of the past serves to complicate the staid models of movements and periods that continues to cling precariously to the academic curriculum.

Inherent in acts of classification are acts of valuation as well. Literary scholarship has deemed adherence to category as a measure of worth: a poem can be held up and warrants inclusion in anthologies and readers if it exemplifies a particular movement or style, but scholars are often at a loss – in biology and literature alike – when confronted with hybrids, mutants, or other misfits. The ability of a work to conform to an existing notion regarding its form or historical context has become conflated with its literary merit. As David Perkins attests:

We might agree, with Croce, that we can classify texts any way we like, since the label will not change our actual experience in reading. In this last point I am sure that he is wrong, for a classification brings with it a context of other works. If we change the context, we activate a different system of expectations, of hermeneutic fore meanings. When we group texts together, we emphasize the qualities they have in common and ignore, to some degree, those that differentiate them. (62)

To locate an *entré-point* in what we call the dominant mainstream literary canon, therefore, a writer must have – and perhaps craft for themselves or embrace knowingly – a suitable label which corresponds to the extant taxonomy. This has proven to be the

predominant reason for Harry Crosby's neglect in contemporary study of modernism: his rejection of categorization in the face of a paradigm in which inability to be categorized results in oblivion. By comparison, we can see in the example of Mina Loy's recovery how difficult it can be to overcome the inertia of critical narrative: the impetus simply did not exist to even reprint her works and make them accessible until multiple waves of feminist revision of critical attitudes had succeeded in establishing the value of embarking on the editorial and publishing project that *The Lost Lunar Baedeker* represented.

Wendell Harris' ten-canon model can be useful as a reference point, insofar as the term canon is insufficiently precise and conflates several different bodies of literary consideration. In brief, as mentioned in the introduction, these ten canons, which coexist in parallel simultaneity, begin with the six canons delineated by Alastair Fowler: the potential canon<sub>1</sub>, which is all writing that may be considered literature; the accessible canon<sub>2</sub>, which is the subset of the potential which is actually available to scholars; selective canon<sub>3</sub>s, "lists of authors and texts – as in anthologies, syllabi, and reviewers' choices"; the official canon<sub>4</sub>, which emerges from intersections of the prior canons; personal canon<sub>5</sub>s, created through the valuation of individual readers; and the critical canon<sub>6</sub>, which emphasizes those works or portions of works which have received critical treatment (Harris 112). Harris then adds four other distinct canons: the original sense of the word canon (dubbed canon<sub>7</sub>) as "a closed, uniquely authoritative body of texts"; the pedagogical canon<sub>8</sub>, which comprises those portions of the critical and official canons that actually see engagement in high school and undergraduate literature courses; and the

diachronic canon<sub>9</sub> and nonce canon<sub>10</sub>, which must be considered together as a bipolar dynamic of persistent and peripheral texts, respectively.

While there is no one codified list to which one can refer as “the canon,” its general shape and contents are relatively familiar. For example, if asked whether the works of William Shakespeare are part of the central canon, most people would say that they are, although they might disagree to their role or importance within that canon, or whether those works should or should not remain there – this taps into several of Harris’s canonical distinctions, from the diachronic (Shakespeare is and has long been generally accepted as “great literature”) to the personal, depending upon the enthusiasm of the interviewee. The canon, ultimately, is rather a principle than a syllabus: a set of works subjected to a value judgment, or perhaps even several disparate value judgments, made at different points in history for contingent reasons, and then collated into a retroactively coherent narrative of value. This disparity in criteria is not obscure, but has not been subjected to critical examination: as an example, a survey of the editing of Shakespeare’s plays reveals the fluidity of editorial standards: the First through Fourth Folios are generally believed to have been edited for the sake of dramaturgy by actors and directors who were actively performing the plays, while the trend in the eighteenth century was on its surface concerned with refining the texts to a definitive version through study of sources and provenance, though riddled with undercurrents of imposing aesthetic choices regarding meter and diction upon the texts by editors (the most notable such editor being Alexander Pope in 1725). The nineteenth century shift toward issuing variorum editions of Shakespeare coincided with a move toward issuing editions under the quasi-anonymity of a university’s imprint rather than the univocal authority of an individual; while



obviously editions such as “the Cambridge” or “the Oxford” are still the product of a central editorial figure, the effect is diffused somewhat over a board of subordinate editors who make the actual textual decisions under the lead editor’s unifying philosophy<sup>26</sup>.

Criticism as a discipline revisits these subjects periodically throughout history, usually in the midst of greater social reconfigurations of perspective: our most current position arose from the confluence of social pressures related to identity politics — a continuum beginning with the abolition of slavery in Europe and then the United States, through the Women’s Suffrage Movement, and reaching its pinnacle as a counter-cultural moment with the Civil Rights Movement in America, subsequently permeating into the greater public consciousness at large. Significant fervor has been invested in defending the bulwarks on either side of this debate. Those who cleave to the dominant mainstream canon rebut proposals of change as misguided at best, harmful at worst. In his popular book *The Closing of the American Mind*, classicist Allan Bloom decried what he saw as the dilution of a hegemonic cultural viewpoint by the inclusion of literature by minorities (an ironic stance to take, given that he was a self-proclaimed homosexual atheist, and thus familiar with the marginalization of subaltern groups in American culture). Allan Bloom takes as an axiom the virtue of the majority viewpoint, politically as well as culturally, and asserts the opposition of the founders of the United States to the existence of minority groups:

For the Founders, minorities are in general bad things, mostly identical to factions, selfish groups who have no concern as such for the common good. Unlike older political thinkers, they entertained no hopes of

suppressing factions and educating a united or homogeneous citizenry.

Instead they constructed an elaborate machinery to contain factions in such a way that they would cancel one another and allow for the pursuit of the common good. (*Closing of the American Mind* 31)

As staggering as some of the presumptions in this claim are, they have a remarkable traction with proponents of the central canon. Tony Judt agrees with Allan Bloom's central premise that university education's inclusiveness ironically has led to a closing of students' perspectives:

Multiculturalism 'created lots and lots of microconstituencies, which universities didn't have the courage to oppose [...]. It's much more like a supermarket – kids can take pretty much any courses they like: Jewish kids take Jewish studies, gay students [take] gay studies, black students [take] African-American studies. You no longer have a university, but a series of identity constituencies all studying themselves. ("Revisiting" 17)

The most prominent scholar to champion the preservation of the traditional canon, Harold Bloom famously coined the term "School(s) of Resentment" to describe those who wanted to insert what he asserted as inferior works into the canon for perceived political reasons (*The Western Canon: The Great Books and School of the Ages*). Even Wendell Harris denatures the argument for inclusivity by commenting, "to attribute all selection processes to the influence of power is radically simplistic, unless *power* and *influence* are defined so broadly that they include all social motivation" ("Canonicity" 118).

The counter-argument to this curricular conservatism may not be dominant within the academy, but its stock has risen throughout the end of the twentieth century. Leaving

aside the persuasive Foucauldian argument that social motivations are, in fact, all matters of relative power imbalance, John Guillory rebuts the hyperbole of claims made by Judt and Allan Bloom by pointing out:

The “open” canon can lay claim to representational validity in the experience not of “women” or “blacks” but of women or blacks in the university – which is not itself a *representative* place. The university is nevertheless a locus of real power (for the distribution of cultural capital), and therefore a good place for a political praxis to define its object. (37)

This critique mirrors Marjorie Perloff’s warning, discussed previously, regarding overzealousness in the drive toward canonical inclusiveness. Guillory hints at this in establishing his own argument:

By insisting on the interrelation between representation and distribution [of cultural capital], I hope to move beyond a certain confusion which both founds and vitiates the liberal pluralist critique of the canon, a confusion between representation in the political sense – the relation of a representative to a constituency – and representation in the rather different sense of the relation between an image and what the image represents.

(vii-viii)

Guillory, however, creates a safe distance between himself and potential critics through substitution of terms: “Where the debate speaks of the literary canon, its inclusions and exclusions, I will speak of the school, and the institutional forms of syllabus and curriculum” (vii). In other words, Guillory addresses the pedagogical canon specifically.

The strategic discourse among revisionists, to use a generic umbrella term more concise, but less descriptive than Guillory's "liberal pluralist," takes as its dominant move the renovation of the curriculum to include marginalized perspectives. The flaws in strict adherence to extant standards of canonicity have already been advanced: the idea of a single cultural perspective has been debased by greater awareness of the silenced or marginalized experiences of minority citizens in a given culture, particularly when that culture is as porous as that of the United States, or as thoroughly entangled historically with neighboring cultures as the states of Europe. However, the great pitfall of canonical revision remains that, once momentum builds behind changing the literary landscape of the classroom, it can be easy to continue remodeling the curriculum without engaging in necessary self-reflection as to whether the intended goal behind the revision has been achieved; the endeavor may become "parochial," to borrow a term used by such academics as Paul Lauter or Anastasia Stamolgou – what literary work tagged for inclusion in the curriculum under the auspices of an agenda of making course material more broadly representative turns out (as highlighted in the passage from Lauter quoted above) to actually speak for a more narrow constituency. As Elaine Showalter has cautioned, "This period of discovery and recovery (for example, of women writers) has been stimulating, exciting and renewing. But now it's time for a period of evaluation and consolidation" ("Revisiting the Canon Wars" 16). Change toward cultural inclusiveness in the syllabus risks being crowded out by change for the sake of change: such a charge might be leveled against attempts to recuperate Harry Crosby, which demonstrates why understanding of his active role in producing and encouraging experimental poetry is at

the crux of the case for his reclamation – it enriches and clarifies our understanding of modernism to discuss his contributions in context.

In guarding against the drive to indiscriminately repair the canon, however, one must equally be vigilant against slipping back into the same formalist scientification of literature from which criticism fought to extricate itself through the middle of the twentieth century. So ingrained is the idea of a great Bloomian yardstick of objective literary worth that it is the first rebuttal that comes to mind for most when addressing the mediation of identity-based literary scholarship, but it has long since been proven inadequate as a model for constructing either a syllabus or an exegesis. Jerome McGann succinctly differentiates criticism, the failed discipline, from scholarship, its productive and positive twin, thus: “Out of scholarship comes the advancement of learning, out of criticism, its arrest” (*The Point is to Change It* xv). The line traced by McGann leads back from the current model of criticism to Matthew Arnold’s refutational analysis of Percy Bysshe Shelley:

[Arnold’s] answer to class war and social dislocation was the “sweetness and light” that would follow the acquirement of culture. That Arnoldian ideology began collapsing in Europe around 1914, and by 1945 it was in ruins. But the society of what Benjamin called “the victors” – that’s to say, in the United States, the ideology continued to thrive well past 1945 in programs of general education – the “Great Books” programs founded and augmented over some forty years at Harvard, Columbia, and Chicago, and the reading methodologies sponsored by the New Criticism. (*The Point is to Change It* xiv-xv)

The tipping point comes, McGann asserts, after the 1969 publication of Hannah Arendt's English translation of Benjamin's *Illuminations* introduced into "the Arnoldian project" the extant but unmet challenge before it (xv). This crisis is one of insecurity, which is to say the failure of literary critics to admit faults in a manner reminiscent of religious dogmatism, such as the apocalyptic language of the two Blooms: Harold, in deeming the third "Age" of his canon as the "Democratic Age" and then identifying the Age beginning with the turn of the twentieth century as the "Chaotic Age"; and Allan, describing the shift in the university toward cultural relativism as "spiritual entropy or an evaporation of the soul's boiling blood" (51). As McGann notes, Walter Benjamin uses Messianic language pointedly during his Theses, with the apparent intent of championing the relevance of criticism during an age of profound technological advancement and consequent epistemological shifts, but adopting the language of "Messiah versus Antichrist" still assumes an inevitable teleological inertia, which McGann is at the very least hesitant to accept. It implies, in short, that criticism will "win" a final decisive struggle, after which its object (literature, and society as beneficiary of literature) will be "saved," and does nothing to address the notion of value as an absolute a priori constant.

While it is necessary to have clear categories between schools of critical thought in order to understand them, the divisions that both of these intradisciplinary tribes – defenders of the status quo, as well as revisionists – impose upon each other as well as upon themselves prevent them from respectively delving into the unifying theories of power relationships, and from collaborating and magnifying the social impact of their work. As such, on one hand, the conservative bulwarks of criticism remain more impermeable than they ought to be, and on the other hand the progressives' intended

assault on hold-out structures within academia – most notably the persistent notion of the central canon as a deterministic phenomenon – is diffused, inefficient and ultimately blunted in effect. In reflecting some of these impulses to resist change, Charles Altieri, speaking self-consciously as a defender of the central canon, sums up

[...] the two basic dangers in the traditional ways of claiming authority for those [canonical] texts: that in order to make them ‘timeless we suppress their temporality’; and that we confuse the fact that texts have endured with the claim that they have some distinctive right to endure, when in fact the reasons for the endurance involve nostalgia, conservative political pressures, stock rhetorical needs, and the inertia of established power. (52)

These “dangers” are not only potential vulnerabilities to the protected position of texts established already as canonical, but we can also see them as tactically useful in addressing neglect, particularly in grasping the circular nature of neglect.

Harris and Fowler, on the other hand, both cheat with the breadth of their distinctions, however: one could conceivably use them to argue that any given text is canonical by applying at least one category to it, and since the very first of Fowler’s categories is “all writing that may or may not be literature,” the usefulness of the model is blunted somewhat. Using this model, for instance, Harry Crosby’s status could be classified as strongly canonical-<sub>1,10</sub>, with instances of being canonical-<sub>3,8</sub> due to selective reprints by Cary Nelson, Jerome Rothenberg, and others. However, all this accomplishes is to effect a bit of critical sleight-of-hand, disregarding an overall scholarly neglect by allowing any given text to be claimed as ‘canonical somewhere to someone.’ In Harris’ system, the canons are given a relatively equal weight, different in their scope perhaps but all

exerting a constant interbalanced pressure on one another. In practice, however, Harris affirms the tautology of neglect as previously asserted:

Academics tend to teach what they have been taught, what is easily available in print, what others are writing interestingly about, and what they themselves are writing about; what is easily available in print tends to be what is being taught and written about; what is written about tends to be what one is teaching or others are writing about. (114)

As a result, certain canons are circularly reinforced: the pedagogical canon persists due to the financial pressure to reuse anthologies year after year for introductory courses; the critical canon insulates itself in a cycle whereby critics write to critics in slow conversations about narrow topics played out in the pages of journals devoted to specific slices of the literary landscape; the accessible canon prefers to hold its course and reuse material already secured rather than incur the additional expense of extended editor-hours vetting material or of paying permissions fees for new inclusions.

Consequently, Crosby's extra-canonical status is compounded by a number of assumptions, perhaps unconscious but nonetheless pervasive, regarding the critical mission. First and foremost, there is an assumption that the work of evaluating value is already done in the majority of cases: known work is known because it has already been vetted by previous editors and scholars, and so it is accepted as having passed an indeterminate metric of value, and conversely work that has been marginalized has somehow "earned" this marginalization by being found wanting in its quality on sheer merit. Critics – and, as we shall discuss further below, biographers – tend to erringly conflate various aspects of Crosby's inaccessibility with his perceived quality as a poet.



As a result, the pedagogical canon remains unchanged, as no effort is made to change Crosby's status with regard to the accessible canon. In Crosby's case, we can also observe that the converse of this tendency is also true, as demonstrated above by the discussion of adherence to pre-established literary taxonomical classification and schema: because Crosby's writing strives for difference and emphasizes its own break with convention (even as it adheres to form and tradition in other ways), literary critics overlook its inclusion into the system of classification (the pedagogical canon) which informs the anthology market (a major arbiter of the accessible canon) and reinforces the notion of Crosby's acanonicity. D.H. Lawrence, in his introduction to the posthumous reissue of *Chariot of the Sun*, explains the deliberate confounding of poetic convention in Crosby's verse: images are not employed as symbols in Crosby's work but as "narcotics," and while Lawrence struggles with the impulse to impose order in the extended metaphor discussing poetry as a symbolic umbrella riddled with holes which let through a controlled amount of chaos (sunlight or rain) to create an aesthetically pleasing harmony, he must recognize the necessity of the chaos, the fact that it "means nothing, and it says nothing. And yet it has something to say" (viii). He also notes in the vein of Pound's "read all together" that "it is useless to quote fragments. They are too nebulous and not there" (xi). As Cary Nelson elaborates, "the canon speaks to and for other structures of power in the society," and the pressure that the established canon and the constant insistence on adherence to known poetic convention as a benchmark for critical navigation places on the construction of literary history, which in turn serves as the rationale for the existence of the central canon, would not result in "Literary history [...devoting] most of its space to explications of works by what are judged to be the

major authors, a practice that amounts to little more than a celebratory staging of the canon” (*Repression and Recovery* 56; 53).

Accessibility (in canonical terms) also comes from one’s poetic peers, in the cases where those peers have influence on publication (typically in peripheral journals or anthologies – especially small independent press editions – that then inform selection guidelines for major mainstream collections). We know from extant biographical evidence on the part of Crosby’s peers that he was recognized by contemporaries as influential, especially via his role as proprietor of the Black Sun Press, but this has not subsequently carried over into his reputation among scholars of the period. Anheier and Gerhards spend a significant portion of the conclusion of their study of literary influence to discuss the interpretation of the findings specifically with regard to authors who denied the phenomenon of influence by other writers. The results are telling because of the possibility of their application to figures such as Crosby, who likewise struggled with their place in the continuity of literature — in Crosby’s case, by acknowledging certain sources openly, but leaving others unnamed. Anheier and Gerhards identify three general categories of writer: those who deny influence, in the sense of being aware of but actively working against it; those who do not affirm or acknowledge influence, meaning that they either have no strong literary influences or are unaware of them; and those who acknowledge influence. In these terms, Harry Crosby would fall between the first two categories, and so, of the six specific extrapolations are made from the data presented by Anheier and Gerhards, we may examine specifically the assertions made about these two categories of writer and compare them to what is known about Crosby’s poesis and position within the “Lost Generation” as community.

First, Anheier and Gerhards assume that writers operating in different genres experience more or less acute pressure regarding influence, and they further assert (following in Bloom's footsteps) that poets experience the most acute pressure, and tend as a result to deny literary influence that nonetheless exists, as compared to writers in other forms who experience a more pronounced absence of influence (152-3). The truth of the latter part of this assertion is difficult to ascertain, but the point regarding the significance of poetic influence specifically may be accepted as a reasonable argument.

The whole of Crosby's neglect cannot be fully laid at the feet of his contrarian and constructed poetic approach: Harold Brunner sums up this facet of the dilemma of Crosby's neglect in the introduction to his biographical essay on Crosby, sidelong addressing the problematic biographies of the poet as rooted in the same issues as can be attributed as one of the main causes for his dismissal by critics:

Harry Crosby has been twice cursed with exceptional biographers (Malcolm Cowley in 1934 and Geoffrey Wolff in 1976) who were interested in exposing the sensational aspects of his too-brief existence [...] but who were not particularly sympathetic to his writings. Those writings, to be sure, were not designed to be likable or even that accessible: avant-garde, experimental, surreal, emerging from a continental tradition that cultivated forms like the prose poem that were alien to Anglo-American modernism (though successfully explored by Williams). And Crosby did not become a compelling writer until the last years of his life. His apprenticeship, moreover, was particularly erratic,

and worst of all, it unfolded in public, as Crosby's own press, Black Sun, released a steady stream of his work from 1927 onward. (Brunner n.p.)

The construction of the category of "minor" literature pervades beyond the field of literary studies into the biographical as well. The enforcement of the dichotomy serves no aesthetic or moral purpose – scholars are not harmed by having more texts to examine, teach, and analyze – but instead solely to protect the established dominant canon, the 'settled' diachronic literary history, and their mutually self-justifying notion of importance:

When we read marginal works so as to understand major ones, to reconstruct historical contexts, we intrude a contaminating social materiality into the imaginative domain of literariness. Minor literature is thus an epistemological threat to the socially constructed transcendence of literary excellence. [...] (Nelson 39)

This "imaginative domain of literariness," the "socially constructed transcendence of literary excellence," is precisely the context-free ideal of the New Critics, the adoption of poems as self-contained artifacts as distinct from the circumstances that generated them. Nelson goes on to demonstrate the paradox of the "minor" categorization:

"Minor literature" is a contradiction in the imaginary of the profession: an impossible and obscene conjunction of determined facticity and imaginative freedom. The canon polices this epistemological threat, ensuring that if minor poetry actually becomes wholly "literary" it will cease being minor. (Nelson 39)

If a work of poetry, for instance, is deemed possessing the value that makes it “literature,” it will start being “major poetry,” in other words — and thus cost publishing companies additional money in the ink and paper to include them in their anthologies<sup>27</sup>. Therefore, from the point of view of those monitoring the costs of publishing literary collections, the inclusion of Harry Crosby represented an “epistemological threat” to the suppression of publication costs: if his work remains relegated to “minor” status, then it cannot command a high price for reprinting, and yet simultaneously the method of confining a poet to “minor” status is simply not to reprint them<sup>28</sup>. Nelson argues compellingly – and, as the intervening decades since the publication of *Repression and Recovery* have demonstrated, at least somewhat successfully – that the fallacy of “minor literature” as harmful to the integrity of the canon is counterproductive to the act of criticism.

### Criticism’s Fear of Uncertainty

Whence does the aversion to inclusiveness arise in literary scholarship? The fear of reprinting, as discussed above, arises from the impetus within publishing houses to reduce costs, which means to preserve paper and ink, and to stay under permissions budgets. But literary scholars also seem loath to discuss work that strays from the established competing categories of canonization, excluding them from their curricula and publication agendas. Charles Bernstein explores this notion thus:

Here, then, is my thesis: There is a fear of the inchoate processes of turbulent thought (poetic or philosophic) that takes the form of resistance and paranoia. [...]

In theory, the proliferation of frames of interpretation (feminist, psychoanalytic, grammatologic, economic, sociologic, Romantic, historical materialist, new critical, reader-response, canonic, periodic) is a positive development. In practice, the incommensurability among these frames has led to a Balkanization of theory. The normalizing tendency, resisted by some of the most resourceful practitioners of cultural studies, is to elect one interpretive mode and to apply it, cookie-cutter-like, to any given phenomenon. On the one hand, this can be defended on scientific or religious grounds, and, on the other hand, as a form not of faith or positivism but of specialization. ("Art" 43)

Several of Bernstein's points bear elaboration: primarily, the calling-out of "professional competence" as a smoke screen for maintaining the status quo in literary scholarship. For one contributing factor, we may observe the lingering Victorianization of academic disciplines, by which every intellectual venture was pressured to systematize (to recall Ransom's thesis in "Criticism, Inc."), both out of deference to the prevailing perspective that all fields of inquiry could be made into purely scientific rather than aesthetic fields, and out of the necessities of an increasingly capitalistic philosophy of university administration whereby student "success" became measured quantitatively by enrollment, retention, and matriculation rates. A number of scholars have already penetrated the murky and problematic history of academic labor, notably Marc Bousquet, and while the

bulk of the discussion is not immediately pertinent to the topic at hand, the concern that Bernstein identifies is a justifiable one on some level, as the perceived failure or success of one's critical activities, as measured by the metrics of student performance can have quantifiable material effects on the instructor themselves.

Additionally, and more directly relevant, Bernstein's use of the word "normalizing" carries more weight than is immediately obvious, for it is the "normal" that is lionized in choosing anthological rosters – that which is accessible to the most students makes the cut, resulting in the reinforcement and reiteration of what might be uncharitably deemed the lowest common denominator of literary study, aimed at broad but shallow cultural literacy for non-majors in conveniently encapsulable curricula. It is this barrier that most disadvantaged Harry Crosby, who sought deliberately to produce work that was difficult to approach for reasons that will be discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 3.

While therefore understandable, the impetus underlying the tendency of critics to maintain the problematic notions of canonicity and value should not be summarily excused. From the point of view of the idealist, the "pure" study of literature is not being served, while from the point of view of the more pragmatic materialist, the conditions that predicate the persistent influences that resist change have deteriorated or faded with the advent of digital communication technology: the extant taxonomy of literature was constructed under the cloud of a necessarily incomplete survey of works and therefore genetically predisposed to exist within a finite habitat — that of the strictly circumscribed parameters of an anthology volume. That constraint continues to rapidly obsolesce as electronic reading devices become more inexpensive, accessible, and consequently

ubiquitous, while the shift toward a new conception of canonicity and the curriculum continues to lag behind the zeitgeist that demands it.

Lisi Schoenbach hints at a possible source of this critical failure as being an over-emphasis on the novel aspects of modernism rather than an underlying pragmatic impulse, especially in its American or American-derived strains:

As a literary movement and intellectual mind-set, modernism has always been synonymous with the radically new. [...] Indeed, narratives of literary modernism have overwhelmingly emphasized modernism's dramatic break from the past, taking Pound's famous dictum – "Make it new!" – as the defining credo of the modernist moment. To this day, modernism continues to be defined by its heroic opposition, its clean break from the past, its anti-institutional stance, and its emphasis on shock and radical discontinuity. (4)

Harry Crosby's work does indeed embrace a number of these elements: "heroic opposition" certainly describes the speaking persona in much of his work, particularly the "tirades" in the later volumes, adopting an anarchic and apocalyptic guise as mad prophet of a new world order that verges on hedonism. It is on these merits that Cheyney and Conroy chose to include Crosby in two of the three volumes of *Unrest*, the anthology accompanying the magazine *The Rebel Poet*, although, as Cary Nelson elaborates throughout *Repression and Recovery*, Harry Crosby was embraced by the political left for a fiery rhetoric that was not strictly indicative of his own political stances: Crosby's contrarian, anarchic streak was mostly a matter of personal (or interpersonal) ethics, and he was in fact rather neutral in terms of political activity. His lack of politics could be



attributed both to his disinclination and to his life as an expatriate, which isolated him from political currents back in the United States, where he had no interest, and in his adopted France, where he possessed no right to participate politically.

At the same time, though, Crosby's work bleeds into what Schoenbach describes as pragmatist methodology: specifically, pragmatism methodology is distinct from pragmatism, the philosophy articulated by William James, in that the former is one component of the latter<sup>29</sup>. The pragmatism of Crosby is that he is a consummate bricoleur, absorbing material from his inspirations purely for the purposes of furthering an expressive agenda rather than an ideological one, and those inspirations include the institutions of preceding literary schools, predominantly the French Romantics upon whose work Crosby modeled not only his early structural explorations but also his poetic voice.

We may also observe, though, that Crosby is a meta-bricoleur: his assimilation of influences is itself a collage, by which is meant that his praxis draws only partly from the avant-garde, partly from pragmatism, and partly from self-poiesis. Pragmatism considers boundaries and institutions as tools, and the avant-garde considers them as a field in which to be positioned, either on or against the object; indeed, as Schoenbach notes,

The word "pragmatism," with its connotations of instrumentalism, practicality, common sense, and (as it is often used in contemporary political contexts) self-interest, was itself anathema to the avant-garde. In the June 1930 issue of *transition*, the editor's introduction boasts that "for three years *transition*, almost alone of all the movements today, set its face against the pragmatism of the age." (148)

Crosby uses techniques of pragmatism in an attempt to articulate an avant-garde sensibility, however, which makes him an interesting interstitial figure.

### Criticism as Capital Activity

It is fallacious to argue that Harry Crosby's exclusion is sign enough that his work does not merit discussion; the mechanisms of academic canon formation are repetition and familiarity – the confluence of what Fowler and Harris term the pedagogical and accessible canons – implemented through the design of anthologies and the courses which adopt them, which in turn provide feedback through sales figures and journal reviews to the publishers of those same collections and ostensibly guide the future evolution of anthologized content. Eliot's own praise for Crosby in the Preface to *Transit of Venus* takes on significant weight because of the manner in which each has fared as scholarly concerns over the intervening years.

For his part, Eliot himself proffered significant praise for his peer:

The Crosby Preface pursues a rhetorical strategy and a concern for avant-garde poetry that seems miles away from 'The Bible as Scripture and as Literature,' but the subjects of the two essays turn out to be surprisingly close. ...[I]n the Preface, he makes striking claims for the necessary 'extravagance' of all poetic symbolism, including that of the Bible or the Church. What joins them is the fact that 'symbolism,' as Eliot maintains in the Crosby Preface, 'is that to which the word tends both in religion and in poetry'. (Bush 83)

The link between the poetic and the religious noted here absolutely applies to Crosby's poetry, often described as 'mystic' and preoccupied with an intensely personal heliocentric cosmology; that Eliot describes such a synthesis as no less than the core of poetry itself counts heavily in Crosby's favor<sup>30</sup>. It is certainly difficult to imagine something more literarily 'extravagant' than the proliferation of an entire corpus dedicated to variations on a single metaphor.

Unfortunately, as champions of neglected literature have learned throughout the past century, the process of determining worth operates with a self-contained system: authors and poets are not taught in classes because they do not appear in the anthologies, and they do not appear in anthologies on the grounds that editors do not want to spend space (in the form of paper) or capital (in the form of ink, printing costs, shipping, and all of the other myriad expenditures of resources involved in producing textual editions<sup>31</sup>) on artists not being taught. Mozek's review of *Revolution of the Word* opens with an apt metaphor:

Draw a circle. Do it.

An anthology is a circle drawn by its editor or editors, some poets and poems end up in the circle, while others are outside it. The dimensions of the circle, of the anthology itself, are determined by these inclusions and omissions. ("Revolution of the Word")

While the symbolism falls somewhat short, as symbols often do – for instance, the constraints of the metaphorical circle are not entirely arbitrary on the part of the editor, but dependent upon page counts, fees for permissions, shipping costs, and so forth – the image also has applicable truths left unspoken. The engraved circle on the page leaves an

indentation, however slight, from the pressure of the stylus, and future circles are just a bit more likely to follow the rut left by the previous one. Whether one's work is in print, or not, and by extension, the willingness or not of an editor to include one's work in anthologies or commit to issuing a collection is perhaps the greatest problem in existing literary scholarship, based as it is on a very tangible but separate binary state — while literary value is not a zero-sum quality, decreasing in one area when awarded anew elsewhere, the material resources available to print have been for the majority of the history of publication. The problem has been so difficult to address primarily because it has been invisible: critics tend to ignore the dross of the reality of book production in favor of appeal to the abstract principle of merit as a quasi-moral justification as if to lend the act of criticism an inherent credence. The effect which arises from this circular logic, if you will, thus predetermines artists as included or excluded based on whether they are already included or excluded. Even as Crosby exemplifies tenets of poiesis codified in the discourse of some of his most recognized colleagues, his marginalization counts as a self-perpetuating judgment, unquestioned by successive generations of academics<sup>32</sup>.

It would be easy to overstate the case that Harry Crosby has languished in total obscurity, but this is not the case; there is a passing familiarity with his work among scholars of modernist poetry, due to his sporadic appearances in texts focused on the inter-war period. A slow increase in attention to Harry Crosby's significance has accompanied the sparing and occasional attention paid to his work, elevating his status from that of the subject of a brief essay in a small literary journal to garnering an entry in a few credible anthologies. Unfortunately, such appearances tend to bear the stigma of the literary oddity, such as the collection *Imagining Language*, published by MIT Press,

which concerns itself with “the literary phenomenon of the exception, the special case” (Rasula and McCaffery x). We may observe that publication is not an assurance of respect; entrance into canonical status is stymied by treatment as a peculiarity. We may also observe from the brief headnote that Crosby’s entry, which reprints only “A Short Introduction of the Word,” retreads the entries in Rothenberg’s *Revolution of the Word* and Nelson’s *Anthology of Modern American Poetry*.

To compare, let us look at the notes in chronological sequence. Rothenberg’s intro was published first, then the Nelson preface, and finally the most recent, Rasula and McCaffery’s introductory note, provide us a skeletal timeline of editorial treatment of Crosby. Rothenberg’s note (quoted here in full) is terse but yet still considered, focusing on the biographical but also historiographical:

Born 1898. Died 1929. In the last two years of his life, Crosby had developed into a major image-making poet. The myth he unfolded was of the Sun – both as male & female - & he followed its orders through a striking set of structural innovations. Editor of Black Sun Press in Paris (which published works by Hart Crane, Archibald MacLeish, Eugene Jolas, & D.H. Lawrence, along with his own first books). Crosby’s verse experiments included the use of found forms (racing charts, book lists, stock reports, etc.) & concrete poetry, all concerned with sun-related imagery. After his suicide, several volumes appeared, with introductions by Eliot, Lawrence & Pound, among others. But in the anti-“modernist” reaction of the 1930s he was turned into a virtual non-person. In the context of the 1970s the importance of his vision would seem clear – its

dimensions suggested in Pound's earlier summary, viz: "There is more theology in this book of Crosby's than in all the official ecclesiastical utterance of our generation. Crosby's life was a religious manifestation. His death was, if you like, a comprehensible emotional act.... A death from excess vitality. A vote of confidence in the cosmos.... Perhaps the best indication one can give of Crosby's capacity as a writer is to say that his work gains by being read all together. I do not mean this as a slight compliment. It is true of a small minority only." The key books, all long out of print, are *Torchbearer*, *Mad Queen*, *Chariot [sic] of the Sun*, *Transit of Venus*, *Sleeping Together*, & an autobiography, *Shadows of the Sun*.

(121)

Aside from some errors in Rothenberg's details, the substance of his contribution works actively against the diminishment or marginalization of Crosby as a poet, mobilizing the term "major [...] poet" to counter the oft-leveled label of "minor" (with which Nelson would later deal at length in *Repression and Recovery*, as discussed above). Rothenberg deftly select a few examples of Crosby's "structural innovations": the familiar "Photoheliograph" and "Pharmacie du Soleil" appear as instances of visual poetry, but also "Madman" and "Tattoo" as long and short specimens of Crosby's 'tirade' mode, respectively, "I Climb Alone" as a representative of the surrealist dream-poetry, and "Fragment of an Etude for a Sun-Dial" to demonstrate Crosby's free verse, among others. The only style in Crosby's repertoire not represented by Rothenberg would be the earlier sonnetry, as a result of his focus on the more challenging avant-gardist appropriations in Crosby's corpus.

Nelson's entry is much more exhaustive in full, and indeed perhaps the longest introductory editor's note Crosby has ever received; even after excising the familiar biographical matter, it remains a substantial commentary on Crosby's work:

There is no other poet in our history quite like Crosby. He is above all else a poet of one unforgiving obsession: the image of the sun and every variation he can ring on it in poems of ecstatic incantation. Poems like "Pharmacie du Soleil" should be read aloud, preferably by a score of people speaking either in unison or in counterpoint. [...] Increasingly committed to writing poetry, Crosby and Caresse also cofounded Black Sun Press. They would publish Pound, Lawrence, Joyce, Crane, and such books as Crosby's own *Chariot of the Sun*. In Crosby's poetry he sought to transform the modern wasteland by the power of unconscious revelation, exploiting surrealism, incantation, declamation, and automatic writing. (382)

Incidentally, beyond the useful insight provided in the entry, Nelson's edition also benefits from being fundamentally constructed in conjunction with an online presence to complement the material in the *Anthology of Modern American Poetry* at Southern Illinois University's website, which supplements its section on Crosby with additional notes on specific poems as well as short essays by Harold Brunner. This is particularly useful, given that Nelson's selections are subsumed by Rothenberg's – the *Anthology of Modern American Poetry* only reprints "Photoheliograph," "Pharmacie du Soleil," "Tattoo," and "A Short Introduction to the Word," forcing readers wishing a broader sense of Crosby to look elsewhere.

Comparatively, Rasula and McCaffery have this to say:

Crosby (1898-1929) was editor of Black Sun Press in Paris, which, in addition to his own early books, published work by Hart Crane, D. H. Lawrence, and Archibald MacLeish. Crosby's formally innovative writings include experiments in concrete poetry and nonliterary found texts such as stock reports and racing charts. For two decades prior to his suicide, he developed a solar preoccupation evident in the piece below.

(28)

Note that Rasula and McCaffery omit to even mention Joyce from the list of notable authors published by the Black Sun Press, a striking error given the prominence Joyce holds amongst modern writers.

Because of the limitations of access to Harry Crosby's work, therefore, those without access to the rare book rooms of various academic libraries or private collections such as the Athenaeum are unlikely to have a full sense of its variety or energy. The material conservatism underlying the choices made regarding of the reprinting of Crosby's poetry stifles proper understanding of the artists' career and development, which took place in a continuum not properly represented by the careless smattering of specimens chosen by anthologists. Of the poetry written by Crosby, perhaps less than a third of the poems have been reprinted at all since the posthumous Black Sun collections; the number reappearing in sufficient volumes as to be considered available for public consumption, or in texts currently in print, remains minuscule by comparison.<sup>33</sup> The first volume published by the entity to be later named the Black Sun Press, Crosby's obliquely titled *Anthology*, was printed for private use only; even at the press's most prolific, fewer



than 900 copies were ever printed of *Transit of Venus*, which was far and away the most published of Crosby's collections.

But if taken as a whole for the first time since his death, as prescribed by Ezra Pound in the foreword to Crosby's posthumous edition of *Torchbearer*, then relevant is precisely the word for Crosby's work in terms of considering a 'whole' modernism. Harry Crosby's literary career, both as a poet and as a publisher, holds relevance to our understanding of not only modernism's narrative but also its shape: Crosby's intercession at the crux of modernist Paris remains indelibly visible on the form and timbre of the work produced. Critical understanding of the "Lost Generation" requires study of Crosby's position at the epicenter of this literary eruption in addition to an understanding of the literary output he produced personally.

The emphasis Harry Crosby placed on publishing what we now consider important literature via the Black Sun Press, rather than retaining it solely as what one might uncharitably dismiss as a vanity project to put his own work between covers, speaks strongly in favor of Crosby's keen literary eye in scouting and encouraging talent that had been passed over by established publishers, often for purely non-literary reasons. Hugh Ford's *Published in Paris* remains the most intricate examination of the small literary press phenomenon centered in Paris between the two World Wars, and as revealing a testament as any to the importance of the Black Sun Press (and by extension Harry Crosby himself) is that Ford devotes not only a hefty chapter to the Black Sun Press individually, but Crosby's name also appears interwoven through the other chapters, as if he were a Joycean character making cameos in others' plots.

The fact remains that Crosby was a motivator, both through his personal charisma and energy, and through his financial resources; when he encountered a literary talent who caught his attention, he bent his efforts towards putting their work to paper, and if he could not persuade someone else to do it, he would pay for it himself. Perhaps sensing (at least unconsciously) the pressures of material circumstance on the propagation of literary work, to take a happily serendipitous image from Hart Crane, Crosby provided a bridge across the material barrier to publication faced by other artists by marshaling his own resources for the benefit of fellow artists with the fervor of a philanthropist, backing work viewed as too risky by established publishing houses. Both Harry and Caresse Crosby were known around Paris as passionate literati; Sylvia Beach recalls, “Harry used to dart in and out of my shop, dive into the bookshelves like a hummingbird extracting honey from a blossom. The Crosby’s [sic] were connoisseurs of fine books, but better still, of fine writing” (*Shakespeare and Company* 134). Harry Crosby’s poetic taste was remarkably refined for a self-taught student of poetry, and, combined with his learned entrepreneurialism, could well have surprised the family and banking establishments from which a young Crosby emphatically departed: it was Crosby’s direct personal insistence that encouraged Hart Crane to complete *The Bridge*, which appeared in first edition bearing a Black Sun imprint; the first published sections of *Finnegans Wake* likewise emerged from the Black Sun’s printing presses (as “Tales Told by Shem and Shaun”), while the cloud of controversy over *Ulysses* still made larger presses balk at the thought of embracing Joyce. While criticism has a tacit interest in whose work a poet reads, however, it has not had as much to say about various other permutations of the reader-author circuit of exchange: when a poet alludes to an influence in a work, the

allusion is considered relevant, for instance, but what of the works a poet chooses to publish? Admittedly, this is not quite so common a circumstance by comparison, but very little attention has been paid to Crosby's selective vision as expressed through the Black Sun Press. Nor, it seems, do critics pay as much attention to indications that a poet is read by others as to the particulars of a poet's own reading, but this too serves as a signal of Harry Crosby's notability.

Understanding the underlying notion of neglect's reflexive nature, and its possible causes, is crucial to the aim of Crosby's recuperation. Further, these theoretical underpinnings of that analysis are broadly applicable not only to the project of reclaiming Harry Crosby as a subject for critical discussion, but to any movement to revise or alter academic curricula (from which the general consensus regarding literary canonicity arises), particularly during a moment in which new technologies are forcing a revision of assumptions regarding the presentation and exploration of literary works and history. As previously asserted, however, the investigation into neglect and canon formation serves as but half of the project's foundation; it is equally important to examine Crosby's actual historical context, in the form of his reception by peers as well as the unknown qualities of his work. We will proceed with those discussions in that order.

## CHAPTER 3

## CROSBY IN CONTINUITY: READERS READING CROSBY

A closer examination of the arc of the pendulum of scholarship, having swung past Harry Crosby's inclusion in curricula not once but twice, reveals a number of poetic points of note – not only the praise and attention of contemporaries of Crosby who have entered into general canonical acceptance subsequently, but also the continued recurrence of Crosby as a figure of inspiration amongst disparate poets in the generations since his death. Proceeding from the argument of the previous two chapters, that putting Harry Crosby into historical context is necessary to fully understand his importance, we find important cues in the work of Crosby's contemporaries and in those who discovered him after his death to help us situate and apprehend his significance. While close reading as a technique has inexorable connotations that reinforce the very arguments this dissertation attempts to refute, it remains a useful tool if employed mindfully and with the aim of contextualization, and so the following two chapters will engage samples of poetic work through that sort of close reading.

Harry Crosby occupied many complex roles during his life: iconoclast, mystic, poet, and publisher. In death, his influence waned in the wake of various social pressures: the taboo of suicide and what was perceived as adultery (despite his marriage being a negotiated polyamorous arrangement); the shift in artistic tastes in Western societies from the 1920s to the 1930s, characterized broadly as a more conservative trend in backlash against the most outrageous of the avant-garde, not only among the general readership but in academic and editorial circles; the deaths of many of his associates among the

“Lost Generation” diminished the living memory and awareness of Crosby’s life and work. The elision of Crosby’s influence happened nearly immediately: a brief piece in the June 28, 1937, issue of *Time* on the launch of James Laughlin IV’s New Directions imprint casually states, “In contrast with similar presses of the past, such as the Black Sun Press conducted in Paris by the late Henry Grew (“Harry”) Crosby, New Directions professes a social purpose” (“Word Workers” 77), implying that the Black Sun Press was socially purposeless and by extension therefore negligible. This was, of course, an erroneous statement, as anyone familiar with the “Proclamation of the Word” should immediately note: the fact that the declaration’s stated aim was one of an artistic and not strictly demographic bent is dismissible in light of the principle that art is its own justification (a sentiment Crosby personally inherited from Baudelaire)<sup>34</sup>.

More has been written about Harry Crosby as a writer than as a latter-day *imprimatur*, but this is a faint comparison: even the well-trod ground of scholarly analysis of Crosby’s work as a whole still remains incomplete. No complete edition of Crosby’s artistic output – ‘poetry’ is a limiting term, for his work as often defies formal conventions as experiments within them – has been published since the four posthumous volumes offered by the Black Sun Press in 1930-31. Sy Kahn’s selections, published as *Devour the Fire* in 1981, leave broad gaps in the span of Crosby’s writing, imbalanced preferentially toward the work immediately preceding Crosby’s suicide. Extant criticism of Crosby’s poems can only be found buried piecemeal within other works, such as that sprinkled throughout Geoffrey Wolfe’s biography *Transit of Venus*, or treatment in Nelson’s *Repression and Recovery* as one among several examples of poetic neglect in the grander context of the poetic left in the 1920s and 1930s.

Existing accounts of Crosby's work all predetermine their conclusions to fit with an agenda of portraying the artist's life in a particularly framed manner: Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return* adheres to a moralizing agenda in railing against the perceived failings of the Parisian expatriates, making an admonitive statement about the decadence of the "Lost Generation" with Crosby's suicide as somehow exemplary of a literary movement characterized as squandering its intellectual potential on excess. Cowley has the advantage of having met Crosby personally; unfortunately, we may infer from the heavy-handed manner in which Cowley attempts to shoehorn Crosby's death into a broad, judgmental thesis about the Parisian expatriates that he did not understand Crosby very well. Cowley's premise asserts that the "Lost Generation" debauched itself into oblivion, suggesting obliquely that their artistic output is diminished thereby:

In those days most young writers lived more simply than other college-bred Americans, because they had less money; but they allowed themselves to become involved by slow degrees in the frenzy of the boom years, with the result that they were also involved in the moral and economic collapse that followed. For some of them, like Harry Crosby, that was the end of the story. (Cowley 290)

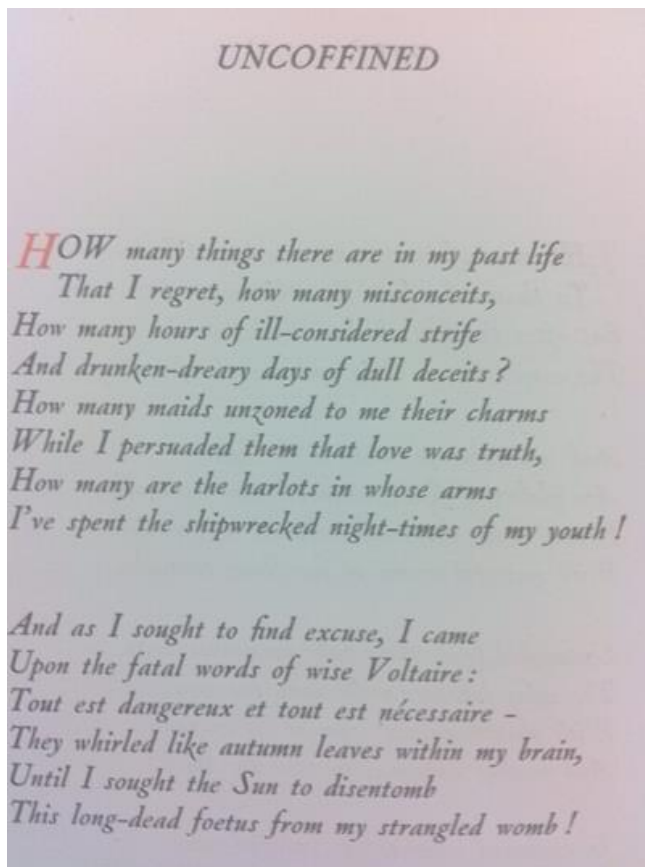
"Moral collapse" as a descriptor for Crosby, either personally or artistically, presumes a particularly narrow viewpoint predicated on certain assumptions; "moral" suggests that Crosby's death was in some way a consequence of a failing, measured against an objective cosmic standard, while "collapse" entails a prior 'uncollapsed' state which is held to be preferable.

### Addressing Cowley's Critique

Contrast this against the evidence in Crosby's own work, however, and the facile quality of the dichotomy becomes apparent. The 33 sonnets in 1927's *Red Skeletons* are largely the work of an apprentice poet beginning to strike out on his own, having absorbed the voices of influences and now going about the business of synthesizing them; if the perception of Crosby as a "minor" poet is at all accurate (and we must recall Cary Nelson's admonition regarding the concept of "minor literature" cited in the introduction), then this collection contains the early, struggling work to which those critiques are most accurate.

*Red Skeletons* not only serves as a transition for Crosby's poetry away from pastiche and hero-worship toward the forging of a personal stratagem of poiesis (as marked, subtly, by the subsequent shift of the press from Editions Narcisse to the Black Sun mark), but its burgeoning awareness of the possibilities of synergy between striking poetic metaphor and challenging visual imagery also problematizes the Cowleian tendency to box Crosby as merely a dilettante. For instance, "Uncoffined," the capstone sonnet in the volume, (reproduced in Figure 5) may shock with its clumsy ultimate metaphor, but the technique is not unsound: the buildup in the initial octet sounds like an Augustinian confession of youthful indiscretion, full of drunkenness and promiscuity, implying the culmination of the thrust of the poem in an epiphany of virtue.

Fig. 5. Crosby, Harry. "Uncoffined". *Red Skeletons*. Paris: Black Sun, 1929. 34.



The poem itself, the final entry in *Red Skeletons*, serves as a concluding and unifying statement similar to that carried out within the poem itself. The expression of “regrets” in one’s “past life” serves dual function to not only situate the image of self-eulogy – the familiar conceit of the departed reflecting, either in the moments preceding death or more fantastically while entombed – but also to announce a rupture from pre-poetic existence to that of the dedicated student (lines 1-2). The remainder of the argument consists of the sort of litany of sins one expects from a reflective, repentant poet: “drunken-dreary days of dull deceits” and dalliances with both “maids” and “harlots,” setting up what the average reader is likely to anticipate, depending upon the method in which they take the opening metaphor, as either a declaration of new-found



piety from one who nearly missed death, or eternal remorse from one who now has no luxury to repent (lines 4-7).

Crosby demonstrates in the second stanza one of his burgeoning personal flourishes: the bold pronouncement of the speaker's iconoclasm in spite of conventional mores. The volta reveals that the poet, in searching to "find excuse" for his debauchery, turns not to the advice of scripture or saints, but to "the fatal words of wise Voltaire" (lines 9-10). The poet's allusion in line 11, "Tout est dangereux et tout est nécessaire," leads us to Voltaire's "Zadig, ou la Destinée"<sup>35</sup>, and to a discussion between the eponymous protagonist of that story, a fictional Babylonian philosopher, and a hermit who is later revealed to be an angel sent to guide Zadig to greater wisdom. In debating various concepts, they comment upon "the passions," wherein the hermit utters the line used by Crosby:

They spoke of the passions. "Ah! how harmful they are!" said Zadig.

"They are the winds that fill the sails of the vessel," retorted the hermit.

"They sometimes submerge it, but without them it could not sail. Bile makes us angry and ill, but without bile man could not live. All is dangerous here below, and all is necessary." ("Zadig" 167)

The expected rejection of bodily pleasure is inverted, as it will be throughout Crosby's poetic ethos: where so-called conventional wisdom of Protestant stoicism, whose epicenter may well be the Boston of his birth, is considered the norm, Crosby instead embraces the epicurean attitude of the hermit in the story and holds pleasure and experience as necessary. Rather than reject the living of life in favor of an inculcated guilt, the poet seeks to purge the "long-dead" morality that has grown stale and

backwards-looking from his body (line 14). The arrival of the poem at its final image of “This long-dead foetus from my strangled womb” – an image calculated to be shocking, perhaps even blasphemous, to the staid Christian readership one might assume – may seem abrupt, but it deflects expectations not only of adherence to an established form of confessional poetry, but also in the preconception that the poet’s voice must remain subordinate to the cohesion of the poetic conceit. This unformed but potentially theoretically ambitious maneuver on Crosby’s part, poet made primary over poem, subtly foreshadows the development of the “tirade” form Crosby will later explore in *Mad Queen*.

The partnership with illustrator Alastair was brief but fruitful: *Red Skeletons* remains among the most sought-after Black Sun volumes largely because of its color plates<sup>36</sup>. A nod to the Decadence movement and art deco, both experimental elements straddling either side of the fin-de-siècle, Crosby knowingly taps the spirit of the Grand Guignol as a tactic to reject any association that might be drawn between Crosby and strict formalism by dint of his adoption of standard poetic forms. The copy from Harry Crosby’s personal library bears two quotations handwritten on one of the front leaves in blue pen: from T.S. Eliot’s “The Sacred Wood,” “the contemplation of the horrid or sordid or disgusting, by an artist, is the necessary and negative impulse toward the pursuit of beauty,” and an excerpt from Edwin Muir’s analysis of *Ulysses*: “for the sincere artist is distinguished from the rest by the fact that his essential concern is with the things that make him suffer, the things, in other words, which stand between him and freedom” (*James Joyce: A Documentary Volume* 232). This quote no doubt informs Crosby’s exploration of a poetic voice peculiarly preoccupied with mortality and pain. One of the

most often reproduced prints from the volume, accompanying the poem “Baudelaire,” embodies the volume’s counter-reactionary approach: the poet Baudelaire, bound at the wrists, kneels with a smirk inside a voluptuous red mouth bearing fangs.

*Red Skeletons* demonstrates emphatically via its praxis that one may implement classic poetic forms as a tool without surrendering to the mainstream. The collection follows four Whitmanesque editions of *Sonnets for Caresse* as more an editorial exercise than a showcase of new poetry – most of its contents are reprinted from the earlier collection, but are the best choices, demonstrating Crosby’s maturing eye for both of his chosen crafts, poetry and publication. We know this only through hindsight, however; it has been all too easy to substitute a facile symbolic version of Crosby for the real poet and person, a cipher that covers both the individual and the work he produced. Along with Pound’s assessment that Crosby’s death was “a vote of confidence in the cosmos,” taken in context, the extent to which Crosby served to mystify even his peers into widely divergent takes on his motivations and principles – by design – comes into sharper focus. Indeed, Malcolm Cowley sets up Crosby as an entirely inappropriate metonym for the “Lost Generation” with the assumption that those who had survived it all consequently ‘reformed’:

His death, which had seemed an act of isolated and crazy violence, began to symbolize the decay from within and the suicide of a whole order with which he had been identified. [...] The lost generation had ceased to deserve its name; the members of it had either gone under, like Crosby and Crane after him, or else found their places in the world. (Cowley 284)

The patronizing implication that only two choices – death or rehabilitation – existed for the expatriates deserves little attention on its face, nor does the logical extension that Harry Crosby might have ‘grown up’ had he not killed himself. It is also far too simplistic to make one individual the exemplar and representative for any community, particularly one made of such disparate elements as those who congregated in Paris after the First World War, but this is exactly the error to which Cowley falls prey: not only does he use Harry’s suicide as a transitive critique of all of the 1920s, but also designates Crosby as a sort of scapegoat who took those excesses with him to the grave, somehow purifying the survivors into sobriety.

Malcolm Cowley’s words carry with them a certain presumption of weight given the historical situation: Cowley walked among the circles of the “Lost Generation” and met Harry Crosby in person, albeit briefly. On the other hand, the judgment does not fit particularly well in the general narrative provided by those who knew Crosby and, more importantly, his body of work. One can accept that the memoria in the 1930 issue of *transition* carry the hint of the proper decorum paid to a recently deceased person (and perhaps recursively to the magazine itself: in the wake of Crosby’s death, *transition* suspended publication for two years); nonetheless, the assessment of peers intimately engaged in the communal project of the 1920s avant-garde was that Crosby lived his art – its intensity was not a sign of an unfocused intellect, but of a genuinely lived philosophy which creates an identity between life and art. Cowley takes Crosby to task for failing to mold his poetry to an extant morality, when quite the opposite was Crosby’s *modus operandi*: the shaping of a morality in poetry.

Contrasting Portraits of Crosby: Wolff and Kahn

Geoffrey Wolff, on the other hand, reads selections from Harry Crosby in such a way as to prefigure a fatalistic view of the artist as a victim of an inevitable doom. Wolff's analysis in *Black Sun: The Brief Transit and Violent Death of Harry Crosby* also discredits itself through its early and frequent repetition of the biographer's predetermined conclusion that Crosby's work is not literarily worthwhile: "I understood when I began that I would not introduce the world to a great lost poet, or even a good one" (319). Besides begging the question, this assumption misses a crucial point; a writer with as prolific and rapid an output as Crosby's necessarily produces works of varying quality.

Further, by Wolff's own attestation, Harry Crosby was born not a poet but a banker, and was completely self-taught as a writer, learning his craft by reading voraciously and imitating styles as they entered his poetic vocabulary (180-1). Here, the unfortunate consequences of the weight attributed to Crosby's "erratic" and "public" apprenticeship once more dilute the poet's reception disproportionately: "Geoffrey Wolff broke from Cowley's example by refusing to accord Crosby representative status, but his decision instead to focus on Crosby as exemplifying a weak and indulgent character, while it made for a gripping (if heavily moralistic) narrative, hardly served to promote interest in his writings" (Brunner). The emphasis placed in *Black Sun* on the polished result rather than the arduous process betrays an adherence to rote definitions of literary value is evident from Wolff's backhanded compliment at the end of the list of traits used to describe Crosby's poetry: "energy, will, a breathtaking ignorance of literary conceit"

(317). What evidence exists regarding Crosby's painstaking process indicates that Crosby was far from ignorant in the craft of writing, either in its actual practice or its tools; rather, Wolff mistakes willingness, even eagerness, to defy convention as an inability to conform to it<sup>37</sup>. It is not for nothing that Crosby's first two volumes consisted largely of sonnets, a form to which he had newly been introduced and which served as a typical practice form for burgeoning poets; nor is it coincidental that, anecdotally, Crosby later took a shotgun, then a torch, to eighty copies of his first work<sup>38</sup> (Wolff). They had fulfilled their role as his apprenticeship, and adopted a new role as burnt sacrifice to the sun: Crosby's need to rely on form had dwindled as his poetic confidence and energy waxed.

One finds a far more knowing and helpful map of Crosby's poetic evolution in Sy Kahn's brief essay "The Slender Fire of Harry Crosby" than in the entirety of Wolff's biography. What Wolff dismisses as poor artistry, Kahn identifies as a calculated poetic strategy while characterizing its results as uneven:

In the poet's fascination with speed, with violence and with death, in his search for a personal idiom, in his experimentation with form and with the syncopated rhythm of the jazz age, he is part of the American expatriate temper of the twenties.... His poetry, sometimes clumsy in form and banal of phrase, but when successful, swift, compact and compressed, articulates his mysticism and is unlike the work of his contemporaries. (Kahn 6)

This disservice to Crosby's work, in assuming that "evenness" is itself a virtue of literary output and thus implicitly diminishing experimentation as a praxis in poetic creation, repeats one of the major *a priori* stance of literary criticism and in so doing gives it

further credence. The pursuit of evenness is, furthermore and more significantly, itself an uneven criterion, for we need not look far to find examples of unevenness in other lauded modernist poets: not only staid bulwarks of the early twentieth-century diachronic canon such as Eliot or Stein or Pound, but certainly in the avant-garde, who rejected evenness and predictability as a matter of course, such as Marinetti or Duchamp. To dismiss Crosby on this point, then, is superfluous.

Though Kahn's later scholarly contribution, the collection entitled *Devour the Fire*, does not engage directly in critical analysis, Kahn's editorial hand hews to his personal closeness with Caresse Crosby until her death; the fact that Kahn does not present a complete view of Harry Crosby's work, but retreads the same reprinted material with little addition, telegraphs his loyalties; Caresse took an active hand in serving as the gatekeeper to Harry's work and reputation for several decades following his death, going so far as to remove material from his diaries that upset her or reminded her of those of Harry's affairs that she found disagreeable, and the work that sees print most often is that which was selected years earlier as that which conformed to Caresse's model for his aesthetic and output. Curiously, *Devour the Fire* devotes more pages to excerpts from *Transit of Venus* than any of the other volumes: this could logically be attributed to their relative quality, coming as they did late in Crosby's career and representing his particular idiom as well as the progress of his craft. The weight given to *Transit of Venus* may also be an artifact of its material accessibility: eight-hundred and fourteen copies were printed over three editions (counting the posthumous issuance), more than any of his other collections.<sup>39</sup>

Ultimately, while Sy Kahn styled himself a champion of Harry Crosby, his main contribution is partial and ineffectual: one selected (as opposed to complete) collection of poetry, and one critical essay, may have seemed enough to bolster what must have felt like a resurgence in interest in Harry Crosby in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but apart from a small number of Crosby-inspired works (most of which are catalogued in Southern Illinois University's archive of the Crosby papers), the surge ended soon afterward, returning Crosby to relative obscurity.

#### Foundations for Recuperation: Rothenberg and Nelson

Compared to Sy Kahn's uneven survey of Crosby's poetry in *Devour the Fire*, Jerome Rothenberg's selections in *Revolution of the Word* are more poetically daring<sup>40</sup> and convey a more vital sense of the range of Harry Crosby's poetry, as well as including the aforementioned editorial headnote<sup>41</sup>, which hints at ways to consider the *corpus in absentia*; Crosby's inclusion is one fragment in a larger mosaic of Rothenberg's overarching narrative concerning lost poets. Rothenberg divides his collection into several categories; the first, "Preliminaries", is where one would expect a dismissive entry on Crosby to be in most anthologies, but Rothenberg's placement of Crosby in his second chapter, entitled "Continuities", is telling, for it reinforces the narrative that recurs sporadically throughout the twentieth century that Crosby is a linking figure between several disparate bodies under the greater heading of modernism, and important because of that interstitial position.



It cannot be coincidental that Rothenberg names his collection after the influential manifesto with Crosby's name prominently at the head of the signatories, which appeared under his editorship in *transition*, for the document's emphatic declamatory voice is of a piece with Crosby's poetic demeanor, and would come to be associated more widely with the bold innovations of language that Crosby and his contemporaries would forge during the 1920s. The thumbnail sketch Rothenberg provides of the rise and fall of Crosby's literary reputation, as mentioned earlier, is tantalizing in brevity: "In the last two years of his life, Crosby had developed into a major image-making poet. [...] But in the anti-'modernist' reaction of the 1930s he was turned into a virtual non-person" (131). Going on to quote at length from Pound's introduction to *Torchbearer*, Rothenberg further intimates that "the importance of [Crosby's] vision would seem clear" to contemporary scholars in light of the mysticism manifest in his poetry. While this optimistic statement does not seem to have borne long-lived fruit, the 1970s did produce the most notable surge of interest in Crosby – Rothenberg, Kahn, and Lamantia. Of readerly importance, *Devour the Fire* remains the most academically credible collection (if incomplete) of Crosby's poetry, while for scholars, Nelson's *Anthology of Modern American Poetry* lacks the broad range of primary material but synergizes with a companion website containing useful analytical essays and supplemental material to expand awareness of Crosby's literary significance ([www.english.illinois.edu/maps/](http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/)).

This scholarly gap wants to be filled, the spaces between the firm categories of the extant taxonomy explored; modernist studies in general would benefit a more extensive and inclusive examination of Harry Crosby's work than has been attempted before, due to the richness of the spaces between, which include individuals such as

Harry Crosby, who defy the established scholarly divisions. While the efforts of specific anthologists and critics to include Crosby in larger discussion of neglect and neglected artists is meritorious – Cary Nelson’s use of several Crosby poems in *Repression and Recovery*, or Jerome Rothenberg’s selections for *Revolution of the Word*, stand out – individual attention is, of course, the most direct and obvious form this critical exploration could take, and precedent can be found in the reclamation efforts of such figures as Mina Loy, whose work was not only laboriously reclaimed but expanded with other lost Loy texts as *The Lost Lunar Baedeker* by Roger Conover. Unfortunately, for Crosby studies, *Devour the Fire* remains the only comparable product of such an undertaking; furthermore, its critical apparatus is hidden within the editorial function, as opposed to being presented directly. A fuller and more complete awareness of Crosby’s importance to his literary moment requires the production of a volume which presents Crosby fairly for general consideration. Other “lost” moderns have benefited from recuperative critical collections, such as Elizabeth Bell’s *Kay Boyle: A Study of the Short Fiction* or Maera Shreiber & Keith Tuma’s *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet*; there has been no equivalent volume to survey Crosby’s output or establish scholarship in one authoritative volume, nor even a single collection of works.

As mentioned earlier, fewer than one in ten of Crosby’s poems have been reprinted in any volume whatsoever. As illustrated in the introduction, Figure 1 demonstrates the percentages of Harry Crosby’s poems that have been reprinted, appeared only in Black Sun Press publications, appeared only in third-party publications, or have gone entirely unprinted. What critical analysis exists concerning these select available excerpts cannot adequately represent Harry Crosby’s work; beyond the usual

handful of reprinted selections found in Rothenberg and Nelson, and neglected by Kahn's selected volume, a significant body of variegated work awaits scholarly attention. Indeed, the poetry published by the Black Sun Press and other publishing organs is itself incomplete: a number of poems remain among the Crosby archives, unpublished among his papers and notes. Only when "read all together" at Pound's advice does a thorough portrait of Harry Crosby as an artist emerge, setting his development parallel to those regularly espoused as iconic or representative of the modernist movement overall.

#### Address by Crosby's Poetic Contemporaries

As important as Crosby's role in the production of various texts may be, it is also important to look at the texts he inspired. While a survey of the entirety of the Black Sun catalogue would be an interesting read to scholars of modernism, creating a sense of Crosby's broad influence as a patron and contributor to the corpus of modernist literature as a publisher, the best point of entry for greater awareness of Crosby's legacy for scholars who may be clinging to more conventional modes of criticism remains an examination of primary texts. Reintroducing Crosby's own primary texts of course remains the top priority for an attempt to revive his work into canonical consideration. At the same time, placing Crosby in a continuity of influence also strengthens the case for his reclamation. Rather than limit our examination to a cross-section of works by Crosby himself, thus, we will include poems written in response to the poet, dating not only from the period immediately surrounding his career but also from subsequent generations of poets demonstrating the persistent resonance Crosby continues to hold as a poetic figure.

One of the most persistent signals of influence continues to be the impulse to talk about Harry Crosby<sup>42</sup>. On the one hand, there remains the sporadic drive to reprint Harry Crosby's poetry or writing, which is itself recursively also an engine for further influence – when a poet is reprinted, his or her work is manifestly given the opportunity to enter the bricolage of future critics and artists alike. This is inevitably problematic, because of the difficult task of verifying copyright to a given work, compounded by the fact that what copyright does exist appears to be unenforced. Recently, small presses have emulated Crosby's passion for disseminating poetry (and, perhaps, his disregard for the formalities thereof) by publishing Crosby's work; in February of 2011, Soul Bay Press in the United Kingdom published *Ladders to the Sun* from poems located freely on the internet, which were typically themselves acquired second- or third-hand from prior sources.

But, on the other hand, many of those who choose to attend to Crosby in the current day betray a continuing fascination with Crosby's life rather than his work. Even those platforms that would seem to be suited to giving an audience to Crosby's poetry sometimes omit to do so. *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* printed an excerpt from the Black Sparrow Press republication of *Shadows of the Sun*, Crosby's diaries, in 1971, as did the Library of America's *Americans in Paris*, retitled "Paris Diaries," but neither included any poetry to accompany the excerpts. The Library of America includes "Vision" and "Photoheliograph" in volume two of its collection of twentieth century American poetry

Indirect influence – aspects of modern poetry which hearken to innovations in which Crosby had an immediate hand – are more subtle but pervasive. There remains a very real sense that Crosby serves as a floating signifier, encountered sporadically by poets in the intervening years, seemingly by happenstance, and to whom he serves as an

inspirational figure to which some sort of artistic response is necessary. What further intrigues the investigator on Crosby's trail throughout contemporary literature is the far-flung reach of his influence: there seems, in fact, to be little commonality between those artists who stumble upon Harry Crosby and, struck by the singular nature of his career, accede to the compulsion to address him in their own work.

Some points of reference do exist to connect these disparate instances of influence, although many of them are red herrings. Many poets trace the same arc in their development as Harry Crosby: the untutored neophyte begins to self-instruct, first adopting and imitating conventional forms, only to abandon them and experiment with less confining modes of composition. It would be inaccurate at best to say that Crosby created this pattern: the path is well established in Western poetry dating back at least as far as Chaucer's day. But its iteration as expressed in modernism in the twentieth century could well take Harry Crosby as its exemplar: the confluence of literary and societal forces which shaped the "Lost Generation" were more perfectly blended in the life and work of Harry Crosby than any of his more well-known compatriots.

Direct influence remains easy to identify and to locate: despite Harry Crosby's obscurity, he remains a totemic figure among a small group of poets who discover his life and work. Naming Crosby in their own work, these artists acknowledge a resonance between themselves and their subject, though this often comes with a need to critique his excesses, his methods or simply the poet himself, as an attempt to create a safe distance and prevent too much identification. One may divide the poetic commentary on Harry Crosby into two neat groups: those pieces written by individuals who knew the living Harry Crosby, and those written after his death. There is a necessarily different timbre to

those artifacts penned by those who knew Crosby in life (and by extension experienced the wake caused by his death); despite what one may assume, though, not all of the poems inspired by Crosby's passing were softened by the desire to speak kindly of the recently deceased<sup>43</sup>. The most sustained critical discussion surrounding Crosby from those who knew him continues to be the quartet of literati who penned the four introductory passages to the posthumous collections discussed above (Eliot, Gilbert, Lawrence and Pound), but other prominent peers also felt the compulsion to comment upon Crosby, and particularly upon his death.

E. E. Cummings composed "y is a WELL-KNOWN ATHLETE'S BRIDE" specifically about the double suicide of Harry Crosby and Josephine Rotch Bigelow; though the poets were acquainted, Cummings and Crosby did not share as jovial a relationship as some others among the Parisian literary community. Their similar experiences during World War I gave them bonding material, but Cummings' literary career required no intervention on Crosby's part to buoy it – Cummings, a well-known contrarian, preferred the lash of controversy in a way that even Joyce did not, and would not have accepted assistance getting his challenging work into print for fear of being seen as capitulating to popular sentiment. As a result, the two interacted mainly as peers and little else. The characteristically biting observation of Cummings' poetry, while perhaps muted in respect, is not withheld. Cummings' poem was published in 1931 and seems to predate William Carlos Williams' own musing on the double suicide, "The Death of See," (Figure 6, discussed below) which did not appear in print until 1938 (according to the date given in the McGowan and Litz collected volume), but both use an elision to

refer to Crosby: Williams substitutes the homophone “See” for the initial “C” in referring to Crosby, while Cummings slurs this verbal abbreviation further into “z” (line 3).

The language Cummings uses to refer to the couple, both individually and together, begins as markedly diminutive of the pair: Crosby is “z,” while Josephine is “y,” and in referring to the tableau of their bodies side-by-side in bed upon their discovery, Cummings simply dubs them “yz” (lines 1-12). This section of the poem is preoccupied with recounting the practiced and distanced confusion of journalists (“‘?’ quote the front” referring to the scandal’s appearance on the front pages of Boston newspapers, however briefly), and may be intended to suggest that the couple was being unfairly objectified in the rush to gawk over the impropriety of the affair, as the poet refers to them subsequently via proper pronouns (lines 10; 32-33).

However, in an early aside, the speaker indulges in some further diminution, this time of Crosby’s adoption of affectations: “z” is “an infrafairy/ of floating ultrawrists” (lines 4-5). The homophobia towards Crosby, who was known to commingle effeminate behavior with his “alpha male” sexuality, is undisguised – “infrafairy” means “below/less than a fairy” – but is conflicted: “I could have been/ You,You/ might have been I” (lines 7-9). The reductive imagery recurs in the image of the dead lovers as “boston/ Dolls” laid out in their shared deathbed (lines 24-25). Repeated use of the word “lullaby” throughout the poem similarly suggests the speaker’s view of the deceased as somehow childish, but also connotes a wish for the subjects to remain peacefully asleep, perhaps out of a subconscious, superstitious fear that speaking so slyly ill of the dead may result in unfortunate consequences.

There is, however, a strong sense of grudgingly-accorded respect in Cummings' poem: the critical remarks are maybe too pointed not to come from a position of concern, particularly when the sense of similarity between the speaker and the subject is equally sharp. Continually interrupting with parentheticals, the speaker attempts to make some sort of appealing admonition to honor the dead: "let(however)us/ Walk very(therefore and)softly among one's/ memory" (lines 17-19). The lines seem to address nobody so much as the speaker himself or herself, a reminder to the self to be cordial about the deceased even if one does not feel much sympathy for the victims, if for no other reason than that the uncomfortable similarities between the two suggest that the speaker is fearful of meeting the same end despite the best protestations.

Kay Boyle's opinions of Crosby changed periodically through the remainder of her life, at times as caustic as Cummings' would be – Geoffrey Wolfe would recount sharper opinions on Boyle's part from interviews later in life (conducted as part of the writing of *Black Sun*) - but at the time Boyle composed "A Valentine for Harry Crosby," which remained out of print until *The Collected Poems of Kay Boyle*, she was obviously more light with her touch than Cummings, and Boyle's poem betrays that Crosby's death had a noteworthy impact upon her. Though most of the poem is an apostrophe to Crosby himself, she makes a sidelong comment to the reader regarding her subject's worth, and her recommendation is on par with that of Pound, though more concise: "He is to be read of in history,/ A gentle gentleman speaking words that shake the teeth in the head" (lines 24-25). As perhaps homage to Crosby's solar obsession, she uses the imagery of the sun shining through a heart of eisinglass, and establishes a symbolic connection to a goat which will recur at the end of the stanza (lines 1-3).



The choice is peculiar, as it seems to be a private association rather than a connection to the circumstances of either Harry's life or death (he was not a Capricorn, for instance, nor did his suicide take place under that sign; since the poem is dated 1929, the best explanation requires that we take the poem as having been written near Valentine's Day 1929, early in the year and thus predating the death by months, as the portion of the calendar corresponding to Capricorn ends on or around 14 February). The goat is beautiful in anger, however, and it awaits the presence of spring in a subtly hopeful way – not to caper in the warmth, but to “sniff and bleat and nibble” on it, presumably to consume it (lines 3-13).

Boyle's poem stylistically also evokes Crosby's style, though not aping it, broken into subsections with titles, for instance, just as in the compositions of many of the pieces in Crosby's final volume of tirades; there is a “Complaint” and a “Refrain,” with recurring images of “lace” and of “frost” (sometimes in conjunction) evoking both the winter weather and an aura of funerary decoration, foreshadowing and anticipating mourning: the wish, to counteract the pall of cold, is “a day to go naked in [...] / Other days more to your measure” in which the all-encompassing sun of Crosby's personal cosmos would be ascendant – readable as a wish for the prominence of Crosby's poetry and poetic ethos to rise (lines 36; 40). The cold of Valentine's Day, the poet says to Crosby, “fits you badly,” and the warmer days of April or June are more suitable (lines 37-43). However, for an irrepressible poet concerned with an ardent existence full of passion, even such a cold season contains “a bonfire at which to thaw your fingers” (lines 37; 45).

Ultimately, the vigor of the individual must give way to natural forces, presaging and attempting to justify the loss of a person known for extraordinary vitality:

The crocus quivers like a young goat's ear.  
 And you, what month are you, what wind that lies  
 As sweet as squirrel skin underneath the chin?  
 What time of year that sows no seeds, and reaps none,  
 Gives the weeded ground, the barren branch, makes way for spring  
 By root, by sap; draws close the February rains and bids them snuff the  
                   beacon of your life  
 To let you sleep and sleep and sleep awhile  
 Until a fresher season swoon between your thighs? (lines 49-56)

The difficult acceptance of Crosby's mortality in light of his exuberant liveliness is assuaged with familiar imagery of flowers returning in the spring, gentle winds, and long sleep followed by a reawakening, but the metaphors are familiar and thus less comforting than they might be. Nature, too, is shown to be lecherous much like Crosby was reputed to be; the lacy gown of the year is blown up and down by curious winds in lines 46-47, a form of vitality that has its own fraught and difficult connotations. So, too, is the prospect of a "fresher season" to renew the sleeping Crosby tinged with a languid sexuality (lines 55-56). The repeated goat imagery calls to mind simultaneously not only the innocent notion of a young spring kid, suggesting life's cyclical nature and renewal, but also at the same time the darker symbolic invocation of the Devil of Judeo-Christian mythology, as succinctly enciphered as the Baphomet of Eliphas Levi familiar to many as the Devil of

the Tarot deck, among other appearances, associated with unbridled lust and self-centeredness.

William Carlos Williams' "The Death of See" (Figure 6) takes advantage of several years' distance from the deaths to insulate the speaker from such a harshly personal moment of introspection. The speaker speculates not just simply on the suicides

Fig. 6. Williams, William Carlos. "The Death of See."\*

### THE DEATH OF SEE

One morning  
the wind scouring  
the streets

I read: Poet  
and woman  
found shot dead

Pact seen in  
murder—  
Suicide in

artist's suite—  
Their bodies  
fully clothed

were found  
half covered  
by

a blanket—  
See  
was described as

a poet  
but when or  
where his

poems were  
published M. could  
not say . . .

Which adds  
a certain  
gravity—

Suddenly  
snow trees  
flashing

upon the mind  
from a clean  
world

which ended Crosby's story, but sketches along the arc of his life, providing a more meditative internal perspective which tempts the reader to treat it with more weight. There is a sense of cleanness evoked throughout the poem, a tabula rasa established not by being new but by the harshness of violence, beginning with "the wind scouring / the streets" on the morning of the news breaking (lines 2-3). The physical purity of the morning is echoed by the anomalous lack of scandalous detail at the scene of the deaths:

Their bodies  
fully clothed

were found  
half covered  
by

a blanket – (lines 11-16)

The details unfold as slowly as if one were narrating them salaciously in whispers to perhaps a comrade in the office, drawing out the suspense, but here there is no suspense, and the lovers are not revealed to be *in flagrante*. The incongruity of the scenario evokes for the speaker a heavily symbolic image of blankness:

Suddenly  
snow trees  
flashing

upon the mind<sup>1</sup>  
 from a clean  
 world (lines 28-33)

The “mind” in question here seems to be that of the speaker; implicitly, the speaking persona is one familiar with Crosby, as a stranger would have no cause or ability to reminisce about the departed. In a sort of metaphysical baptism (one of light and snow, not of water in a font – Williams may obliquely be evoking the cold of the December morning in which Crosby died, and the flash of the gunshot which ended him), not only does the world become “clean” – the poem ends with the world being cleansed, in fact – but the poet’s career is scrubbed clean by the sudden caesura, eclipsed (as we now know all too well) by the actuality of the twin deaths:

See  
 was described as  
  
 a poet  
 but when or  
 where his  
  
 poems were  
 published M. could  
 not say . . . . (lines 17-24)

---

<sup>1</sup> "The Death of See" By William Carlos Williams, from THE COLLECTED POEMS: VOLUME I, 1909-1939, copyright ©1938 by New Directions Publishing Corp. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

Crosby's obscurity works against him, as it has over the twentieth century: he is a half-remembered incident, a gauzy anecdote, but little more to "M," a fact that the poet observes without making comment. The "gravity" that this lends to the death for the speaker in line 27 is one that could likely only be fully grasped by one who actually knew Harry Crosby in life: knowing, for instance, of how visceral his life could be at times, likely even in those final hours before the death, adds a significance to the apparent chastity of the tableau of their bodies post-mortem that strikes observers by its incongruity.

Common in all three of these poetic addresses to Crosby is the feeling that he was something of an enigma, and far more enigmatic to each poet was the tragedy of his death. Just as critics find it difficult to neatly categorize Crosby's work, so too did his peers have divergent opinions on Crosby and his burgeoning myth: Boyle is sympathetic and mournful, Williams's grief is tempered with contemplation, and Cummings seems to want to mask his remembrance in disapproval. This is possibly due to a difference in poetic sensibility; it would take several more decades for figures to begin to offer more in-depth apologia for Crosby's work and life.

#### Crosby, Rothenberg, Lamantia

While a number of important poets have acknowledged Harry Crosby as influential, that number remains small; further complicating the case, the majority of them do not directly demonstrate that influence in their poetry, but in other realms, identifying their awareness of Crosby as an oblique member of their internal library of

references. The two most prominent poetic voices of the twentieth century to utter the name of Harry Crosby are Jerome Rothenberg and Philip Lamantia. Rothenberg is the foremost exemplar of the larger category: while Rothenberg champions Crosby in his anthology and editorial work, reprinting selections of Crosby in the journal *Alcheringa* and his collection *Revolution of the Word*<sup>44</sup>, the most immediately comparable aspect of Rothenberg's own poetry – his mystical language – is personal and is derived from his Jewish heritage and descent from the rabbinical line, not an attempt to express a Crosbyan persona of poet-as-sibyl. This is an unfortunate oversight, perhaps, since Rothenberg would have the advantage of following the line of thought that arises from the posthumous appendices offered by both Pound and Eliot, both of whom were firm in their categorization of Crosby as a mystical poet. Pound situated Crosby at the “antithesis of artist and illuminatus,” perhaps misapprehending the meaning of the term antithesis but still clearly signaling Crosby as a liminal figure, not entirely poet and therefore not entirely suitable for reading by critics – rather, Pound asserts, there is “pure theology” in Crosby's output and thus theologians are best suited to examine it (*Torchbearer* x).

On the other hand, Lamantia consciously operates in a mode of transcendental surrealism that hearkens to Crosby's poesis. Lamantia's essay, provided in full in Appendix II, cites Crosby directly in the third volume of *Arsenal/Surrealist Subversion* as “a true dandy of explosively Promethean desire” who

[...] left in *The* [sic] Mad Queen and elsewhere, a “Sadean” magnanimity in the realms of mad love; before him, in America, perhaps none but Poe, in a few of his most “ectoplasmic” descents (and in the spirit of Eureka), comes to mind as purely comparable. (“Poetic Matters” 9)

Lamantia taps Crosby as an “immediate precursor” to the American Surrealist movement along with Samuel Greenberg and Mina Loy, trumpeting them as counterexamples or antidotes to the “stultifying provincialism” mainstream of poetic discourse (“Poetic Matters” 8). Lamantia approaches the same fiery diatribe of Crosby’s own tirades, even drawing at times upon the disdainful remarks of Rimbaud and Baudelaire, two of Crosby’s own poetic heroes; there is similarity between Crosby’s invective in such late specimens as “Target for Disgust” and the vituperation with which Lamantia critiques accepted literary canon of his day, which he terms a

[...] parasitic literary charade played at the expense of any sign of disinterested and unqualified human freedom, for which these respectable gangs of the pimps of Literature and Art do their utmost to isolate, if not by a noisy confusionism, then by well known “conspiracies of silence” and scandal mongering, (8)

In Lamantia’s poetry, we can detect a hearkening back to Crosby: structure is the two most readily comparable elements of Lamantia’s construction, both the structure of discrete phrases and the composition of whole pieces on the page. The poem “Hypochondriac Weather” resembles one of Crosby’s later prose-poetic entries, such as those found in *Sleeping Together* or *Mad Queen*, utilizing terse run-on sentences to project a concentrated burst of imagery:

The cavernous overhead opens millipedes of submarine  
postcards I cannot count to nail where the rhombus  
lamb fondles the brain of roseate grails. The sleight-of-



hand wisdom v-necks the humming hair which grips  
 the mastodon of oil that scrutinizes with the glass of  
 Bedlam the beds flying in half across the blindfolded  
 barricades. (79)

The language is much more in line with what we now think of as “surreal”: the impossible image fragments that are juxtaposed to jar readers rely heavily on non sequitur (“submarine/ postcards” or “the rhombus/ lamb” being just two instances) are more in line perhaps with subsequent generations’ understandings of surrealism as opposed to the principles of those responsible for launching the movement, but certainly recognizable in relation to the descriptor.

Lamantia, like Crosby, also draws back one level from directly using dream imagery to talk about using dream imagery, engaging in meta-commentary that foregrounds the focus on dreams in both poets’ work. “Oneiric Reversal” demonstrates self-awareness through the use of the first person voice to acknowledge the speaker’s dream state much as Crosby’s dream journal pieces do; the poem leads with the pronoun “I”, which recurs, embedded once in each of the subsequent two stanzas, making the engagement with the dream a personal affair, an experience rather than a vision. The language in the poem becomes darker for the second half; in those next three stanzas, the speaker no longer refers to themselves directly, perhaps receding from the rising tide of threatening images, having been “medused” in the last appearance (line 9). The scene shifts as the title indicates: a collage of symbols of power and heroism (a “signet” in line 1, the “golden lance” of Night in line 4) gives way to “spiked faces” in line 7, “necrophile” children in line 15 (perhaps a nod to Crosby’s early sonnet bearing that

title), and other images that accrete throughout the poem and from which emerge an increasingly oppressive feel reminiscent of purgatory and damnation.

Both poets also invoke external sources as authority for their spiritual proclamations: that is, external not only to themselves, as a priest or shaman would call upon their presiding greater spirit, but external to their culture of origin. Each has their own cultural preference – Crosby prefers to draw upon Middle Eastern (particularly Egyptian) lore to provide his mysticism with a vocabulary, while Lamantia tends to speak on metaphysical matters in the terms set forth by First Peoples cultures of the Southwestern United States – but both are willing to draw upon common symbolism present in Western culture from a variety of sources. Lamantia’s “Precipitous Oracle” refers not only to that Greek prophet in the title, but references the “athanor” in line 3, the slow-burning furnace of alchemy which provided heat to the crucible. In line 11, Lamantia refers to “the quiltwork of aura,” which could ambiguously refer either to the Greek personification of light wind or breezes, or to the spiritualist term for a visible field of color surrounding a person’s body, or the colloquial use related to the previous sense, that of a general ambience or emanation; the usage suggests the poet’s comfort with mythological language, a move befitting the first wave of surrealists, which also figure heavily into Crosby’s oeuvre by absorption from his major inspirations.

Lamantia and Rothenberg approach Crosby as sympathetic figures, each identifying Crosby’s poetics. The two (particularly Rothenberg) are also responsible for helping maintain Crosby’s tenuous position within the collective academic memory as a so-called minor poet, as opposed to being wholly forgotten; Cary Nelson in particular would pick up the idea of a vague and unreliable “cultural memory” which not only has

forgotten poets, but has forgotten that it has forgotten them, in *Repression and Recovery*, with several nods to Rothenberg's *Revolution of the Word* as a precursor to Nelson's own work. Keeping Crosby in the minds of literary critics, however peripherally, has managed to yield more recent poetic responses to Crosby as well.

#### Other Poetic Responses from Subsequent Generations

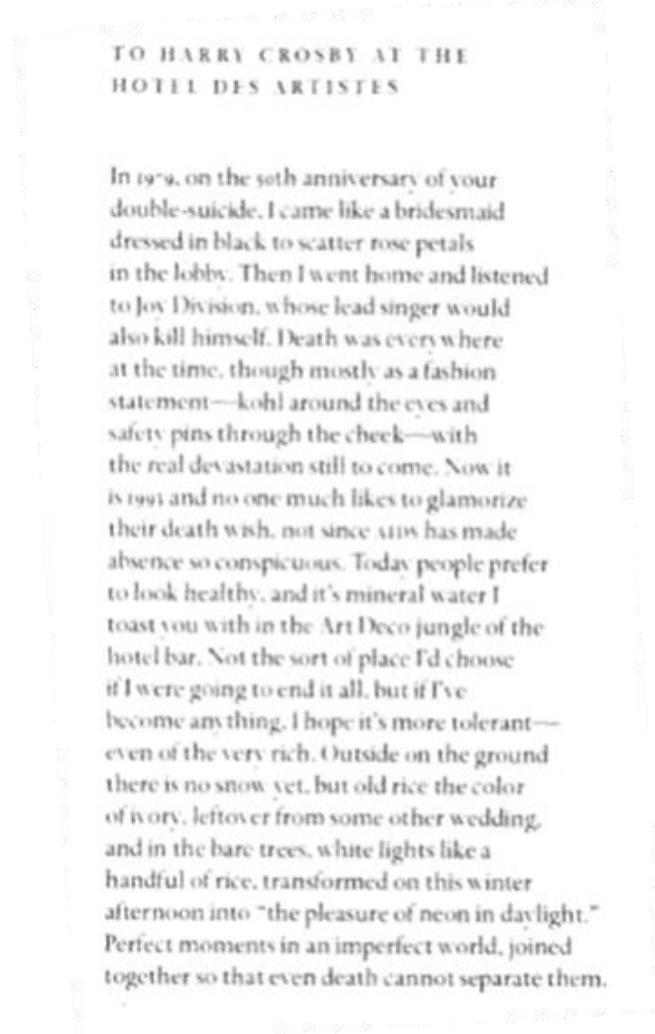
The complexity of Crosby's life remains unfortunately beyond many more modern observers, who misconstrue it as incongruity. Poet Yusef Komunyakaa addresses Crosby (and his mistress) in the poem "Etymology," in the collection *Talking Dirty to the Gods*, which strikes the reader familiar with Komunyakaa's work in a peculiar way simply by its existence, for it strays from the typical subject matter with which Komunyakaa normally deals — specifically, the experiences of a black man in the southern United States, as well as that of a war veteran. "Etymology" begins with the odd choice of a very formal address: Komunyakaa refers to his subject in line 1 as "Henry Crosby," his official birth name, rather than the more familiar nickname. This standoffish posture spins quickly into rhetorical antagonism, though always ambiguous: is Komunyakaa criticizing Harry and Josephine's suicide, or the moralizing sentiments which followed it, or agreeing with them, for instance by referring to Josephine with her married surname of Bigelow (line 2)? When Komunyakaa writes that "Jazz made them cock / The hammer & pull the trigger," we are unsure whether this is the disapproving voice of Boston society or that of a poet removed by sixty years from the event (lines 6-7).

In fact, the second stanza begins with a fragment that doesn't follow from the abrupt emdash at the end of the prior stanza, "Blaming it on black music / & dance," but we are left to consider who exactly could be laying the blame, if not the dead lovers, even though they would grammatically be the subject of the broken sentence despite all logic (lines 5-6). The grammar breaks down in a way that resembles Crosby's own disregard for the strictures of syntax in favor of a naturalistically broken cadence conveying passion, but Komunyakaa hews only to the form and not the passion underlying the rhythm. The sense is of the speaker reacting judgmentally toward the suicide from the position of a disapproving conservative eager to pronounce their displeasure at the display of loose morals: the presumption of a preexisting state of purity sullied when "Valves of a horn sprung the locks/ on chastity" betrays a bald unfamiliarity with the nature of the Crosbys' marriage as an openly mutual polyamorous arrangement (lines 8-9). The best defense for such a position might be as a depiction of the frowning Boston Brahmins disavowing the scandal in satire<sup>45</sup>, but Komunyakaa never provides a hint of such sarcastic role-playing. At the conclusion of the poem, the speaker barely veers away from the obviously fallacious theory that jazz music motivated the deaths as it "revised / Eighteenth-century minds with a 4/4 / beat" but fails to offer a counter-argument, which ultimately makes the refutation limp and powerless without any rhetorical substance, no more suggestive than a trailed-off clause, a verbal ellipsis and a shrug rather than a case (lines 13-15).

Komunyakaa doesn't so much miss the point entirely as indulge in a facile contemporary critique of a figure more complicated than his circumstances, and in doing so his stance falls into the same trap as Malcolm Cowley: that of reducing Crosby to a

metonym for his era. By comparison Elaine Equi embraces the Crosby ethos, if from the vantage of distance over time and societal drift; however, her grasp of Crosby is blunted by her attempt to decontextualize her subject and transplant him temporally into a 1990s milieu. Her poem “To Harry Crosby in the Hotel Des Artistes” (Figure 7) combines sentimentality and self-awareness in a dense free verse elegy considering the shift over time in American cultural attitudes with regard to death. Her single stanza is slab-like on the page, a monument-like rectangle of 26 lines of text (though not fully justified on the right, leaving the craggy impression of an eroded edifice). Its content, however, weaves and meanders: the speaker’s ritual observance of the death anniversary of Crosby and Rotche cannot help, because it is the postmodern era, but be juxtaposed with the band Joy Division, “whose lead singer<sup>46</sup>/ would also kill himself” (“To Harry Crosby,” lines 5-6).

Fig. 7. Equi, Elaine. "To Harry Crosby at the Hotel Des Artistes."\*



The speaker comments on both the funerary fashion of the 1920s and the violent personal aesthetics of the punk movement, “kohl around the eyes and/ safety pins through the cheek,” the latter in particular appearing as somewhat naïve and dated in the advent of the AIDS epidemic, even though both images have more recent connotations as adopted signifiers of the punk movement (lines 8-12). This decision seems sub-optimal, neglecting the richness of the poetic potential of comparing Crosby’s experience as a veteran of World War I (about which he was open; he included his war diaries as part of

*Shadows of the Sun*) is a missed <sup>2</sup>opportunity that perhaps is only apparent in hindsight. Crosby, as with most of the “Lost Generation”, was heavily informed by the wake of World War I, and Equi’s poem, dated circa 1994, could easily have drawn a more apt comparison with the then-recent first military conflict in Iraq to properly create context. Whether this is an oversight or a deliberate refusal on Equi’s part is unknown: the decision would not be without its risks, as the “Lost Generation” existed in the wake of a thoroughly devastating and traumatizing personal experience with the First World War, whereas American society was largely insulated from the costs of Desert Storm. The speaker’s assertion that “no one much likes to glamorize their death wish” in lines 11-12 calls attention to the shift between the past and the present: there is a certain “fashionability” to the death and destruction of the First Iraq War as a result of that insulation, particularly among the hawkish segments of the American population, but it is a bloodlust rather than a death wish, and the celebrants of 1991 are inclined to treat war as sport rather than as a serious international conflict. Equi’s theatricality in mourning Crosby may serve as a commentary upon the artifice of death, both in Crosby’s own decadent era and the modern antecedent movements.

The appearances of Harry Crosby in the art of subsequent generations are sporadic and personal: generally, an individual discovers the obscure story of the poet and is inspired to respond, feeling a compulsion to acknowledge the poet (or, more likely, to comment upon the tragedy of the death). Peculiarly, these expressions tend themselves to be obscure and to exist in a sort of isolation whereby their own comment upon Crosby does not have any sort of ripple effect, further inspiring new creation in its wake. For

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\*Reprinted with permission from *Decoy*, by Elaine Equi, 1994, Coffee House Press, Minneapolis, by Coffee House Press.

whatever reason, artists find themselves drawn directly back to Harry Crosby himself – a black literary sun around which disparate bodies continue to orbit inexorably. For those insistent upon finding a niche in the established narrative of literary history, these influences serve as useful markers, though their eclectic nature still confounds easy consignment of Crosby to one particular poetic label (and, it may be argued, this is no defect or failure of Crosby's poetry). Indeed, as we move forward to examine Crosby's poetry directly, we will see just how thoroughly Crosby confounds simple identification with any given movement, and how this is a previously unrecognized strength of his work.



## CHAPTER 4

“FOR A FEW FRIENDS AND A FEW CRITICS”: PRIMARY TEXTUAL ANALYSIS  
AND CRITICISM

A number of assumptions made by literary scholars about Harry Crosby are riddled with errors and misconceptions, and often a reiteration of previously identified errors that have nonetheless become accepted as true. Disentangling the various aspects of Crosby’s work and life requires some effort, but such work is necessary to bring Crosby to the skeptics who dismiss him as a “minor poet”. Presuming that, in order to understand Crosby’s place in modernism more fully, two elements are necessary – awareness of his historical contextual significance, and access to his corpus in order to gain familiarity with the details of his work – the preceding chapters have addressed the various facets of Crosby’s historical context, and we may now look at samples of his poetry.

The reasons for this approach are several: foremost, direct analysis of Crosby’s actual poetic output does much to help dispel the purely mythological aspects of Crosby’s reputation, and clarifies those that have some grounding in fact but have become exaggerated or confused over the intervening century. “The lives of writers are subject to many myths”: one does not expect to find a poetic turn of phrase in the abstract for a sociological study, but Anheier and Gerhards begin their summary of “Literary Myths and Social Structures” just so. In the case of Harry Crosby, the stories of his excess and eccentricities were subject to a process of mythologization that has led to his work being overshadowed. The lingering influence of New Criticism complicates this problem

further: if one is to treat only the works or artists as a metric of value, then the personal quirks of the poet should be inconsequential, and yet the mid-century formalists took their excuse to deny Harry Crosby attention in their literary canon primarily because of those foibles, it would seem.<sup>47</sup> Compounding the issue of Crosby's neglect, the evolution of his idiosyncratic voice and stylistic experimentation have been taken to be difficult to access for casual readers even above the distancing tactics of Crosby's modernist peers – Eugene Jolas' assessment in the memorial issue of *transition* that Harry Crosby's work is “for a few friends and a few critics” asserts an obscurity that perhaps has been communicated from critic to critic without reexamination and thus tainted the reputation of the work as well as the creator far beyond the issuance of the statement (“Harry Crosby and *transition*” 228).

This repetition of accepted critical position is reinforced by the fact that the bulk of Crosby's poetry is not readily accessible for proper consideration, leading to a sort of poetic caricature standing in for the more varied depths of his corpus and resulting in a denial of access to several significant avenues of access to canonicity – through absence from the accessible canon, as a consequence Crosby is elided from the critical and pedagogical canons as well. While an examination of this corpus in whole is beyond the scope of this dissertation, the readings here provide a cross-section of details of Crosby's poetics that are heretofore unexamined, and will serve as a foundation for further critical analysis of Crosby (more on which in the conclusion).

### Crosby's Arc of Experimentalism and the Difficulty of Taxonomy

A question arises that must necessarily be addressed: if literary canonization requires an acceptable classification, what label or labels apply to Harry Crosby's work? On the one hand, there seems to be little doubt as to whether Crosby qualifies as a "modernist," despite the fact that the term itself carries internal contradictions accrued by association with a multitude of critical agendas. On the other hand, one does not want to succumb to unquestioned assumptions, and it would be facile and presumptuous to affix the "modernist" moniker to him solely on the basis of his dates of birth and death. While the meaning of "modernism" is highly variable depending on the intent of the scholar applying the term, modernist literature's tendencies and common tactics have been identified by theorists already, and these tropes can be linked demonstrably to the arc of Crosby's career, even if the ink spilled thus far in discussing modernism has yet to settle the debate and establish an indisputable consensus definition. By establishing parity between Crosby and his modernist milieu, a case for his worth as an encapsulating example of modernist practice begins to emerge.

In a general sense, Crosby's poetics undergoes three main phases of development, which are quite distinct from one another but also cohere when the reader is able to take in the scope of his poetry throughout his career. It is for this very reason that the project of recovering Harry Crosby's writing into publication is an important one not only for scholars of the poet but of the period. Crosby's earliest work, beginning with *Sonnets for Caresse* and then culminating in *Red Skeletons* (spanning 1924 to 1927) serves as his apprenticeship and most conventional period. *Chariot of the Sun* breaks from this

previous work in form in 1928, both in the sense of Crosby's poetic compositions becoming more eclectic in technique and in the advent of the Black Sun Press as a vehicle for experimental materiality; the characteristic use of gold, red ink, illustrations, and high-quality imported paper marry with typographic experimentation. The miniature volume *Sun* would be completed in 1920 as the ultimate expression of Crosby's material explorations during this period, while *Transit of Venus* (bookending 1928 with *Chariot of the Sun*) stands as the exemplary poetic product of this phase, a more confident iteration of the work of an independent journeyman poet garnering increased notoriety. Some of the poems in *Transit of Venus*, in fact, serve to presage the shift from the second to the third phase, Crosby's final and boldest, which manifests in a near-rejection of conventional poetic composition via the "tirade" and Crosby's embrace of avant-gardist technique which apexes with the release of *Mad Queen* in 1929. Though *Mad Queen* is the most rambunctious of Crosby's collections, that same year – Crosby's last – would also see the release of the first of other, more thoughtful explorations of calmer poetic avenues: *Sleeping Together*, a foray into dreamy prose inspired by Crosby's interest in surrealism and Dada. Crosby would not live to see the release of *Aphrodite in Flight*, however, a companion piece which explores love not as a dream-journal but as a manual for flight instruction. Finally, in 1931, the posthumous retrospective boxed set of four volumes marked the last issuance of Harry Crosby's poetry by the Black Sun Press: *Chariot of the Sun*, *Transit of Venus*, and *Sleeping Together* are republished in their final forms, along with the collection entitled *Torchbearer*, which repackages material from *Mad Queen* and other unfinished or unpublished work from the same time.

Form plays a significant role throughout this examination: the genre shifts of Crosby's work delineate a progressive poetic journey, moving from the utmost formal phase of his early work (sonnetry combined with an infatuation with Baudelaire) through prose poetry into dream journals and finally 'tirades' that implement strategies employed in the larger modernist thrust to explore the long poem. Matei Calinescu marks the awareness of modernity with the passage (and invincibility) of time as the defining characteristic of modernism. Part of the critical ambivalence regarding Crosby is his liminal status overlapping formal or "high" modernism (which is to say consciously theoretically modernist), avant-gardism, and neo-Romanticism; it is perhaps more accurate to assert that Crosby is also firmly modernist, using Calinescu's rubric, in that his style occupies a liminal space incorporating the characteristics of the greater trend emerging out of the abandonment of romanticism - what Calinescu characterizes as the "relativization" of artistic beauty, particularly in terms of French Romanticism - and the eclecticism concomitant with the aesthetic rupture that represented (147-8).

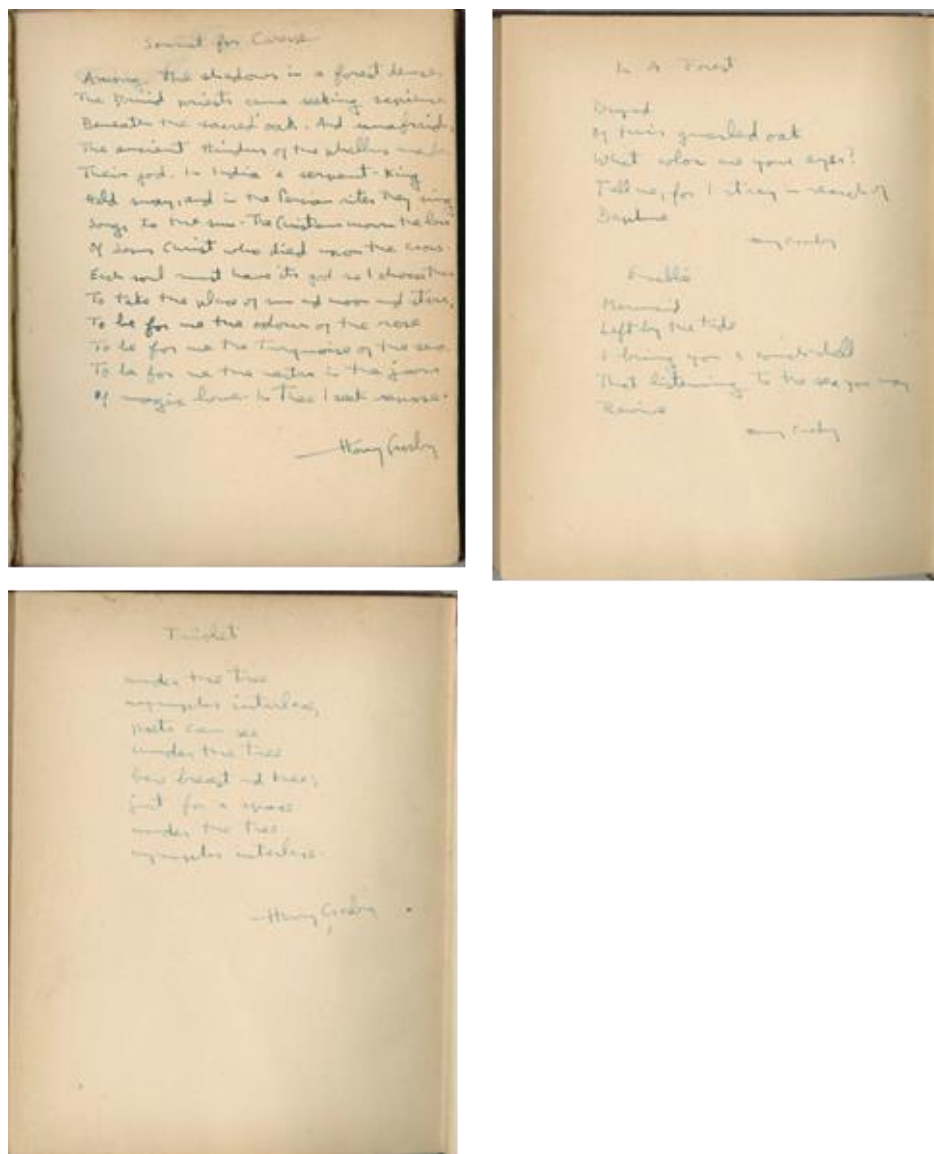
There is also the lingering tension between what is expediently deemed "high modernism," of the more formal variety, and its avant-garde, which occupies a tense space within the set from which it attempts to differentiate itself. This duality informs the attempt to identify Crosby, as his open influence by and direct relationship with major figures counted among the avant-garde complicate the neatness of his classification. To be very clear, Crosby was not avant-garde, using the most precise current understanding of that term. His influences, however, draw heavily from his French contemporaries, and it is their use of the term "avant-garde" amongst themselves - even though since evolved into a different meaning - that colors our thinking about Crosby's work. Though outside

the accepted roster of avant-gardists, Crosby's work borrows from and was influenced by the avant-garde directly, particularly the French experimental formalism with which he was surrounded. Crosby was liked by Marcel Duchamp, who contributed to the memorial published in *transition*. Julien Levy (famed New York art dealer and gallery founder who married Mina Loy's daughter Joella) submitted a book on surrealism to the Black Sun Press for publication. Surrealism figured prominently in Harry Crosby's poesis, both conceptually and in lending composition techniques: *Sleeping Together* strides the line between dream journal and poetic anthology.

There are, of course, significant reasons for what is often termed "the obvious difficulty of Crosby's verse" (Bush 79). As discussed earlier, Harry Crosby was an autodidact in his poetic endeavors, a talent he fed with voracious consumption and disciplined practice, and we may see in him an example of Eliot's statement regarding tradition: "It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour" ("Tradition and the Individual Talent" 43). He is also accused of failing to live up to varying nebulous standards held up by critics as to the quality, not only of his written work, but in fact of his modernist sensibilities; detractors treat his poetic output as immature. This assessment lands wide of the mark, however, which becomes evident if we are able to survey Crosby's work sufficiently.

Let us take the example of three unpublished poems hand-written by Crosby in his personal copy of *Anthology* (scans of which are shown in Figure 8), which demonstrate his incessant toying with sometimes obscure poetic forms in an attempt to sharpen his technique. Because they were not ultimately presented as commercial artifacts, their unpublished status presents us a chance to see the craft of Crosby's composition as comparative specimens set in relief against the more thoroughly worked

Fig. 8. Unpublished, handwritten poems discovered in Harry Crosby's personal copy of *Anthology*



examples in the finished collections. One, simply entitled "Triolet," as the name suggests, is an example of that obscure form, brought briefly into vogue by British fin-de-si cle poet Robert Bridges.

“Triolet”  
 under the tree  
 nymphs interlace,  
 poets can see  
 under the tree  
 bare breast and knee;  
 just for a space  
 under the tree  
 nymphs interlace

To cursory evaluation, these artifacts are little more than the equivalent of juvenilia — snapshots of Crosby literally schooling himself in the forms of the poetic ancestors<sup>48</sup>. In dismissing the early work as mimetic, however, critics miss the developmental work in poetic range evident: “in five working years Crosby duplicated a century of complicated aesthetic traditions” (Wolff 187). In this particular specimen, likely influenced by the classical selections included in *Anthology*, Crosby appropriates pastoral imagery of a particularly sensuous nature in conjunction with a rare French stanza construction.

While this piece would not be out of place among the ardent (but more modern) passages in *Transit of Venus*, it serves more as an example of the constant transition and hybridization of Crosby's poetic craft, and its unpublished, dashed-off nature attests to how constant and ephemeral this process can be. We may also read two cinquains jotted



on the same leaf in Crosby's personal copy of *Anthology*, "In a Forest" and "Mermaid," in the same experimental manner.. the subject of the first selection is the sensuous mythical female, framed in verse composed according to classical strictures.

"In a Forest"

Dryad

Of this gnarled oak

What color are your eyes?

Tell me, for I stray in search of

Daphne. (unpublished)

The juxtaposition of such a resonant classical image with what amounts to a pick-up line fits perfectly with Crosby's demeanor - its candor balances the humor of the situation.

"Enablée"

Mermaid

Left by the tide

I bring you a conch-shell

That listening to the sea you may

Revive. (unpublished)

The more apostrophic quality of this verse, implying a sort of absence on the mermaid's part, not physically, but emotionally or spiritually, stretches Crosby outside of his normal mode of direct address. Witnessing a poet learning about the application of voice, especially in light of the later emphasis on fictional personae in the "tirades" of *Mad Queen*, proves invaluable to the scholarly reader as the demonstrative work that sketched out for his contemporaries, and for any latter-day readers who would care to investigate,

the potential and trajectory of Crosby's would-be future work: it is the principal artifact we have of the unique voice of Harry Crosby as he emerged from the journeyman phase of his poetry. Difficult to categorize though it may be, as it does not lend itself toward an obvious critical perspective, these samples are necessary to a more robust understanding of Crosby's career and poetics, one that cannot be obtained piecemeal; indeed, because these poems are unpublished, there has been no opportunity for scholars to have examined them apart from directly obtaining them via the Morris Library archives at Southern Illinois University.

Though omitted by Kahn in the compilation of *Devour the Fire*, "Eventuate" and "Little Poems" from *Transit of Venus* reveal Crosby's awareness and incorporation of techniques considered iconic in other modernist poets.<sup>49</sup> "Eventuate" (Figure 9) demonstrates the poet's eye for the free typographical experimentation that characterizes work by E. E. Cummings, though tempered by tentative formal sensibilities. Whereas Cummings demonstrates that he has grown comfortable employing his scissored idiom through frequent practice, "Eventuate" shows Crosby sampling such technique sparingly, but to noticeable effect in combination with Crosby's own style, which has developed by 1929 into an identifiable mannerism: an exclamatory, hurried style utilizing a tripping technique reminiscent of a breathless speaker restating points to clarify in the midst of a burst of inspiration, not wanting to lose the thought or the moment. The impression created thus becomes one of multiple overlapping voices, not only stylistically but in the progression of the poem: the offset parenthetical lines interrupt the main narration, which itself is punctuated by repetition<sup>50</sup>: "I am not the/ Je ne suis pas/ Just newly born" (lines 3-5). These voices continually intersect – in line 13, a parenthetical line spills over to

Fig. 9. Crosby, Harry. "Eventuate." *Transit of Venus: Poems by Harry Crosby*.

EVENTUATE

I am here  
                   (looking into your eyes)  
 I am not the  
 Je ne suis pas  
 Just newly born  
 That all are praising  
 With leaves yet folded  
 Waiting the dawn,  
 But I shall remain here  
                   (immortal behind this portal)  
 I shall remain here  
                   (as one shall see in a  
 day at the end of a day  
                   one golden languor)  
 I say the world is in your hair  
 (in dream the youngest princess lay  
 most shy and ladylike  
 in very gentleness of dream)  
       A very snare  
       Wherein agree  
       Five fathom deep  
       Miraculously  
       Darkness and sleep.

39

begin again at the margin, intruding on the main voice's territory – until they ultimately coalesce in a quintet of lines, "Wherein agree/ Five fathom deep/ Miraculously" on their way to the oblivion of "Darkness and sleep" (lines 20-23). The piece's relative length, twenty-three lines, also signifies Crosby's growth away from the constraints of his formal sonnet-centered apprenticeship, reaching toward long-form poetry in anticipation of *Mad Queen*.

"Little Poems," by contrast, is an experiment in brevity – a trait emblematic of Crosby's work to that point – which would feel at home in an Imagist anthology alongside Pound. The visual impact of the two minuscule fragments certainly recall's

Pound's occupation with compact poetic forms borrowed from the Japanese tradition. On the other hand, this short work deploys a bewildering density of techniques in a scant seventeen words, arranged into a total of five lines. Crosby's two poems are roughly chiasmic, setting "(Her eyes)" at the end of the first section as a mirror image to the opening of the second, "Her ears" (lines 2-3). Each stanza, if the term applies, advances a tidy conceit via impressionistic metaphors that stand perpendicular to conventional cliché: rather than windows, the eyes are doors, while the ears are "little slippers/ For the feet of my voice" (lines 4-5). With the creation of these scant establishing details, the poem suddenly sprawls outward in the reader's mind; the release of the compression of the poems on the page conveys a cozy room whose walls are the page, its white space uncluttered and unrushed but full of the sense of comfort conveyed by the familiar metaphors, with door and slippers occupying the space as casually as their owner might.

This language is so fine-edged, concise that it nearly goes unnoticed, a fact which seems to have worked to Crosby's detriment with regard to scholarly attention.

Specimens like this poem are exemplary of just why Crosby's work was neglected by the New Critics, whose ascendancy followed closely after Crosby's death; we would reasonably expect that the New Critics would have thus been aware of , even familiar with his work, but New Criticism appears to have uniformly rejected Crosby as suitable material for their ceaseless close reading exercises. There is also the matter of Harry Crosby's deliberate, nearly theatrical, construction of a poetic identity with a distinct libertine timbre, which certainly deflected the interest of the more stanchly conservative literary establishment which coalesced in the 1930s as a reaction to their predecessors' excesses. What may be dismissed by some critics as 'bad poetry' may instead signal a

quite convincing performance by an artist adhering to a very specific aesthetic – a performance, like the verse which delivers it, so painstakingly devised that critics have been deceived into thinking of it as artless.

### Crosby's Poetic Tactics: Visual Composition and Formal Experimentation

As linguistically genuine as the performance of Harry Crosby's poetic persona may be, the auditory cadence of his verse also recollects the richly visual. Not considered an "Imagist" by conventional scholarly taxonomy, Crosby's poetry (as befits his deep and abiding Symbolist influence) nonetheless operates on the sense of sight in a manner that owes a debt in principle to impressionism, not only in its most well-known iteration to us as well as to Crosby (visual art) but also in the impressionist musical compositions of composers like Claude Debussy, who was likewise influenced by French Symbolism as was Crosby: one could conduct an interesting comparative analysis between Debussy's idiosyncratic tonality and Crosby's increasing avoidance of conventional poetic form as his career progressed. The fragmented phrasing and structure of Crosby's poem function much as dabs and dots of sound or metaphor on the canvas of the poem, and the poem arises from the gestalt understanding of these incomplete pieces of sentences. One may recall the above discussion of the pairing of "Her eyes" and "Her ears" in "Little Poems" and note the explicit attention to the two senses to which Crosby meticulously catered in his poetics. Even the physical aspects of his collections were designed to appeal to these two senses in combination, with their gold foil slipcases, morocco bindings, and opulent Dutch linen paper. The poems on the page (which can be seen in full reproduction below)

deliver the impression of having been framed like photographs or paintings, and are typically (as expected of visual poetry) evocative or symbolic in congruence with the content. The much-discussed “Photoheliograph” (reproduced in Figure 10) embodies this tendency, recreating as poem the phenomenon of exposing a visual plate directly to the sun. “Pharmacie du Soleil” (Figure 11) appears at first to be a simple rectangular block, but upon closer inspection, the truncated final line of the poem turns the shape of the visual field into a pestle; the reader is left to meditate upon where the mortar might be – that is, if the reader is not themselves the mortar, blending the disparate elements in the pestle (“calcium iron hydrogen sodium nickel/magnesium cobalt silicon aluminium [*sic*]” and so on) through alchemical fusion, if not actual solar fusion, into a unified whole through reading and absorbing the poem as an object (lines 1-2).

Figure 10. Crosby, Harry. “Photoheliograph (for Lady A.)” From *Chariot of the Sun*.

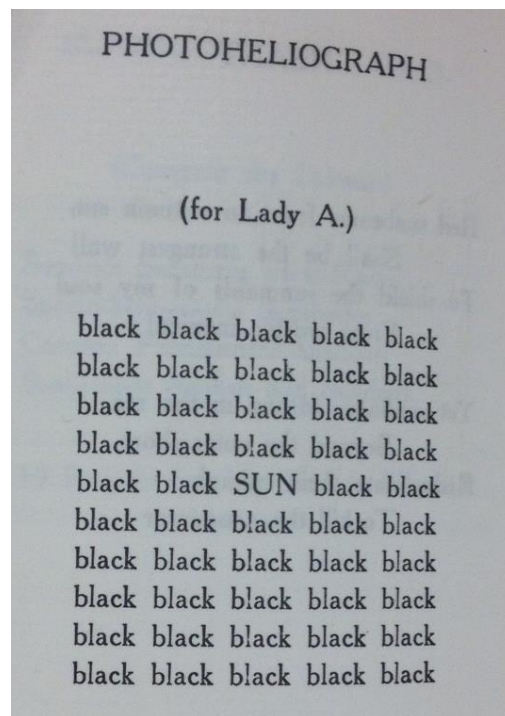
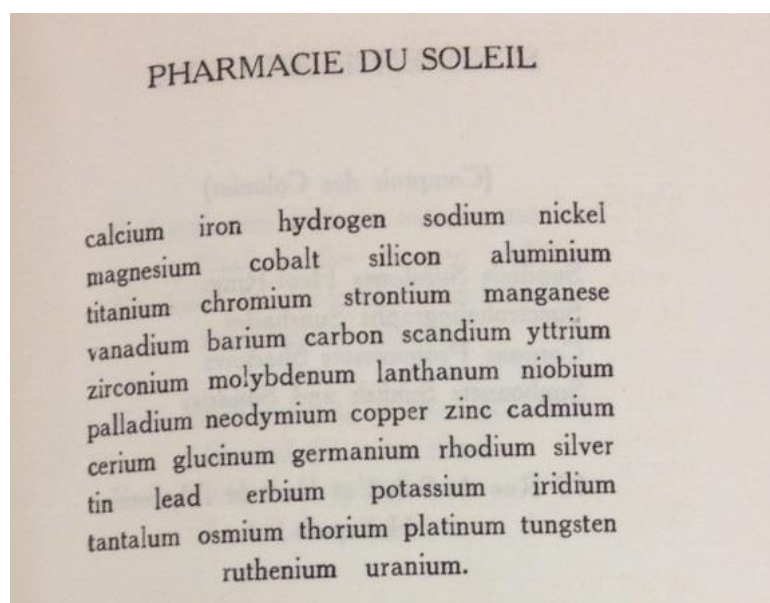


Fig. 11. Crosby, Harry. “Pharmacie du Soleil” From *Chariot of the Sun*.



These two poems – “Photoheliograph” and “Pharmacie du Soleil” – have inadvertently become demonstrative of the necessity of understanding Crosby’s material

Fig. 12. “Photoheliograph (for Lady A.)” reprinted in Rothenberg, *Revolution of the Word*.

#### PHOTOHELIOGRAPH (FOR LADY A.)

black black black black black  
 black black black black black  
 black black black black black  
 black black black black black  
 black black SUN black black  
 black black black black black  
 black black black black black  
 black black black black black  
 black black black black black  
 black black black black black

poiesis. Both selections have been reprinted with various levels of attention to their original forms, and these variations highlight the meticulous composition of the originals by contrast. For instance, both poems were selected for reprinting in *Revolution of the Word*, by Cary Nelson for the *Anthology of Modern American Poets*, and by Soul Bay Press editor Tom Jenkins for *Ladders to the Sun*. Such seemingly inconsequential factors as typeface alter the visual impact of the poems the way that thinning or thickening brush strokes in a painting would, which attests to the highly visual aspect of this phase of Crosby's work. Each choice is a hermeneutical interference which creates a different interpretation for the poem, highlighting some details while eliding others in a craft where details are communicative. Rothenberg uses a heavy modern gothic for the title, for example, and chooses to place it all on one line beginning at the left margin, rather than centered on two lines as Crosby chose. This generates visual asymmetry and ruptures the uniformity that Crosby created between the poem and the title. Rothenberg's choice of font also makes the poems feel leaden (particularly "Pharmacie du Soleil," which perhaps is Rothenberg's silent commentary in foregrounding the alchemical

Fig. 13. "Photoheliograph (for Lady A.)" reprinted in Nelson, *Anthology of Modern American Poets*.

Photoheliograph (For Lady A.)

black black black black black  
 black black black black black  
 black black black black black  
 black black black black black  
 black black S U N black black  
 black black black black black  
 black black black black black  
 black black black black black  
 black black black black black  
 black black black black black



metaphor). The starkness of the contrast of “SUN” to the surrounding field of “black” is lessened when the surrounding words are themselves indeed black in practice rather than suggesting it by their presence: in a figurative sense, the photo in this instance comes across more overexposed than Crosby’s original.

Meanwhile Nelson employs a thinner Roman style in keeping with the standard for the volume (though not as light as Crosby’s), which creates a uniformity of visual presence among the poems throughout the anthology; this is of course standard practice for anthology editors, whose supervisors would rather not spend the additional expense and time of having the layout staff performing poem-by-poem, and makes Rothenberg’s eclectic typographical presentation all the more striking. There is a boldness in the type selected by Nelson as well, making it closer to Rothenberg’s edition than the primary source, but some subtle alterations have been made. Nelson chooses to center the title above the poem as did Crosby, although it remains on one line rather than separating the dedicatory note. The “SUN” in the center of the poem appears to be spaced or justified to occupy its niche in the center of the field of “black”, with the letters separated slightly to cause the word to expand outward. By comparison, however, Nelson’s entry is physically smaller, typeset at a smaller point size, and appears more compact than either of its predecessors. No doubt this is a side effect owing to the necessity of the Oxford University Press to make their cumbersome volume slightly less so, arranging the poems through any technical feat available to occupy the least amount of space, but the end result for this specific poem is a feeling of compression: “Photoheliograph” has transformed from its namesake, a representation of a photographic exposure of the sun, to a dense block of fuel under pressure awaiting combustion, a transformation not simply of

Crosby's making, but of the decisions (conscious or otherwise) made by his posthumous publishers which impact analysis of Crosby's poems as material expressions.

Curiously, the reverse is true of the respective treatments of "Pharmacie du Soleil," another visual composition that all three editors also selected. Rothenberg's version is set in a notably smaller typeface, creating a sense that one is reading the list of ingredients on a small package. The uniformity of the typography in Nelson's volume, by contrast, thereby makes the poem slightly more expansive; however, apart from relative size, no other consequential details change with regard to the relative position of the constituent elements (figuratively and literally).

Fig. 14. Crosby, Harry. "Pharmacie du Soleil", reprinted in Rothenberg, *Revolution of the Word*.

#### PHARMACIE DU SOLEIL

calcium iron hydrogen sodium nickel  
magnesium cobalt silicon aluminium  
titanium chromium strontium manganese  
vanadium barium carbon scandium yttrium  
zirconium molybdenum lanthanum niobium  
palladium neodymium copper zinc cadmium  
cerium glucinum germanium rhodium silver  
tin lead erbium potassium iridium  
tantalum osmium thorium platinum tungsten  
ruthenium uranium.

Fig. 15. Crosby, Harry. "Pharmacie du Soleil", reprinted in Nelson, *Anthology of Modern American Poets*.

#### Pharmacie du Soleil

calcium iron hydrogen sodium nickel  
magnesium cobalt silicon aluminium  
titanium chromium strontium manganese  
vanadium barium carbon scandium yttrium  
zirconium molybdenum lanthanum niobium  
palladium neodymium copper zinc cadmium  
cerium glucinum germanium rhodium silver  
tin lead erbium potassium iridium  
tantalum osmium thorium platinum tungsten  
ruthenium uranium

Finally, as an egregious example of careless editing, the 2011 Soul Bay Press volume *Ladders of the Sun* fails to capture the visual composition of these poems whatsoever, reducing them to strings of words. In both “Photoheliograph” and “Pharmacie du Soleil,” shown in Figures 16 and 17 respectively, the reprint fails even to maintain the proper line breaks, resulting in the former case in the word “SUN” appearing misplaced at the end of the second line of a repetitive chant of “black”, and in the latter case in a jumble of names of elements with no further significance. Far from being a minor gimmick, these instances demonstrate how Crosby utilized material factors in composing poems that communicate powerfully.

Fig. 16. Crosby, Harry. “Photoheliograph (for Lady A.)” reprinted in Jenkins, *Ladders to the Sun*.

**Photoheliograph (for Lady A.)**

black black black black black black black black black  
 black black black black black black black black black SUN  
 black black black black black black black black black  
 black black black black black black black black black  
 black black black black black black black black black

Fig. 17. Crosby, Harry. “Pharmacie du Soleil”, reprinted in Jenkins, *Ladders to the Sun*.

**Pharmacie du Soleil**

calcium iron hydrogen sodium nickel magnesium  
 cobalt silicon aluminum titanium chromium  
 strontium manganese vanadium barium carbon  
 scandium yttrium zirconium molybdenum lanthanum  
 niobium palladium neodymium copper zinc cadmium  
 cerium glucinum germanium rhodium silver tin lead  
 erbium potassium iridium tantalum osmium thorium  
 platinum tungsten ruthenium uranium.

On rare occasions, these forays into concrete poetry took the visual aspect of Harry Crosby's composition in surprising directions. "Laid Under," from *Transit of Venus*, (reproduced in Figure 18) proffers the reader two stanzas in identical shapes which could be taken as one or more of a number of symbolic items: a tree (mentioned in the first line), a funerary pedestal (suggested by the motif of burial mentioned throughout), or hourglasses (potent icons of time and mortality). Upon closer examination, a series of metaphors decorate these pedestal-like stanzas like bas-relief carvings along the shaft: a star, roses, ashes, a dart, all evoking complex emotional connotations in their seemingly haphazard juxtaposition.

Fig. 18. Crosby, Harry. "Laid Under." *Transit of Venus*.

## LAID UNDER

Laid under the root of a tree  
     As a star  
     As roses  
     As she  
 Darkness and silence agree.

Laid under the root of a heart  
     As a hurt  
     As ashes  
     As a dart  
 Passion and love break apart.

These emblems accompany the twin plinths' specific representations, however, rather than serving as random adornment. The first stanza alludes to specific, literal death, very likely of a female subject (line 4). This first monument pays tribute to the departed because there is no headstone or marker – the deceased has been “Laid under the root of a tree” to repose in “Darkness and silence” (lines 1, 5). The star and roses evince tender sentiments toward the subject, in stark contrast to the impression rendered by the second stanza. This other monument is decorated with “a hurt,” “ashes,” and “a dart,” symbols perhaps more befitting a war memorial than a tomb (lines 7-9). As with the first pillar-stanza, the second serves in place of a non-existent physical marker, but in this case, the resting place is not a tree but “under the root of a heart” (line 6). This emotional grave is not wreathed in wistful memory; instead, its shroud is redolent with loss and regret, testament to that which lies here: “Passion and love break apart” (line 10). A careless editor might mistakenly harm the richness of the interplay between Crosby's visual poetic thrust and the content of the words within the shapes: this poem, although not among those reprinted by subsequent collections, exemplifies the sort of challenge facing an editor wanting to recreate the full experience of Crosby's work.

The twin memorials here echo a familiar dichotomy: instead of juxtaposing love and war, the two defining strokes in Crosby's own life, here the poet contrasts peaceful loss with that torn away before its time. The suggestion of death, here, remains purely metaphorical – descriptive of a lovers' quarrel and parting rather than an actual bereavement, in contrast with his more morbid early work in the vein of Baudelaire. At the same time, however, it is in this aspect of Crosby's poesis that Johanna Drucker's assertion of early twentieth-century modernist poetry as *being* rather than *representing*

returns to the fore of our minds as readers: just as “Photoheliograph” *is* the result of the sun blackening a photographic plate, and not simply a signifier alluding to it, so too are the dual columnar stanzas of “Laid Under” actual memorials rather than stand-ins for stone pillars.

### The Fiery Persona of Crosby’s Late Phase

Eventually, however, Harry Crosby would find visual forms and conventional poetic technique to be too orthodox and confining. The “tirades” of *Mad Queen*, the last collection published during Crosby’s lifetime, serve as both a fitting capstone to his literary development, and as a snapshot of the trajectory of the writer in progress before its abrupt end. In the introduction to *Devour the Fire*, Sy Kahn characterizes the collection as an experiment in bending form to a predetermined purpose, comprised of an array of “poems and prose pieces in a variety of forms invented for excoriation,” rather than the standard approach of poets attempting to cram their intentions into the mold of a pre-existing form (xxv). Elsewhere, Kahn quotes Hart Crane’s response in an unpublished letter to reading preliminary excerpts from the collection: “Harry’s genius, all of its many manifestations, was strikingly unique. I hope to be able to write some fitting critical tribute to it someday” (“A Transit of Poets” 54).

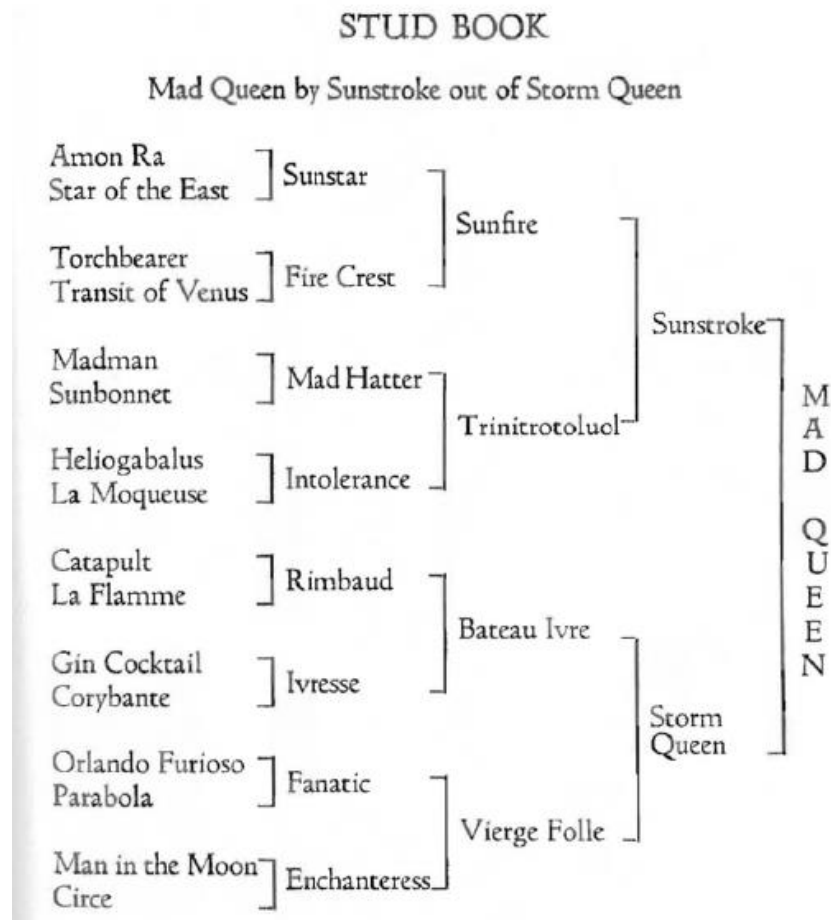
Evolving past the plosive, fragmented interjections of the shorter poems found in earlier volumes, *Mad Queen* demonstrates the poet harnessing that raw energy which had formerly mastered his diction, transforming it into fuel to extend the length and furor of his expression. Whereas *Transit of Venus* contained terse, one-page poems, like

surreptitious notes to a lover, *Mad Queen* reads more like the assemblage of a hermit's wild-eyed rants; drawn out in length, Crosby's tirades also adhere to an internally consistent narrative thrust and do not ramble. The collection demonstrates a lesson learned from working on the intermediary volume *Sleeping Together*, which collected dream accounts in flowing free-form prose. *Mad Queen* represents, in Crosby's own words, a "violent state of fusion," compiling all of his former poetic lessons into a compelling final examination ("Heliograph (Self-Portrait)" line 26).

It is possible to take the volume as a whole rather than a disparate collection, given the intensity of the focus upon Crosby's singular metaphorical anchor. As a poetic narrative, *Mad Queen* charts the story of an unnamed speaker, receiving and pursuing a mission on behalf of the titular figure who herself proxies for the Sun. The milestones in this path are found in several long-form sections details the stages of this core story, interspersed among shorter pieces which demonstrate the extent to which the Sun has infected the speaker's perceptions and daily existence. For example, "Stud Book," a poem in the visual form of a family tree or breeding chart, as shown in Figure 19 below, traces the pedigree of fictional horses, many of which bear peculiarly sun-oriented names; scattered among them are also traces of Crosby's own literary pedigree:

"Catapult" and "La Flamme" beget "Rimbaud," and some of the horses bear the names of other Crosby poems or books.

Fig. 19. Crosby, Harry. "Stud Book". *Mad Queen*. Reprinted in Kahn, *Devour the Fire*. 53.



In its way, "Stud Book" is an acknowledgement of the inescapable force of influence, but it also serves as a subtle critique: reducing all elements in a continuity to the combination or confluence of two and only two predecessors highlights the absurdity of simplistic claims of strict mentor-student relationships or exchanges, as critics of the early and mid-twentieth century liked to do (a trend culminating in many ways with Harold Bloom, the most prominent contemporary speaker on the subject of influence).

The Sun has become all-pervasive, insinuated into the most quotidian aspects of life, but the speaker also demonstrates how the mystery of the Sun has itself become



more pedestrian in the dawning age of science: “Madman” contains lists of data concerning the Sun – a thoroughly modernist manifestation of Crosby’s fascination with the imprints of order on language, namely litanies, lists and figures – and yet the mysticism of the Sun is not stripped away by knowing these facts, demonstrating that a new and different sort of awe and veneration can coexist with empiricism:

his candle-power (fifteen hundred and seventy-five billions of billions—  
1.575.000.000.000.000.000.000.000.): his age and duration: his  
dangerousness to man as seen by the effects (heatstroke, insolation,  
thermic fever, siriasis) he sometimes produces upon the nervous system:  
the healing virtues of his rays (restores youthful vigor and vitality is the  
source of health and energy oblivionizes ninety per cent of all human  
aches and pains): his purity (he can penetrate into unclean places brothels  
privies prisons and not be polluted by them): his magnitude (400 times as  
large as the moon): his weight two octillions of tons or 746 times as heavy  
as the combined weights of all the planets): his brilliance (5300 times  
brighter than the dazzling radiance of incandescent metal): his distance  
from the earth as determined by the equation of light, the constant of  
aberration, the parallactic inequality of the moon (an aviator flying from  
the earth to the sun would require 175 years to make the journey) [...].

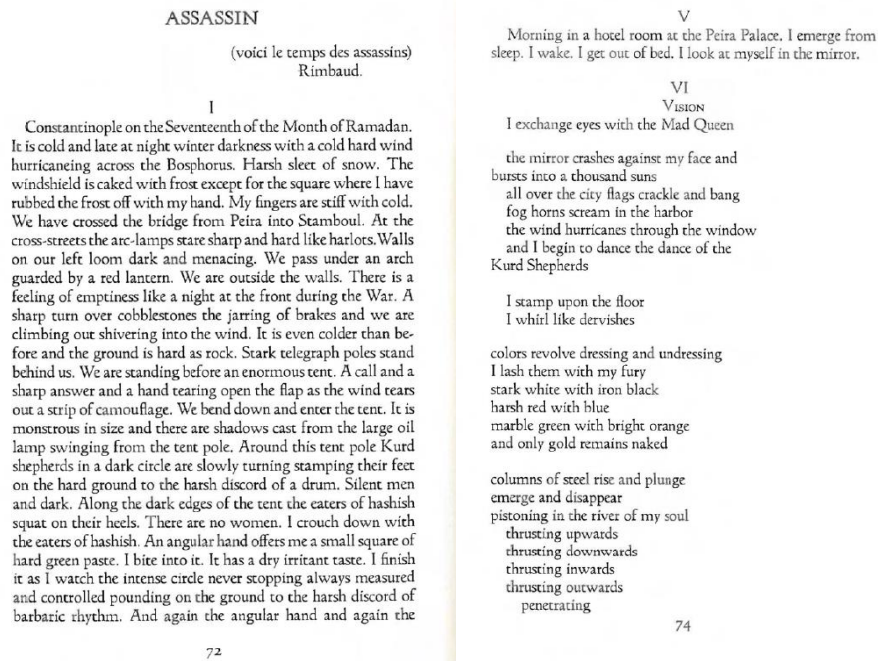
(*Mad Queen* 49)

This devotion leads the speaker on a mission of violence against the world; indeed, the centerpiece of *Mad Queen* is “Assassin,” a psychotropic account of a journey which combines cinematically hallucinatory scenes with relentlessly propulsive travel

descriptions and first-person commentary bearing syntax strikingly reminiscent of that found in Crosby's own diaries. Indeed, the first section narrates, as Kahn notes, imagery "based on Crosby's experience with hashish among Kurdish shepherds near Constantinople" (*Devour the Fire* xxv). The experience narrated to us, however, is far from being either pastoral or literal. The speaker's train of thought (conveyed, appropriately, by a literal train ride which opens and closes the poem) escalates in fervor, describing the process of initiation into the Mad Queen's service, the destructive intent of the would-be assassin, the ultimate metaphorical triumph of the deed, and its self-annihilating consequences. The goal is not nihilism, but destruction to clear the way so that "a new strong world shall arise to worship the Mad Queen, Goddess of the Sun" (*Mad Queen* 59).

Within *Mad Queen*, "Assassin" functions both as the beating heart, driving the collection by embodying its premise, and in creating the primary shape to which the other pieces conform, its skeleton. The work, longest in the collection, succeeds as a microcosm of the greater story being told by the volume – that of Crosby's open-eyed acknowledgement of the consequences of his sun-religion and its antinomian ideals. It is perhaps here that Crosby fully faces the fate he has implied throughout his career and his life: "I the Murderer of the World shall in my fury murder myself" (*Mad Queen* 64). The poetic suicide occurs promptly and without hesitation – narrated by the speaker up to the moment of death in unpunctuated fragments – and then dissolves into a drugged dream ("Antidote for Poisons") to find the poet "on the Orient Express," remembering nothing of his experience and seemingly happy in his oblivion (*Mad Queen* 65).

Fig. 20. Two sections excerpted from Sy Kahn's reproduction of "Assassin," demonstrating the variation in poetic composition as the poem progresses.



The piece also serves as a snapshot of Crosby's poetic voice, providing examples of nearly every technique developed over the course of his creative career. Elements of visual poetry emerge during the *ekstasis* in section VI – the only segment to receive a subtitle (“VISION”), and the segment excerpted to represent Crosby in the Library of America's anthology of twentieth-century American poets – during which the poet is transported by hallucination and begins to dance and shout; the margins of the stanzas grow farther and farther indented, then recede slowly back to their original position, cresting and falling like a wave in imitation of the emotional tide in the poet's soul as the experience sweeps over him (*Devour the Fire* 74-7).

*Mad Queen* is not only a self-referential exercise, however, although its stance as an expression of what might be characterized as militant mysticism requires an inward eye; embedded among its allusions, one can find praise for contemporaries whom Crosby

held in esteem - an esteem which was clearly reciprocated by Crosby's peers, as evidenced by subsequent memorials to Crosby such as the front matter in the posthumous omnibus or the funerary installment of *transition*. For example, in "Target for Disgust," his infamous invective composed for and about his home city of Boston, one of Crosby's chief charges is the city's blindness to some of the day's literary movers and shakers:

your Libraries are clogged  
                                   with Pamphlets and Tracts  
 but of Ulysseses  
                                   you have none  
 but of Gertrude Steins  
                                   you have none (lines 40-45)

The poem also invokes a trinity of figures who reappear throughout the collection, often in conjunction with one another: "Aknoton" (Akhenaten, or Amenhotep IV), Rimbaud, and Van Gogh, who serve as icons for Crosby of sun-worship, decadence, and "triumphant individuality," respectively (*Mad Queen* 55). Rimbaud and Van Gogh appear alongside Brancusi and Stravinsky as artists who revere the sun in their works in "Sunrise" (lines 36-9). "Sun-Death" serves as a litany of figures considered exemplary of Crosby's philosophy: among them, he hails "men of transition," in a clever call-out to his literary comrade Eugene Jolas and the little magazine the two co-edited, and both names and paraphrases T. S. Eliot (*Mad Queen* 56-7).

These nods in appreciation of fellow artists tempt readers to see them as paying respects in anticipation of a departure; the sudden and numerous appearances of such allusions, contrasted with the tightly self-focused work in Crosby's previous volumes,

suggest – though without significant evidence in support – that a certain self-awareness of impending death drove Crosby to pay his homage while he still could. While an eerily romantic notion, there is no indication from Crosby’s own diaries that he had altered his existing plans: it is certainly true that he intended to commit suicide on a predetermined date under appropriately ritualized circumstances, but that plan was supposed to culminate later: according to the July 6, 1928, entry from *Shadows of the Sun*, Harry and Caresse had set their date for a planned airplane crash as October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1942 (197). The construction of his poet-mystic persona had been thought through to the last detail. This, along with the quantity of work in progress left by Crosby’s suicide, indicates that for all *Mad Queen*’s preoccupation with self-destruction, it was not meant to be its poet’s last living work. Instead, read in the context of Crosby’s generosity with his time, editorial and monetary support, the gesture of acknowledgement is of a piece with the pivotal role he had assumed among the “Lost Generation” as a booster of literary experimentation. Despite the intentions of the poet, however, the apocalyptic nature of what would become his final poetic phase became conflated with the circumstances of his death, and in many ways has defined his reception ever since.

## CONCLUSION

*A model is a metaphor for a process: a way to describe something, such as the composing process, which refuses to sit still for a portrait.*

Linda Flowers and John R. Hayes

Harry Crosby occupies a more central role to the “Lost Generation,” and thereby to modernism, than has been acknowledged by literary scholarship. Dismissed by critics as a “minor poet”, the dismissal itself betrays prior assumptions, repeated through generations of explication and critique, derived from formalist and New Critical thought that, although it has been subsequently rebuked, retains a significant hold on the foundations of literary criticism. Further, such conformance betrays the deferential nature of canonicity: as pointed out by Wendell Harris earlier in this dissertation, the reader typically assumes that the decision on literary worth has always already been made by a prior editor serving as gatekeeper for literary merit, and thus that if something has seen print, it is a priori worthy of print – and by contrast, anything not seeing regular reprinting must have failed that inscrutable test at some point in the past. This assumption not only lends an unwarranted air of infallibility to editors of the past, but serves to perpetuate boundaries between accepted literary work and neglected literature.

As a result, in the field of literary criticism, stated intentions are not always borne out by actions. Even work which adheres to the literary standards delineated or espoused by a critic may be reflexively rejected due to the weight of prior rejection. In Crosby’s case, he is quintessentially modernist, yet defies the extant taxonomical niceties of

modernism as scholars would have it; his neglect is a caesura in the study of Western modernist poetry, both textually and historically. Harry Crosby is often tapped as an exemplar of the worst indulgences of the “Lost Generation,” most notoriously by Malcolm Cowley, who made of him a straw man to sermonize on the excesses of the 1920s and its purported detrimental influence on literary work, but while Crosby was certainly as fallible as any other person – no more nor less so – his work is also exemplary of the zeitgeist of the Parisian expatriate literati: Crosby experimented poetically with everything that crossed his path with an equal fervor, bending all of the materials in his bricolage to a unifying goal. For Crosby, that goal was the ineffable, mystical conveyance of Sun, not just as a noun but as a verb both transitive and intransitive. If anything, Crosby’s adherence to that single-minded vision contributes to the difficulty critics find in him, for as the “Revolution of the Word” manifesto would have it, his art expresses rather than communicates; far more than simply being impressionistic, it strives, often with success, to capture the voice of sibyls or prophets channeling the abstract principle to which they are attuned.

This voice in Crosby’s poetry would not be nearly as remarkable were it the only notable feature of his poesis, but his craft is more meticulous than that voice suggests. Moving from the early portion of his career, in which he dutifully absorbed the basics of poetic composition through imitation of the French Symbolists, he developed a persona and stylistic flourishes that gave the impression of raw, interjectional utterances but which were actually painstakingly fashioned to appear that way. Again, Harry Crosby’s success at his intended goals seems to have damaged his acceptance by subsequent readership, for critics have taken his persona at face value, making the crucial error of

conflating the historical individual with the character, an confusion further compounded by Crosby's embrace of his poetic character to an ever-growing degree throughout his brief career.

The initial step in reclaiming Harry Crosby's work to serious scholarship, then, is to raise awareness of this critical misstep, repeated by rote over now three generations of poetry studies, and thereby dispel the cloud of obscurity that persists over him. Raising awareness of Crosby himself also serves that agenda, for while Crosby's exclusion from curricula can be attributed in part to the unquestioned perpetuation of critical rejection, it can also be blamed on simple obscurity: Harry Crosby remains obscure even to a number of dedicated scholars of modernist poetry, who may be familiar with his name but not with the details of his work. The most direct method by which to address this absence would be through the production of a definitive scholarly edition of Crosby's poetry, presenting the work in its entirety – thus finally fulfilling the decrees of Pound and Eliot, close to a century ago, to take Harry Crosby's work into consideration holistically – as well as providing a contrary historical interpretation of Harry Crosby's life to that found in Wolff or Cowley, whose works have dominated the understanding of Harry Crosby mainly by dint of having no other narratives to compete with in shaping the consensus of students. Paradoxically, the recuperation of a poet cannot be considered complete until their work returns to circulation, but circulating the poet's work is necessary in order to effect recuperation, as with the reissue of Conover's edition of Mina Loy's *Lunar Baedeker*<sup>51</sup>.

This dissertation begins the work necessary for such a volume, but there is still work to be done: the task is aided by the continuous expiration of copyright on Crosby's



poetry. As permissions to reprint copyrighted material are often an impediment to the process of issuing a collection, the availability of Harry Crosby's work in the public domain would alleviate that restriction greatly, and several factors indicate that this is the case for the entirety of Crosby's corpus. First, Crosby's poetry has never been issued in print by Caresse Crosby, the de facto copyright holder upon Harry's death, since the 1930 posthumous collection; upon transfer of the Crosby papers to Southern Illinois University, the Morris Library has maintained the archive of Crosby's work but not issued any form of reprint. Second, having only been issued through the Crosby Continental Editions imprint in Europe and not in the United States, Crosby's poetry is subject to the statutes in place for French *droit d'auteur* in 1930, and which was not grandfathered into the European Union Copyright Directive passed in 2001. Third, Crosby's work was more often than not issued without the inclusion of 'formalities,' the required (at the time) notification of copyright in the front matter of a published work.

It is important to issue such a collected edition sooner rather than later: reversal of entrenched neglect, and the repair of Harry Crosby's scholarly reputation, will take time. Further, as any literary work lapses into the public domain, there exists a burgeoning industry in independent print-on-demand works that mine these public domain works for their own gain, flooding the market with volumes designed solely to rake in as much meager profit from as many divergent sources as possible. The quality of these publications – it would be misleading to deem them "editions," for in some cases, such as the recent Soul Bay Press compilation *Ladders to the Sun*, there is scant evidence that editing was performed – for scholarly work is negligible, as the publishers have no concern for the specialized market of literary scholars. At the most cynical, one can view

them as a ploy to online booksellers in hopes of receiving enough search results to capture a portion of the indiscriminate public market. The irony is that the liberation of access to printing technology, the ubiquity of paper and ink, and the availability of software to manage the process of composition, all serve to facilitate this dilution of the poetic market, even as they provide scholars the key to overcome material barriers used to justify the traditional restrictions that bar certain figures from inclusion.

The production of such a volume would be a boon to university presses everywhere, but the most likely to benefit in an obvious fashion would be the Southern Illinois University Press, as releasing a scholarly volume of Harry Crosby's work allows them to publicize the Morris Library's ownership of the Crosby papers. Prior to release of an edition of Crosby's complete collected poems, the bibliographic data collected in compiling this dissertation will be further revised for two purposes: most immediately, with the intent of providing a finding aid for scholars consulting the Crosby papers at the Morris Library. This bibliographic information will also provide the raw material by which the ultimate shape of a proposed edition would be constructed, as the editing dilemma presented by Crosby's frequent revision and re-release of poetry makes the prospect of a simple chronological showcase of his poetic development less feasible. On the other hand, the breadth of Crosby's range of styles allows for the potential to edit his corpus into genre categories – sonnets, tirades, dreams, and miscellaneous blank verse – each with its own evolutionary track on display. The revision of the bibliographic catalogue of the entirety of Crosby's poetic output is also necessary to ensure a complete survey of work: the unpublished poems discussed earlier in this dissertation were discovered by happenstance during an examination of Harry Crosby's personal copy of

*Anthology* archived at the Morris Library, and the possibility remains that further undiscovered work could remain among the Crosby papers.

In the interim, the submission of further analysis of Crosby's texts to literary studies journals will serve to increase the visibility of Crosby's poetry, combatting (consciously as well as subconsciously) the notion that the work is beneath study: this aspect of Harry Crosby's recuperation is likely to be the most difficult, if not the most time-consuming, due to the competitive nature of journal publication, the shrinking number of journals that are able to retain funding and thus remain operational, and the likelihood of editorial conservatism in preserving page count<sup>52</sup>. As a stepping stone toward a collection of Harry Crosby's work, journal publication has the advantage of synergizing with the work of editing the volume and serving as a form of advertisement for the volume, not to mention the possibility of drawing interest by other scholars toward Crosby and thus ensuring an audience for such a volume.

The timeline for producing the collected Harry Crosby poems should take approximately three years. Regular contact with the Crosby archives at the Morris Library is assumed for that duration, provided that the editor can secure research funding to facilitate this work and to present findings and preliminary editorial work at conferences; lack of such support could extend the time for completing the collection further.

All criticism is an act of subjective comparison. It is overly idealistic to consider the possibility of criticism without "a canon," if only in the sense of a body of literature serving as a point of reference for critical inquiry. Fragmenting a single hegemonic corpus of accepted literature into multiple dialectically-organized canons would seem to

be the furthest one can go in that direction. “At the practical level, there will always be competing canons: it is impossible to avoid the question of which texts one wishes to share or discuss in one’s anthology, or critical article, or syllabus, or polemic” (Harris 118). The neglect of Harry Crosby in literary scholarship illuminates the flaws in the current boundaries between the extant competing canons, which are useful but not the totality of possible schema by which to refine the act of criticism, pushing it away from the dominance of a single cultural voice while simultaneously refraining from the impulse to, as Paulo Friere wrote, “harden into a dominating ‘bureaucracy’,” and thus become oppressive in response to liberation from oppression (57). Recovering Crosby for scholarly consideration will not prevent or resolve the issues causative of critical neglect by itself, but serves as a practical exercise in reexamining canonicity and the mechanisms of neglect toward the enrichment and improvement of criticism.

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NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup> Figure 1 visually represents the proportions of Crosby's work in print via various outlets. A few curious pieces of information arise: besides the case of unpublished poems found in manuscript among the Crosby papers, two poems in particular do not appear in any of the Black Sun Press poetry editions, even as they are reprinted in several different subsequent sources. "They" appears only in the rare 1928 collection *Six Poems* published by Latterday Pamphlets (possibly without Harry Crosby's direct approval). "A Short Introduction to the Word" is a popular choice for anthologists aiming to capture both Crosby's antinomian demeanor and his love of language, appearing in Cary Nelson's *Anthology of Modern American Poetry* and Jerome Rothenberg's *Poems for the Millennium*. It does not, however, appear in any of Crosby's Black Sun Press volumes.

<sup>2</sup> A smattering of Crosby's poems have unexpectedly benefitted from the Black Sun Press indulging freely in experimental printing. For instance, what would become the poem "Madman" in *Mad Queen* was printed as a stand-alone miniature volume entitled "The Sun", of which copies persist (though not especially more readily accessible). "Six Poems," though not numbered among the major collections of Crosby's poetry, no doubt because of its dubious authorization (as mentioned above), is useful because it raises the profile of six pieces from the middle of Crosby's career, providing additional insight into his development.

<sup>3</sup> One peculiarity of the secondary market for Harry Crosby's works runs contrary to conventional wisdom in the book collecting world: signed copies are not especially

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more valuable than other volumes. The reason for this is two-fold; first, the relative scarcity of Black Sun Press books in general makes them all valuable to collectors. More importantly, though, Harry had a habit of inscribing personal messages into his books for anyone who wanted them, and often did so as part of giving a volume to a recipient as a gift. He was even known to just inscribe signatures fresh off the press on their way to binding for no special reason whatsoever. Of the small number of remaining copies, it is actually more difficult to find one that doesn't bear his handwriting in it somewhere.

<sup>4</sup> That all of the intended copies of these editions were actually produced and distributed remains uncertain. George Minkoff, bibliographer of the Black Sun Press and rare book dealer, suggests in entries on [abebooks.com](http://abebooks.com) for Black Sun Press works that “Despite the note on the colophon that 20 copies on Japan vellum, 500 copies on Navarre paper and 50 copies on Holland were issued, it is the opinion of the bibliographers that neither the Japan vellum nor the Holland paper copies were ever issued.” It is impossible to gauge the actual scarcity, however.

<sup>5</sup> The first edition of *Sleeping Together* was issued in 1929 as a stand-alone volume; the text in the posthumous Crosby retrospective is unaltered apart from the inclusion of Stuart Gilbert's introductory “memory of the poet.”

<sup>6</sup> Cary Nelson uses the same adjective to describe Crosby in *Repression and Recovery*, and the comparison is apt: both are iconoclastic, shamanic figures who invoke the power of poetry as ritualistic practice (175).

<sup>7</sup> With the caveat that even reading all of Crosby is not necessarily a guarantee of understanding, as is the case with mystical literature, it is a necessary exercise to

attempt. To draw an analogy from historical mystery practices, an initiate taken to a grotto where the word “vitriol” is inscribed on the wall, or shown an alchemical text that refers to vitriol, is not necessarily aware of the term’s function not only as a referent to actual sulfuric acid, but also as an acronym for the motto “*Visita Interiora Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem*” (“*Visit the interior of the Earth, purify, and find the hidden stone*”), a key part of the analogy of the philosopher’s stone: the stone is the alchemist’s own soul, which was to be refined and purified through seclusion and study. This hidden meaning separates the initiated from the neophytes, and so too does Crosby’s poetry defy simple penetration.

<sup>8</sup> The word “industry” is employed knowingly here, for the first of those points is primarily true not only because of the smokescreen of literary value, but because of the legitimacy that fiction affords to assessing such works as artifacts of material – that is, monetary – value. While the most telling figures would be sales to academic audiences (i.e., to professors of literature classes and their students) apart from popular sales direct to the public, the readily available figures on Amazon.com, arguably the world’s largest bookseller, gives us a general idea of the relative cachet of comparable works. For instance, the Oxford University collection of Shakespeare’s complete sonnets and poems is ranked 98,119<sup>th</sup> overall on the site; Penguin Classics issues the only extant complete collection of Thomas Wyatt’s sonnets, ranked 810,193<sup>rd</sup> on the site; meanwhile, the complete poems of a third temporal peer, Lady Mary Wroth, can be found at #1,015,278 on the site. These sales figures are an ironic inversion to the significance these poets currently find within the syllabus: Shakespeare is often used, fairly or not, as the primary example of a canonized author who has proven nearly

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impossible to dislodge from centrality in the canon, while Wyatt is recognized as being responsible for technical innovations in sonnetry in English to which Shakespeare was indebted, and *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* by Lady Mary Wroth holds the historical significance of being the first known sonnet sequence to be written by a woman. This ranking can be attributed to traditional familiarity in the public consciousness accrued over generations of reinforcement, by the volume of the voice given by scholars to the importance of certain figures in literary taxonomy, and proves an ironic inversion to an oft-stated and ostensible goal of the academy in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, which is to explore neglected voices from the history of literature in order to rectify imbalances of cultural representation and privilege.

<sup>9</sup> Ironically, the creation of a variety of canons implies an overarching super-canon. The concept of the “tag cloud” as implemented in blogging software demonstrates this phenomenon: when an entry in an online journal is published, the author typically has the option to add tags, which are keywords useful in creating organizational schemes. A tag cloud is an automatically generated visual representation of the frequency of tags, rendering more frequently used tags in larger typeface. The end result is a block of text of varying sizes, within which some elements are emphasized and naturally catch the eye of the viewer over the smaller surrounding text. Likewise, an implicit canon emerges from those authors most represented in the various curricula across the spectrum of colleges and universities, despite the best efforts of educators wishing to break what they perceive as an oppressive dominant literary paradigm: one can see the



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central canon has had elements within it replaced, and its boundaries expanded, but it exists nonetheless.

- <sup>10</sup> This admonition is, of course, the same one issued some thirty years earlier by Paulo Friere in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. There is a familiar clumsiness to attempts to simply invert the positions of privilege and subaltern that defined the canon as espoused by the New Critics and their critical precursors from the Victorian era, ever obsessed with objective quantification and perceived natural laws: it is easier to retain a structure and simply rearrange elements within it, after all, than to actively engage in systemic reconstruction, but at the risk of retaining the assumptions inherent in the structure — in this case, the existence of two opposed fields of interest, one of which possesses an intrinsic worth lacking in the other.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

- <sup>11</sup> The gendering of typewriting has been well discussed by Kittler, Wershler-Henry, and others. There are several possible reasons why Harry Crosby did not personally own or use a typewriter: to use one in the context of an office was thought of as distinctly feminine, while the more masculine use of the portable typewriter as a journalistic tool carried with it working class connotations that may or may not have appealed to Crosby, depending on what spin he wanted to give his persona at a given moment: a scion of Boston society would not deign to use such a device, but the young chap who emerged from the trenches of the Great War might have. It also bears mentioning that Crosby was enamored of romanticism (capitalized or otherwise), and such a modern

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contrivance was at odds with the ethos of the poet as he absorbed it from Rimbaud, Baudelaire, and others; simultaneously, he was a technophile and personally indulged in photography and aeronautics.

<sup>12</sup> The size of these starting sheets was not standardized for centuries; not only were there several different paper sizes, such as foolscap or crown, but before standard conventions were established, different countries tended to produce these varieties in their own arbitrary dimensions. Terms such as folio and quarto, then, could actually describe a range of sizes of book, all of which have in common that their pages started out as a larger sheet before folding them a specified number of times into groups called signatures or gatherings, and then binding them into a book. The bewildering array of nuances and variations is far too broad to discuss in great detail here; readers are referred to Philip Gaskell's *A New Introduction to Bibliography* as the best source for a thorough introductory explanation of developments through the early twentieth century.

<sup>13</sup> Or, rather, the *appearance* of authenticity and the obfuscation of craft, for, as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, Harry Crosby labored to create a persona of unlabored expressiveness, and perhaps succeeded too well, harming critical perception of his work.

<sup>14</sup> Modernist authors such as Hemingway and Orwell who would go on to exemplify the period became acquainted with the typewriter during their time as correspondents, and to this day, the subconscious association of the typewriter with journalism is at least as strong as that with writing as artistic venture, certainly owing to the earlier adoption and thus longer pedigree of connection between journalists and typewriters.

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- <sup>15</sup> Having perused artifacts from both imprints, there appears to be a distinct lavishness to the Editions Narcisse output that exceeds even the early Black Sun Press texts: they are regularly in folio or quarto sizes, compared to the Black Sun predilection for quarto and octavo texts (or smaller – down all the way to the miniature of *Sun*, which measures only several centimeters on a side). The Editions Narcisse also more often sport hand-drawn color (red and black) illustrations; these works occupy the period of greatest collaboration between the artist Alastair and Harry Crosby.
- <sup>16</sup> The position of publishing houses is not unlike that of the music recording industry currently; both institutions have enjoyed a position of privileged control over the production of artistic material, subsequently eroded by an inability to keep up with innovations that break the consolidation of control and allow individuals to produce and distribute material on their own terms. Chapter 2 deals more extensively with some the ramifications of the proliferation of digital media on literary criticism and theory.
- <sup>17</sup> Indeed, the word “print” itself becomes nebulous when one considers the variety of mechanical methods available to produce a textual artifact that would be recognizable to readers as a “book”. Mimeograph and pantograph both produce output not functionally different from that generated by movable type through techniques rather different in nature, to name just two examples, and in fact allow for some amount of experimentation that movable type does not provide.
- <sup>18</sup> The typewriter continues to enjoy a seemingly unshakeable position as the locus of theoretical discussion: Charles Olson’s engagement with the typewriter is inextricable

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from the tenets of “projective verse”. Walter Benjamin explicitly addresses “mechanical reproducibility” as it impacts traditional conceptions of artisanship.

<sup>19</sup> This statement, while accurate, does not convey all the complexity of the situation:

Harry Crosby’s suicide occurred during the final days of Crane’s revision of *The Bridge*, and Crane’s grief over the tragedy threatened his ability to meet the necessary deadlines to get the book to press, after all the difficulty that accompanied its composition. Clive Fisher recounts the events in *Hart Crane: A Life*:

The funeral was hastily arranged since Caresse, whether eager to escape the scandal or to distract herself with practicalities, had decided to follow existing plans and return to France, and the Black Sun Press, on 13 December. [...] In view of her determination that *The Bridge* would still appear as scheduled the least Hart could do was pledge his own dependability: he therefore promised she would have all final revisions before 1 January even though the circumstances for perfectionism were hardly ideal. Crosby’s suicide, he told Charlotte Rychtarik, ‘threw me flat’, and when he wrote to Allen Tate on 14 December to accept his offer to proof-read *The Bridge* before it went to press in Paris he admitted he was ‘all broken up about Harry’ and hoped the brevity of his letter would not be misconstrued. [...] In a final exertion of lyric determination Hart devoted the two weeks that followed Crosby’s death to reworking ‘Quaker Hill’, pausing on 23 December to sign his contract with Liveright and receiving in return a \$200 advance and a promise that the publisher’s edition of *The Bridge* would not appear before 1 April in deference to the

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labour and conviction of the Crosbys. On 26 December he completed the modifications and rushed to get them aboard the Cherbourg-bound *Mauretania*. Revision had taken longer than expected but he knew Caresse would understand. ‘You can now go ahead and finish it all,’ he promised. At last, for her – and for him – it was over. (421-2)

<sup>20</sup> As the aphorism goes, one can measure a person’s worth by the caliber of their enemies. The same could be applied to the case for Harry Crosby’s significance: in speaking about the noted New Critic R.P. Blackmur, Russell Fraser asserts that the critic “differs absolutely from the Americans who attached themselves to the Black Sun Press of Harry Crosby or the magazine *transition*”(559). It is a testament to the position Crosby occupied in the social network of the “Lost Generation” that he may be invoked by name as a symbol to serve as a convenient guidepost for discussing the larger political and aesthetic situation of subsequent criticism.

<sup>21</sup> Lost somewhere in this swing, among many other useful tactics, is Derrida’s emphasis on “play” – the medial space *between* the culturally privileged reading and its negative correspondent. The point of deconstruction, which has seemingly eroded from critical practice, lays one step beyond the inversion of the inevitable binary in order to find a different, sometimes “perverse” stable state, but to explore the fluidity of the text between the two readings, finding meaning in the juxtaposition and synchronicity of the readings’ simultaneity.

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- <sup>22</sup> This conflict between the capitalist necessity for profit and the ideal of academic independence has already received thorough examination in innumerable other sources, and lies at the crux of the argument made in this dissertation. Lawrence Rainey succinctly describes “the current crisis in academic and trade publishing” as “a crisis that includes the increasing erosion of meaningful distinctions between them” (171).
- <sup>23</sup> Another well-studied example of this phenomenon is in the letters of Howard Phillips Lovecraft; a prodigious number of other authors mentored by Lovecraft via correspondence would go on to become major writers of horror or “weird fiction” in the twentieth century, such as Robert Bloch, L. Sprague de Camp, Robert E. Howard, among others. See S.T. Joshi, *H.P. Lovecraft: A Life*, for an excellent examination of this aspect of Lovecraft’s literary career.
- <sup>24</sup> Literary criticism of Harry Crosby’s poetry theoretically holds its own Library of Congress classification. That category, however, currently remains empty.
- <sup>25</sup> “By definition”, that is, because once the liminal area is thoroughly explored, it ceases to be liminal and becomes of the privileged fields of containment in the branching hierarchy of literary taxonomy.
- <sup>26</sup> One example of this can be seen in *The Oxford Shakespeare* first issued in 1986. The inclusion of parallel texts of *King Lear* is obviously a decision on the part of joint editor Gary Taylor, who has subsequently employed the inclusion of multiple texts side by side in his work on Thomas Middleton, while the choice to adhere to “original” texts or textual elements, such as Falstaff’s original name “Oldcastle” or the relegation of portions of Hamlet’s speeches to footnotes because they were believed to

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be added after the play had been performed, very likely comes from the influence of Stanley Wells.

<sup>27</sup> At least, that was the case when Nelson wrote those words; the advent of digital communication has accelerated their obsolescence. The prospect of having virtual anthologies with ever expanding and ever more inclusive tables of contents has caused a seismic shift in the understanding of literary value, no longer reliant upon (or hidden by) the material concerns of the publishing houses.

<sup>28</sup> This fear on the part of editors may soon be quelled by the entry of Crosby's work into the public domain, however. Copyright was not maintained on Crosby's poetry, and so the latest pieces entered the public domain in the year 2000: published in France in 1930, all of Crosby's work is subject to Article L123-1 of the Intellectual Property Code of France and therefore only protected for 70 years following the death of the author. The material costs of including the work remain a factor for physical anthologies, of course, but the growing use of electronic books increasingly mitigates this issue as well.

<sup>29</sup> Pragmatism as a philosophical concept is rather complex, as it requires a foray into meta-philosophy: William James conceived of the idea as a method of reconciling fundamental dilemmas within philosophy between strictly scientific or rational thinking on one hand, and moral or ethical positions which are more subjective or prone to emotional appeal (Hookway). The tenets of pragmatic philosophy require the consideration of the practical effects of application of philosophical ideas; Schoenbach's argument necessarily deals overwhelmingly with that practice of

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pragmatism as it manifests in the actual fact of modernism, and less with the underpinnings.

<sup>30</sup> Not that all critics have seen it this way: because mysticism is intensely personal, Eliot can only speak of Crosby's poetic theurgy in broad terms that approach the abstract, a fact which F.R. Leavis interprets as Eliot coyly distancing himself from strong support for Crosby:

Mr. Eliot, in his introduction, says he thinks we find 'in Crosby's writings, that we do not pick out single poems for enjoyment: if any of it is worth reading, then it all is.' It should, however, be said that most of the pieces answer more ostensibly to Mr. Eliot's general account: 'Harry Crosby's verse was consistently, I think, the result of an effort to record as exactly as possible to his own satisfaction a particular way of apprehending life.' 'What interests me most, I find,' says Mr. Eliot later, 'is his search for a personal symbolism of imagery.' But one gathers that he means to disclaim any suggestion that he understands. Crosby's language, that is, remains predominately a private one. ("This Poetical Renaissance" 76)

Mr. Leavis' somewhat sniffing tones hints at his disapproval at the idea of private language; this comment comes immediately after glossing over "Photoheliograph" without examination, and (much like Lawrence) missing the substitution cipher in Harry's "sound poem".

<sup>31</sup> Though it is not often the first cost of publication that comes to mind for consumers, editors are often concerned primarily with balancing the permissions fees for reprinting copyrighted selections. There is a distinct irony to this system, as it



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complicates the relationship between money and publication. There is an apparently direct correlation: poets from privileged backgrounds are consequently more likely to have an established estate controlling the poet's corpus. This, interestingly, actively works against the chances of such a poet's work being as widely available; editors under budgetary restrictions may opt to include less expensive selections from a known poet to make a sort of imaginary quota of a given number of familiar names.

When permissions for the works of a single poet amount to thousands of dollars, which is not uncommon depending on the copyright holder, it is tempting for an editor to cut a few high-priced poems, and include instead any number of lower-priced or public-domain selections of whatever length by major and minor authors alike. ("Contemporizing Canon" 86)

In a peculiar sort of paradox, the scandal surrounding Harry Crosby's death, which has worked against his inclusion in the poetic conversation for so long, may ultimately result in a more ready recovery: despite his wealthy family background, no real estate was established beyond the maintenance of the Black Sun Press by Caresse, followed by the donation of their papers to Southern Illinois University. Crosby's poems were not maintained in copyright, and are beginning to enter public domain at the very time of the writing of this dissertation. Crosby's poems might thus prove more attractive to anthologists in the next few years on account of their availability.

<sup>32</sup> Crosby felt a sympathy for some of the tenets of both Imagism and Vorticism, though he did not adhere strictly to either movement: he was not concerned about economy or precision of language where it detracted from the impact of his imagery, in the former

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case, and in the latter he appreciated dynamism but held to a romantic world-view as opposed to a mechanophilic futurism.

- <sup>33</sup> Bibliographic analysis is, as Jerome McGann asserts in *Social Values and Poetic Acts*, its own form of critical discourse distinct from narrative criticism, and an important one. I have embraced McGann's notion of "criticism as array" as an alternative to the form of solely narrative critical discourse, which "typically serve[s] to maintain an idea of the 'real' which avoids forms of change and discontinuity that cannot be appropriated to a processive or developmental model" (*Social Values* 133). By compiling as thorough a list of the appearances of Crosby's poetry as I have been able to create, I attempt to convey the weight of Crosby's neglect through a context that is too easily overlooked in descriptive form for reasons described throughout this dissertation, as well as to embrace the idea of the importance of the text-as-document, rather than text-as-content. Appendix I includes a list of Crosby's poems and the volumes in which they appear.

### NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

- <sup>34</sup> Crosby was explicitly aware of this philosophical stance on his own part, acknowledging it in a letter to his mother preserved in the Southern Illinois University archives and dated 7 August 1928:

But for me [the enclosed poems] show a real development forward – I suppose they come under the head of *surréalisme* You remember what Imber [?] said in the Saturday Review about the surrealist poet 'when his

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poem is written he is not concerned if it ‘means’ anything or not. Certainly the surréaliste poems ‘mean’ nothing in the vulgar sense of the word but they are nevertheless existent, vivid, and beautiful and is that not all that matters?’

- <sup>35</sup> Besides evoking “Zadig,” Crosby may also intend for readers to spot a second allusion to a similar Voltaire aphorism from *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, “Il est dangereux d'avoir raison dans des choses où des hommes accrédités ont tort.” (It is dangerous to be right when established men are wrong.) The relevance of this allusion to the ongoing decision to exclude Crosby from the canon can be read as both prescient and ironic.
- <sup>36</sup> Color is used both literally and metaphorically in *Red Skeletons* as a motif that will recur throughout the Black Sun Press’ production life. Three pairs of poems marry black and red – “Red Burial” and “Black Sarcophagus” are placed side by side, as are “Red Icebergs” and “Black Idol,” and finally “Red” and “Noir”. The physical use of red ink alongside black in Alastair’s illustrations is also a signature aesthetic choice of the Black Sun Press.
- <sup>37</sup> Reviewers of Wolff’s biography take the biographer’s subtle cues and run further with them: for instance, D. Keith Mano positively gloats over his assessment of Crosby as “mediocre” and exults in adding his own faux-magnanimous commentary on how Crosby’s wealth allowed a supposed luxury in being mediocre. Amid the dismissive posturing, Mano does make one useful comment about Crosby’s stylistic breadth: “In five years he ran through a century’s worth of verse tradition: ersatz Browning, ersatz Decadent and Symbolist and Dadaist; even some automatic writing” (“That’s Entertainment” 1241). The addition of the diminishing qualifier “ersatz” attests to the

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conservative vantage of the commenter, adherent to the notion that one must fully and exclusively cleave to a codified literary movement – and often to a limited and esoteric nuance of said movement, a shibboleth of authenticity that conveniently appears or vanishes according to the critic's perspective – or be labeled a second-class pretender.

<sup>38</sup> A photograph of the event appears on page xiv of the introduction to Sy Kahn's *Devour the Fire*.

<sup>39</sup> Though the logistics of including selections from *Transit of Venus* are much easier to surmount than some of Crosby's other collections, nevertheless, the decision appears curious because *Transit of Venus* was written not in dedication to Caresse Crosby but to Josephine Rotch, the mistress known in code as the "Fire Princess," who joined Harry in death in 1929. It is apparent that Caresse deliberately edited *Shadows of the Sun* to elide evidence of Rotche's intense connection to Harry in a number of the final diary entries, and from this we can infer that she clearly considered the entire matter of their affair difficult to countenance; given Kahn's admitted closeness to Caresse, the decision remains intriguing.

<sup>40</sup> Rothenberg also does Crosby the justice of attempting to recreate authentically, or at least approximate, some of the typographical techniques used in the poems chosen. Not all of Crosby's republication has been as meticulous.

<sup>41</sup> From Rothenberg's summation:

In the last two years of his life, Crosby had developed into a major image-making poet. The myth he unfolded was of the Sun – both as male & female – & he followed its orders through a striking series of structural innovations. [...] Crosby's verse experiments included the use of found

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forms (racing charts, book lists, stock reports, etc.) & concrete poetry, all with sun related imagery. [...] But in the anti-“modernist” reaction of the 1930s he was turned into a virtual non-person. (121)

He then quotes the familiar Pound introduction as suggestive of “the importance of [Crosby’s] vision” in the context of the 1970s (Rothenberg 121). This headnote is itself suggestive: does Rothenberg genuinely believe Crosby’s self-crafted sun-myth game the poet “orders” to be followed? Such a conclusion smacks of acceptance of an implication that seems to lurk underneath the dismissal of Crosby’s work that he possessed some sort of mental illness that affected his perception of reality, such as a schizophrenic or dissociative disorder, rather than the more likely and supportable assertion of a mood disorder such as severe depression or bipolar disorder.

<sup>42</sup> At the time Crosby was active, his peers often acknowledged his name among the other important literary figures of the time, which provides clues to the careful scholar looking for signs of influence. To give one example, Bob Brown’s collection *The Readies* opens with an acknowledgement of his own reading appetites, containing a mixture of writers subsequently canonized, reclaimed, or now obscure: “I like to read Hemingway, Carlos Williams, Sydney Hunt, Harry Crosby, K.T. Young, Links Gillespie, C.H. Ford, Herman Spector, Richard Johns, Norman MacLeod, Augustus Tiberius, etc.” (7). Brown was himself obscure for several decades, but has since enjoyed a modest resurgence in scholarly popularity, and it may be the case that Crosby may benefit from “second-hand” reclamation, regaining notice as a consequence of the recuperation of writers who acknowledge him directly.

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<sup>43</sup> There is also necessarily a difference between those who write poems about Harry Crosby and those who write in other forms, be they prose fiction or biography. This dissertation deals primarily with poetic reference to Crosby because of the significance accorded to Crosby's own journeyman work as a poetic mimic of Rimbaud and Baudelaire, but mention should be made of other works inspired by Crosby. Besides Wolff's *Black Sun* and the treatment given Crosby in Cowley's *Exile's Return*, two other long-form works take on Harry Crosby as their subject: the French biography *Les Amantes du Soleil Noir* by Dominique de Saint Pern, a literary biography concerned with the Crosbys as a couple, and *Black Idol*, a novel about Harry and Josephine's final days by Lisa St. Aubin de Terán. The former is exceptionally generous toward both Harry and Caresse, while the second remains too preoccupied with salaciousness to stand out as an informative source regarding the poet.

<sup>44</sup> Although Crosby enjoys a significant examination in *Revolution of the Word*, Rothenberg curiously omits Harry Crosby from his more expansive *Poems for the Millennium* series.

<sup>45</sup> The other possible explanation for the speaker's stance in "Etymology" is more nuanced: while Harry and Caresse Crosby had an open marriage, the Bigelows clearly did not, and so Josephine would thus invite more censure, and Harry along with her for abetting the infidelity. The title of the poem, "Etymology", is referenced in lines 9-11 – "Was it really lindy/ Hop, or Charleston, or the etymology/ of a four-letter word?" – referring to the popular but apocryphal explanation for the origins of the word "fuck" as a debased acronym for the phrase "for unlawful carnal knowledge"; the emphasis on the unlawful nature of the affair further reinforces the idea of a

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disapproving conservative commentary on the incident, and would certainly have been in line with the actual reactions of the staid Boston upper-class society from which the lovers emerged and which put them under erasure as punishment for their transgression. While this might be a reasoned position, the poem does not provide any substantial evidence that Komunyakaa intends to comment upon this facet of the case sufficient to support such a reading.

<sup>46</sup> The strength of the comparison is dubious: one might fairly consider the early Crosby, during the phase most strongly and directly influenced by Baudelaire's morbid imagery, to be not unlike Ian Curtis, the lead singer of Joy Division until his suicide in 1980, and there is some second-hand evidence that there was perhaps an element of craft to Curtis' musical persona just as there was to Crosby's poetic one, such as in Curtis' widow's memoir *Touching at a Distance*. However, Crosby evolved out of that maudlin phase into the more assertive sun-worshipping *Madman* persona, a more exuberant and bold façade whose self-destructiveness arose from a surfeit of manic energy, which was at stark contrast to both Curtis' real depression and its manifestation in the performances of Joy Division.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

<sup>47</sup> Just as paradoxically, while criticism has supposedly embraced the notion of the poet's life as necessary context in the Jamesonian sense, it simultaneously proclaims the death of the author, in Barthes' words. This tug of war seems to have manifested in a détente exemplified by the biographical headnotes one finds in anthologies, which

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carve out a (sometimes literally) marginal space in which a sop can be thrown to context without impinging too much on the primacy of the works chosen by the editor to represent the poet.

<sup>48</sup> One also must not forget that such material receives a wide range of receptions based upon the extant opinion of the author in question: academic presses sell thousands of volumes of such tangentially literary material to enthusiasts every year, and scholars have no qualms about writing lengthy examinations or analyses of the ephemera of an author of such esteem as Jane Austen or even J.R.R. Tolkien.

<sup>49</sup> “Little Poems” was renamed and reprinted in the now-rare 1932 Dutch anthology *Americans Abroad*, edited by Peter Neagoe. See Appendix I.

<sup>50</sup> This repetition may be more critically important than previously discussed for two reasons. First, as a matter of influence, it is known Crosby admired Gertrude Stein’s work, and one of the stylistic hallmarks of Stein’s poetry is an emphatic deployment of repetitive phrases. While that alone creates another thread in the web of intersecting praxis of the multifarious literary community to which they belonged, there is critical depth yet unexplored in such seemingly innocuous poetic tactics. Lisi Schoenbach’s *Pragmatic Modernism* explores the idea of “habit” as a more nuanced critical field than previously thought, and counter-reads the conventional modernist narrative not as a break from the past but as a forward movement that is problematized by a past that is never fully erased or absent.

## NOTES TO CONCLUSION



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<sup>51</sup> As Ira Sadoff notes, however,

“the entire text of Lunar Baedeker has appeared in print only once. [...] Only selected poems from Lunar Baedeker [sic] appeared in the 1958 publication of Lunar Baedeker and Time-Tables, and since then, The Last Lunar Baedeker (1982) collects and reorganizes Loy’s entire body of poetry. The Lost Lunar Baedeker (1996) does not contain all the original Baedeker [sic] poems, nor does it adhere to the original order.” (“Loy Poems”)

Fortunately, this does not seem to have harmed Loy scholarship; the continued availability of the texts remains the crucial element of the recuperation process.

<sup>52</sup> Journals, peculiarly, have not been as rapid in adopting electronic distribution methods as fixed anthologies have been, at least in a uniform way across the publishing field. Further, individual editors have embraced online journals, but have not always had the resources to maintain an online presence effectively. Literary studies journals also perennially suffer from overreliance on subscription fees to remain solvent, due to ever-receding budgetary allotments for all but the most prestigious titles; instituting a “paywall” system requires more labor on the part of the journal’s staff, both to establish the infrastructure and to manage subscriptions on an ongoing basis to ensure they remain current and accurate. Journal editors who forgo this work are essentially distributing their work for free on the internet, which is immensely useful for scholars wishing to access articles but detrimental to the continuation of the journal’s publication.

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## APPENDIX A – HARRY CROSBY’S POETIC CORPUS

Alphabetical List

Primary sources in parentheses: CS = *Chariots of the Sun*; MQ = *Mad Queen*; RS = *Red Skeletons*; SC = *Sonnets for Caresse*; SP = *Six Poems*; ST = *Sleeping Together*; TB = *Torchbearer*; TV = *Transit of Venus*; U=Unpublished

If a poem has been reprinted in a subsequent collection, the primary source in parentheses will be followed by abbreviations in square brackets noting which volumes contain a reprint: U29 = *Unrest: The Rebel Poets’ Anthology* (1929); U30 = *Unrest: The Rebel Poets’ Anthology* (1930); AA = *Americans Abroad*; RW = *Revolution of the Word*; D= *Dreams, 1928-1928*; TG = *Test of Gold*; BS = *Black Sun*; DF = *Devour the Fire*; AMAP = *Anthology of Modern American Poetry*; IL = *Imagining Language*; AP = *American Poetry: The Twentieth Century* (Library of America); LS = *Ladders to the Sun*

Edition numbers are appended to source abbreviations if a poem does not appear in all editions. For example, SC2 indicates a poem which appeared in the second edition of *Sonnets for Caresse*.

Crosby often retitled his poems, as did some of the editors who reprinted them. [[Double square brackets]] indicate different titles appearing in different editions, the titles of which also appear in square brackets.

Crosby also sometimes reused titles for different poems. To differentiate these, a poem sharing a title with an earlier work is numbered with a Roman numeral in {ornate brackets}

1. 103° (TB)
2. A Dress for Her (CS)
3. A Girl Comes From Afar (TV) [DF]
4. A Progress Upward (ST)
5. A Short Introduction to the Word (unknown) [RW, IL]
6. Academy of Stimulants (TB) [RW]
7. Aeronautics (MQ)
8. Aeronautics (ST) [DF, D]
9. Alchemy (TV)
10. All That Is Beautiful (TV)
11. Allegory (TB)
12. Altazimuth (TV)
13. Amor (TV)
14. And Memory (TV)
15. Angels of the Sun (CS) [DF]
16. Animal Magnetism (ST)
17. Arc-en-Ciel (SC)
18. Arrow of Gold (TV) [DF]

19. Assassin (MQ) [DF, AP<sup>1</sup>]
20. Assassin (TB)
21. Aunt Agatha (ST)
22. Bal Du Soleil (CS)
23. Bareheaded (TB)
24. Baubles (SC)
25. Baudelaire (RS) [DF]
26. Be Not It Is I (TV)
27. Beacons (TB)
28. Beauty in Bed (TV)
29. Bella Res Est Mori Sua Morte (RS, SC)
30. Beyond (TV) [DF]
31. Bilitis (SC3)
32. Bird in Flight (TB)
33. Black Idol (RS) [DF]
34. Black Sarcophagus (RS)
35. Brest (CS)
36. C Preferred (ST) [DF]
37. Cat (ST)
38. Cauchemar (RS)
39. C.C. (ST) [D]
40. Chenonceaux (SC)
41. Chinese Jade (SC)
42. Cinquains To The Sun (CS)
43. Coeur Damné (RS, SC)
44. Coeur De Jeune Femme (TV) [DF, U29]
45. Color-Spell (SC)
46. Collision (TB)
47. Coming Upstream (TB)
48. Corydon (SC)
49. Crucifixion (RS)
50. Croyant Avoir Rêvé (SC3)
51. Cruel Mouth and Little Ear (ST)
52. Cue of Wind (ST) [D]
53. Dance in a Madhouse (RS)
54. Dawn (CS) [D]
55. Day-Dreaming (TV)
56. Désaccord (SC) [BS]
57. Desespoir (RS)
58. Dialogue With Dalmas (CS)
59. Dice In A Yellow Skull (ST) [D]
60. Dissonance (SC)
61. Dream and Reality (TB)
62. Dryade (SP, CS)
63. Embrace Me You Said (ST)
64. Empty Bed Blues (MQ) [DF]



65. Endemonism (TV)
66. Ensablée (U)
67. Enquete (MQ) [DF]
68. Epitaph for the Sun (CS)
69. Eventuate (TV)
70. Faisans Froids Dans Leur Fond (for Nina) (CS)
71. Fear-Encompassed (RS, SC)
72. Feet of the Sun (TV) [DF]\*
73. Fierté (SC)
74. Fire-Eaters (TV) [DF]
75. First Meeting (TV) [DF]
76. For a Protection (ST) [D]
77. For An Initial Key (CS)
78. For the Prevention of Cruelty to Brides (ST)
79. For You (TB)
80. Folies Des Femmes (SC)
81. Forecast (TV)
82. Fragment [[of an Etude]] For A Sun-Dial ([CS], MQ) [RW]
83. Fragment of a Prayer (U)
84. Futility (RS)
85. Game of Tag (ST)
86. Gargoyles (RS)
87. Gay (TV)
88. Gazelle At Luncheon (ST) [DF]
89. Girls Are Climbing (ST)
90. Girls Under Ten (ST) [D]
91. Gladness (TB)
92. Glass Princess (ST) [D]
93. Goddess of Mirth (TV)
94. Gold and Gray (SC)
95. Golden Future (SC)
96. Golden Spoon (ST)
97. Hands (TV) [D]
98. He Called Us A Girl (ST)
99. Heliograph (MQ) [D]
100. Heliograph (self-portrait) (TB)
101. Hill of the Foreskins (MQ)
102. Horse Race (MQ)
103. House of Ra (MQ)
104. Human Flesh and Golden Apples (ST)
105. I Am [[In]]Your Soul (ST) [DF]
106. I Break With the Past (ST) [DF]
107. I Climb Alone (TB) [RW, DF]
108. I Drink to the Sun (TB)
109. I Follow You To Bed (ST)
110. I Had No Idea What They Would Do Next (ST)

111. I Was Never Happier (ST)
112. Idle Questions (CS)
113. Idolatry (SC)
114. In a Castle (SC)
115. In a Forest (U)
116. In a Pair of Eyes (SC)
117. In Madness (MQ) [DF]
118. In Pursuit of Your Eyes (ST) [DF]
119. In Search of the Young Wizard (ST) [DF]
120. In the Green Bed (SC)
121. Index (CS)
122. Indubitable (TV)
123. Infuriate (MQ)
124. Infuriate (TB)
125. Inseparate (SC)
126. Inspection (ST) [DF]
127. Into Forgetfulness (SC)
128. Inverse Ratio (TB)
129. Invocation To The Mad Queen (MQ) [DF, U29]<sup>†</sup>
130. It is Snowing (ST) [DF]
131. It is Well (TV)
132. Kiss (TV) [DF]
133. Laid Under (TV) [DF]
134. Lamentation (SC3, RS)
135. Last Contact (TV) [DF]<sup>+</sup>
136. Lesbienne (SC3)
137. Letter (TB)
138. Library (TB)
139. Lit de Mort (RS) [DF]
140. Little Girl (TV)
141. Little Poems (TV) [AA]<sup>‡</sup>
142. Loi Solaire (CS) [DF]
143. Lost Things (TV) [DF]
144. Madman (MQ) [RW, DF]
145. Madonna Mea (SC)
146. Magic Formula (TV) [DF]
147. Mask (TV)
148. Meditation Under the Sun (CS) [DF]
149. Metamorphose (SC)
150. Miracle (TV) [U29]
151. Miracle of the Tooth (ST) [DF]
152. Miraculous Message (ST)
153. Monotone (RS)
154. Moon-Magic (SC)
155. Mort Volontaire (TB) [DF]
156. Mosquito (ST)

157. Naked Lady In a Yellow Hat (ST)
158. Narcisse Noir (SC)
159. Neant (CS)
160. Necrophile (RS)
161. New Every Morning (TV)
162. Nicer Hands (TV)
163. No Indication of Where I Might Find You (ST) [DF]
164. Nocturne de Paris (SC)
165. Noir (RS)
166. Nor Look Behind (TV) [DF]
167. Nostalgia (SC3, RS)
168. Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep (TV) [DF]
169. O' Mans Mansueta In Man O' Amante (CS, SC)
170. Ombres (SC3, RS)
171. On the Grounds of Indecency (ST)
172. One Hundred Ways Of Kissing Girls (ST) [D]
173. One Letter of the Alphabet (ST)
174. Orchidaceous (RS)
175. Our Lady of Tears (SC3, RS<sup>#</sup>)
176. Ovid's Flea (ST)
177. Palimpsest (SC)
178. Panther (TV) [DF]
179. Parabola (TB)
180. Parallel (TV) [DF]
181. Parce, Parce, Precor (SC3)
182. Partout Des Prunelles Flamboient (RS)
183. Performance by Two (ST)
184. Pharmacie Du Soleil (CS) [RW, AMAP]
185. Phoenix (TV) [DF]
186. Photoheliograph [[(For Lady A.)]](CS) [RW, AMAP, AP]
187. Pleureuse (RS)
188. Poem (TV)
189. Poem for the Feet of Polia (CS)
190. Prayer (TV)
191. Predacious (RS)
192. Priestess (TV) [DF]
193. Proportionate (CS) [DF]
194. Proposed Titles for Sun-Poems (CS)
195. Psychopathia Sexualis [(Case 19)] (CS) [DF]
196. Q.E.D. (CS) [DF]
197. Quatrains To The Sun (CS) [DF]
198. Queen of Hearts (ST)
199. Radio From the Sun Goddess (TB)
200. Reckon the Days (TV) [U29]
201. Red (RS)
202. Red Burial (RS) [DF]

203. Red Icebergs (RS)
204. Requisites (TV)
205. Revirginate (ST)
206. Ritual (TV) [DF]
207. Ritz Tower (ST) [D]
208. Roots (TV) [U29]
209. Safety-Pin (ST)
210. Saint Valentine's Night (ST)
211. Salammbô (SC3, RS)
212. Salome (RS)
213. Scorn (TB) [U30]
214. Sea-Myth (CS)
215. Second Dialogue With Dalmás (for Polia) (CS)
216. Seesaw (ST) [D]
217. Shadow Shapes (RS)
218. Shadows (TV)
219. Sharing Fire (TV) [U29]
220. Solution of a Mystery (ST)
221. Sonnet for Caresse (U)
222. Squirrels (TB)
223. Street of the Four Winds (ST) [DF]
224. Strong for Battle (TB)
225. Stud Book (MQ) [DF]
226. Study for a Soul (SP, CS)
227. Sun and Fire (TB)
228. Sun Rhapsody (SP, CS) [DF]
229. Sun Testament I (for W.V.R.B.) (CS)
230. Sun-Death (MQ) [DF]
231. Sundrench and Sons (CS)
232. Sun-ghost (CS)
233. Sunrise (CS)
234. Sunrise {II} (MQ) [DF]
235. Sunrise Express (ST)
236. Suns In Distress (CS)
237. Sunset (CS)
238. Sunstroke (MQ)
239. Sun-Testament (MQ)
240. Symbolique (RS)
241. Target for Disgust (MQ) [DF]
242. Tattoo (TB) [RF, DW, AMAP]
243. Teatime (SC2)
244. Telephone Directory (MQ)
245. Temple De La Douleur (SC, RS)
246. Testament of Pleasure (TV)
247. That Hard Word (TV) [DF]
248. The Arrow (TB) [DF]

249. The Bridge (TB) [DF]
250. The Cramoisy Queen (ST)
251. The End of Europe (TB)
252. The Golden Gourd (CS)
253. The Red Umbrella (ST)
254. The Rose (TV) [U29]
255. The Ten Commandments (TB) [RW]
256. The Trail (TB)
257. The Young Queen (SC3)
258. They (SP)
259. They The Twelve Lions (ST) [D, DF]
260. Thorn In the Flesh (TV)
261. Threnody (SC)
262. Tidal Wave (TB)
263. To Those Who Return (CS)
264. Torse De Jeune Femme Au Soleil (CS)
265. Touggourt (CS) [DF]
266. Tournesol (CS) [DF]
267. Toys of Time (SC3)
268. Tree of Gold (CS) [DF]
269. Triolet (U)
270. Trumpet of Departure (TB)
271. Ultimate (TB)
272. Unanswered (CS)
273. Uncoffined (RS) [DF]
274. Unfathomed (TV)
275. Unfertilized (RS)
276. Unleash the Hounds (TB)
277. Unremoved By Rubbing (ST) [D]
278. Venus (TV) [DF, U29]
279. Very Nice To Look At And Sweet To Touch (ST)
280. Virginity (TB)
281. Vocabulary (TB)
282. Water Lilies (SP, CS)
283. We Are One (TV)
284. We Have Forgotten Our Calling Cards (ST)
285. Were It Not Better (TV) [DF]
286. Whippets to the Sun (CS) [DF]
287. White Aeroplanes in Flight (ST) [DF]
288. White Clover (ST)
289. White Ermine (ST) [D]
290. White Fire (ST)
291. White Slipper (ST)
292. White Stockings (ST) [D]
293. Winning-Post (TB)
294. World Made to Be Loved (TV)

- 295. Yes (TV) [DF]
- 296. You Are Standing On Your Head (ST)
- 297. You Came To Me (TV)
- 298. You Were Trying To Tell Me Something (ST) [D]
- 299. You Would Not Scream (TV) [D, DF]
- 300. Young Sun (CS)
- 301. Your Eyes Are Your Real Eyes (ST)
- 302. Your Kiss (TV) [DF]
- 303. Youth (TV) [DF]
- 304. Zorah (SP, SC)

! Reprints only an excerpt: section VI, "Vision".

+ Retitled "Sleeping Together" in *Unrest* (1929)

† Retitled "Invocation to the Sun-Goddess" in *Unrest* (1929)

‡ Retitled "Two Poems" in *Americans Abroad*

# Retitled "Our Lady of Pain" in *Red Skeletons*

\* "Our Feet" is an altered version of "Feet of the Sun," substituting 'our' for 'his' and 'yours' for 'hers' throughout.

### List by Volume

#### *Anthology*

(This was an anthology compiled by Crosby of other poets' work, but a personal copy dated 1927 contains hand-written poems of his own.)

- Inside front:

Sonnet for Caresse

Angels of the Sun

Zorah

Unanswered

Symbolique

Proportionate

- Inside back:

Water-Lilies

Bal de [Contraire/Couture] (renamed Bal de Soleil)

Shadow-Shapes

In A Forest

Ensablée

Futility

Fragment of a Prayer

Triolet

Inseparate

*Sonnets for Caresse* (four editions)

Arc-en-Ciel 3-4  
 Baudelaire 1-3  
 Bilitis 3  
 Cauchemar 1-4  
 Chenonceaux 3-4  
 Chinese Jade 1-3  
 Coeur Damné 2-4  
 Colour-Spell 1-4  
 Corydon 1-3  
 Croyant Avoir Rêvé 3  
 Désaccord 1-3  
 Désespoir 1-3  
 Dissonance 1-4  
 Faëry Cities 1-3  
 Fear-Encompassed 2-4  
 Fierté 1-4  
 Flowers 3  
 Futility 1-3  
 Gold and Gray 1-3  
 Golden Future 1-4  
 Heart-Enshrined 1-4  
 Idolatry 1-4  
 In A Castle 1-4  
 Inseparate 1-4  
 Into Forgetfulness 3-4  
 Lamentation 3  
 Lesbienne 3  
 Madonna Mea 1-4  
 Metamorphose 1-4  
 Monotone 2-3  
 Moon-Magic 1-4  
 Nostalgia 3  
 O Mano Mansueta In Man D'Amante 1-4  
 Ombres 3  
 Our Lady of Tears 3  
 Palimpsest 3  
 Parce, Parce, Precor 2-3  
 Salammbô 3  
 Salome 3  
 Sea-Myth 1-4  
 Shadow-Shapes 1-3  
 Symbolique 3  
 The Young Queen 2-3  
 Threnody 1-4  
 Toys of Time 3

Violets 1-3  
 Water-Lilies 3  
 Zorah 1-3

*Red Skeletons*

Baudelaire  
 Bella Res Est Mori Sua Morte  
 Black Idol  
 Black Sarcophagus  
 Cauchemar  
 Coeur Damné  
 Crucifixion  
 Dance in a Madhouse  
 Desespoir  
 Fear-Encompassed  
 Futility  
 Gargoyles  
 Lamentation  
 Lit de Mort  
 Monotone  
 Necrophile  
 Noir  
 Nostalgia  
 Ombres  
 Orchidaceous  
 Partout Des Prunelles Flamboient  
 Pleureuse  
 Predacious  
 Red  
 Red Burial  
 Red Icebergs  
 Salammbô  
 Salome  
 Shadow Shapes  
 Symbolique  
 Temple De La Douleur  
 Uncoffined  
 Unfertilized

*Chariot of the Sun* (two editions, no variations)

A Dress for Her  
 Angels of the Sun  
 Bal du Soleil  
 Brest



Cinquains to the Sun  
 Dawn  
 Dialogue with Dalmas  
 Dryade  
 Epitaph for the Sun  
 Faisans Froids Dans Leur Fond [(for Nina)]  
 For An Initial Key  
 Fragment of an Etude For A Sun-Dial  
 Idle Questions  
 Index  
 Loi Solaire  
 Meditation under the Sun  
 Néant  
 O Mans Mansueta In Man D'Amante  
 Pharmacie Du Soleil  
 Photoheliograph  
 Poem for the Feet of Polia  
 Proportionate  
 Proposed Titles for Sun-Poems  
 Psychopathia Sexualis [(Case 19)]  
 Q.E.D.  
 Quatrains To The Sun  
 Sea-Myth  
 Second Dialogue with Dalmas [(for Polia)]  
 Study for a Soul  
 Sun Rhapsody  
 Sun-Testament (for W.V.R.B.)  
 Sundrench and Sons  
 Sun-ghost  
 Sunrise  
 Suns In Distress  
 Sunset  
 The Golden Gourd  
 To Those Who Return  
 Torse De Jeune Femme Au Soleil  
 Touggourt  
 Tournesol  
 Tree of Gold  
 Unanswered  
 Water Lilies  
 Whippets to the Sun  
 Young Sun

*Mad Queen*

Stud Book

Heliograph  
 Invocation to the Mad Queen  
 Hill of the Foreskins  
 Target for Disgust  
 House of Ra  
 Horse Race  
 Etiquette  
 Sunstroke  
 Sunrise  
 Sun-Testament  
 Fragment for a Sun-Dial  
 Madman  
 Empty Bed Blues  
 Sun-Death  
 Assassin  
 Telephone Directory  
 In Madness  
 Aeronautics  
 Infuriate

*Sleeping Together* (two editions)

A Progress Upward  
 Aeronautics  
 Animal Magnetism  
 Aunt Agatha  
 C Preferred  
 Cat  
 C.C.  
 Cruel Mouth and Little Ear  
 Cue of wind  
 Dice In A Yellow Skull  
 Embrace Me You Said  
 For a Protection  
 For the Prevention of Cruelty to Brides  
 Game of Tag  
 Gazelle At Luncheon  
 Girls Are Climbing  
 Girls Under Ten  
 Glass Princess  
 Golden Spoon  
 He Called Us A Girl  
 Human Flesh and Golden Apples  
 I Am Your Soul  
 I Break With the Past  
 I Follow You To Bed

Had No Idea What They Would Do Next  
 I Was Never Happier  
 In Pursuit of Your Eyes  
 In Search of the Young Wizard  
 Inspection  
 It is Snowing  
 Miracle of the Tooth  
 Miraculous Message  
 Mosquito  
 Naked Lady In a Yellow Hat  
 No Indication of Where I Might Find You  
 On the Grounds of Indecency  
 One Hundred Ways Of Kissing Girls  
 One Letter of the Alphabet  
 Ovid's Flea  
 Performance by Two  
 Queen of Hearts  
 Revirginate  
 Ritz Tower  
 Safety-Pin  
 Saint Valentine's Night  
 Seesaw  
 Solution of a Mystery  
 Street of the Four Winds  
 Sunrise Express  
 The Cramoisy Queen  
 The Red Umbrella  
 They The Twelve Lions  
 Unremoved By Rubbing  
 Very Nice To Look At And Sweet To Touch  
 We Have Forgotten Our Calling Cards  
 White Aeroplanes in Flight  
 White Clover  
 White Ermine  
 White Fire  
 White Slipper  
 White Stockings  
 You Are Standing On Your Head  
 You Were Trying To Tell Me Something  
 Your Eyes Are Your Real Eyes

*Torchbearer*

Academy of Stimulants  
 Allegory  
 Assassin  
 Bareheaded  
 Beacons  
 Bird in Flight  
 Collision  
 Coming Upstream  
 Dream and Reality  
 For You  
 Gladness  
 Heliograph (self-portrait)  
 I Climb Alone  
 I Drink to the Sun  
 Infuriate  
 Inverse Ratio  
 Letter  
 Library  
 Mort Volontaire  
 Parabola  
 Radio From the Sun Goddess  
 Scorn  
 Squirrels  
 Strong for Battle  
 Sun and Fire  
 Tattoo  
 The Arrow  
 The Bridge  
 The End of Europe  
 The Ten Commandments  
 The Trail  
 Tidal Wave  
 Trumpet of Departure  
 Ultimate  
 Unleash the Hounds  
 Virginity  
 Vocabulary  
 Winning-Post

*Transit of Venus* (three editions)

A Girl Comes From Afar (1-3)  
 Alchemy (2-3)  
 All That Is Beautiful (1-3)  
 Altazimuth (1-3)  
 Amor (2-3)

And Memory (1-3)  
Arrow of Gold (1-3)  
Be Not It Is I (1-3)  
Beauty In Bed (1-3)  
Beyond (1-3)  
Coeur De Jeune Femme (1-3)  
Daydreaming (1-3)  
Eudemonism (2-3)  
Eventuate (1-3)  
Feet of the Sun (1-3)  
Fire-Eaters (1-3)  
First Meeting (1-3)  
Forecast (1-3)  
Gay (2-3)  
Girl Comes From Afar (2)  
Goddess of Mirth (1-3)  
Hands (1-3)  
Indubitable (1-3)  
It Is Well (1-3)  
Kiss (1-3)  
Laid Under (1-3)  
Last Contact (1-3)  
Little Girl (1-3)  
Little Poem (1-3)  
Lost Things (1-3)  
Magic Formula (1-3)  
Mask (1-3)  
Miracle (1-3)  
New Every Morning (2-3)  
Nicer Hands (1-3)  
Nor Look Behind (1-3)  
Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep (2-3)  
Panther (2-3)  
Parallel (1-3)  
Phoenix (2-3)  
Poem (1-3)  
Prayer (1-3)  
Priestess (1-3)  
Reckon the Days (1-3)  
Requisites (1-3)  
Ritual (1-3)  
Roots (1-3)  
Shadows (1-3)  
Sharing Fire (1-3)  
Testament of Pleasure (1-3)  
That Hard Word (1-3)

The Rose (1-3)  
Thorn in the Flesh (1-3)  
Unfathomed (2-3)  
Venus (1-3)  
We Are One (1-3)  
Were It Not Better (1-3)  
World Made To Be Loved (1-3)  
Yes (2-3)  
You Came To Me (1-3)  
You Would Not Scream (1-3)  
Your Kiss (1-3)  
Youth (1-3)

## APPENDIX B – LAMANTIA’S “POETIC MATTERS”



PROCESSION OF BLACKFOOT BRAVES

# POETIC MATTERS

A concerted abandonment of fixed forms (from sonnets to free verse), rhyme and metrical references cannot be considered anything but a formal change unless it is intrinsically correlative to a high degree of *deformation*, the term suggested by Gaston Bachelard in order to do away with the mistaken notion of “image making” or “image building” which conventional thought has ascribed to the word *imagination*. I cannot help agreeing with Bachelard that the imaginative faculty must be understood as *freeing us from the immediate images of perception* and in his words “without an unexpected union of images, there is no imagination, no imaginative action.” He suggests the word “corresponding to imagination is not *image*, but *imaginary* .... that the value of an image is measured by the extent of its imaginary radiance.” Now, it is incontrovertible (in accordance with Hegel’s findings in *The Philosophy of Fine Art*) that the “*unfettered imagination*” is the basis for poetry, “imaginary content,” its objectivity. Rigorously, imaginary power is central to poetic materialization which surrealism locates as a conduit for thought, speech being no more than a mediational instrument that imaginary thought transforms by the deforming of imagery.

But most American poets have mistakenly subordinated the imaginative faculty to the predominance of perception conjoining a slavish reduction of language to “speech patterns” and pragmatic usages. Bachelard characterizes an image which takes on a “definitive form” as assuming “present perception” ... such a “stable and completed image *clips the wings of the imagination*. It makes us fall from that dreaming imagination which does not confine itself within any image...”

The literary practitioners of the “post-Olson generation” as some promoters now label it)

have been to a hopeless degree failures on the imaginative and lyrical planes of true poetry, preoccupied as they are with a self-conscious acquiescence to the debasement of language characterizing its reification by technicians and mind-managers of latter-day capitalism.\* This direction is glorified specifically in those false poets who pride themselves on a formalized “handling” of “ordinary American speech” which is, in effect, nothing other than a rhetorical camouflage for the betrayal of poetic exigencies in the service of cultural chauvinism and the oppressive “reality principle,” reflecting a pitiful need to be recognized by socially conditioned imbecility. Instead of poetry conceived as a disinterested means of emancipation—tending toward the realization of the objects of desire—we have Charles Olson, with misappropriated scientific jargon, reducing “the poem” to unqualified abstractions, “energy” and “energy-discharge,” and pontificating the following inane dogma: “one perception must immediately and directly lead to a further perception.” Bachelard—scientist in poetry and psychologist of science, champion of Lautréamont and *active imagination*—has noted the crucial distinction between present perception and imagination. The following prescriptive revaluation may be critically situated in opposition to all aesthetic ideologies which shift the focus away from poetry’s capacity and necessity for imaginative radiance: “To acquire a feeling for the imaginative role of language, we must seek, in every word, the

\*Beyond the general deficiencies of the last thirty years, and outside of the surrealist movement, there are a number of exceptions known to me. Both morally and poetically, for example, there is Bob Kaufman, pre-eminently; Gregory Corso, who can also be commended for his public disdain of “the Black Mountain School”; and Daniel Moore of *Dawn Visions*. All of these poets share the distinction of having, at certain times, expressed themselves honestly and intensely in a language with real affinities to surrealism.



desires for otherness, for double meaning, for metaphor... we must record all the desires to abandon what we see and what we say for what we imagine. We shall then have some chance of restoring to the imagination its role of attraction. To perceive and imagine are as antithetic as presence and absence. To imagine is to absent oneself; it is a leap toward a new life."

The vociferously alleged "newness" of post-World War II American poetry and poetics associated with Olson, Creeley, Ginsberg, Duncan, Levertov (among the most voluble practitioners and theorizers) pertains to nothing more than a belated "palace revolution" diverging only from the previous literary stranglehold by the fixed-form addicts, a priesthood of feudal minded English professors such as J. C. Ransom, Yvor Winters and R. P. Warren. The new literary priesthood found one of its main sources in Ezra Pound's glib slogan "Make it New", a recipe which has been actually translated into the advertising, architecture and designs of "the administered life" as we know it under monopoly capitalism and for which the inventor of futurism, Filippo Marinetti, by 1909, had sounded the exact intellectual tocsin.\*\*

Like Marinetti, Olson posits unqualified "energy" and "the kinetics of the thing" as major technical preoccupations for composition. In fact, Marinetti's literary program seems to have resurfaced in Olson's reading of Pound, who asserted that the whole modern movement which he, T. S. Eliot and Joyce represented as a nucleus had its origins directly in Marinetti's futurism.

There is the curious fact of an aesthetic movement (Italian futurism) proclaiming extreme "novelty" and "dynamism" and all the while seminating, primarily through its founder, political "solutions" that found their end in fascism. At its origins futurism extolled war and extreme patriotism often expressed in organized mass demonstrations as well as in artistic productions; its political program, anti-parliamentarian and anti-socialist, consisted of a germinal theory of organizing the State and the economy which was largely realized later in Mussolini's Corporate State. The proposal that futurist artists and poets should rule society was, of course, less than fruitful. (Even Mussolini's belated appointment of Marinetti as cultural minister in the 1930s had no immediate significant effect on Italy.) However, the translation of certain futurist political proposals into central features of fascism does suggest the preponderant influence of the Marxian model of a

"super-structural" ideology interacting on the infra-structure of Italian capitalism at crucially interstitial "moments" before and after World War I and extending considerably thereafter to finally determine a general aesthetic, by reduction and technical adaptations, in the architecture and stylizations which today throughout the world still resemble the futurist models. For it is *not* Picasso's influence, as alleged recently by some pundits of mass opinion, that is evident "all around us" in the contemporary civilized world. (If it were so, then where is the intense lyricism and super-reality represented by Picasso in his most important imaginative works between the two World Wars?) But the fact remains, we have reached the point in 1975 that the act of reading Ginsberg and Olson or any of their epigones is interchangeable with the scanning of *Time* and *Newsweek*. I maintain this is no "accident" but clearly delineates the *false consciousness of poetry* proliferating within the shifting gears of decadent capitalism.

Contrary to the consensus of American literary "authorities" who decided to separate Pound "the man" from "the poet," deploring his fascist politics and hailing his literary achievements, I believe Pound's poetics are as anti-human as his politics and, if his poetry is examined closely, considering the historical facts vis-a-vis Marinetti's futurism, it will be obvious to what extent the two currents interpenetrate. Fascism's claim to "revolution" by the cult of "youth" and "newness" while resuscitating the classicist values of Greco-Roman civilization and concretized, laughingly so, in the architecture known as "Mussolini modern," is a neat similitude to Pound's exclusive and scholastic insistence on Aristotelian logic and his aping of "the classics" while cinematically employing the linguistic idioms of a political ward heeler in the United States of the 1920s.

Charles Fourier rightly judged civilization to be the carrier of oppressive ideologies. In open hostility to the cancerous and moribund moral "values" exemplified in the bourgeois-academic "classics," surrealism prefers the great poetry of the primal peoples of the earth, and recognizes as well signs of revolt and liberty in the heretical, gnostic and heterodox developments in thought throughout the last three thousand years which significantly diverged from the judeo-christian and academic Greco-Roman traditions. I have always dreamed of the ultimate triumph of the legendary Sirens who, it was said, were "defeated" in their poetic combat with the Muses and who can be deciphered to typify imaginative freedom from the restraints of rationally controlled poetry whose spokesmen, like all good bourgeoisie, must always recommend that we "plug our ears" against the enchantresses heard by the inspired poet on his voyage to the unknown. The great nineteenth century painter, Gustave Moreau, must have known of the heterodox meaning of this legend, since he depicts the poet at the feet of the Siren, evoking her role as a sub-aqueous source of poetic inspiration, associating humanity's origin with water, which Sandor Ferenczi later found so psychoanalytically significant.

\*\*During a sojourn in Rome (1964) I encountered a curious circle of old and young "friends of Marinetti" and became familiar with the substance of the Pound/Marinetti correspondence housed in a special archive. Thus I was able to acquire little-known facts concerning the futurist movement which, by way of explaining its "eclipse," certain of the "amici" hypothesized had as "enemy" none other than surrealism. Pound's fanatical pro-Italian posture corresponded, in fact, to Marinetti's proto-fascist and racist theory of Italian superiority over all other national groups based on the cultural "Genius" which, according to early futurist propaganda, was alleged to be a monopoly of the Italians (!). Finally, Pound's political position, as one of Mussolini's most prestigious supporters, culminated in his World War II radio broadcasts emphasizing permanent preferences for all things Italian over what Pound considered his own countrymen's inferiority and barbarism. During the Allied invasion of Italy, Pound could be heard over the radio soliciting American soldiers to surrender, invoking Italian cultural and political superiority as the main argument.





OJIBWA PICTOGRAPHS

It is not, as with Baudelaire, "plunging into the unknown" to find "the new," by which he who named imagination "the queen of the faculties" implied a path of *descent into oneself*, but, for the American versifiers, a consciously manipulated method of fragmenting reality by reduction to random sensorial (primarily *retinal*) reporting and syntactic distortions suggesting a "newness" sought as an end in itself, much as reactionary versifiers of the late nineteenth century espoused "art for art's sake." Evading completely the primary problems of what it is that *informs content* in poetic practice, the emphasis on technical means which are often enough turned into ends, becomes a delusory surface structure hiding the fact that poetry, in the sense understood by Hegel as "an act of unfettered imagination," is nowhere to be found. Instead we are given a whole new set of conventions replacing the old ones of rhyme and meter, but whether "projective verse," "cutups," "organic form," concrete poetry" or "songs à la rock 'n roll," these are merely another group of unmistakably petty "games" Rimbaud so rightly denounced in earlier counterparts and which surrealism has superseded. Just as boring as medieval litanists and "alliteratives," or the sonneteers of a few generations ago, the present "poem makers" come puffing and choking and creaking like the anthropomorphic caricatures of broken-down automobiles depicted in animated cartoons. The rottenness of these dichotomizing and alienating literary dogmas of the last twenty-five years should not fail to become more evident to others as the Surrealist Movement in the United States progresses to initiate a quantitatively determining *lever of revolution* on the cultural plane, since surrealism offers the sole challenge and viable alternative to what amounts to a conspiracy of poetic degeneracy in this country. Such degeneracy (with all its attendant implications) may be illustrated by a dialectical transposition of a recent Ginsberg book title, turning into "The Fall of Poetry in America." This "Fall" is the real *kinetic* activity of the post-Olson versifiers, as the mystificatory *poetry equals energy* identity is the reductionist predication of a psychological crisis with its roots in the alienated subject terrified by the repressed images he has successfully evaded during acts of composition.

Instead of words set free from the prosaic prisons of social reality, images transformed by desire, poetry freed from the "laws" of nature, attentive to the becoming of unknown analogies, words purified by the rays of oneiric desire, language emancipated from the confines of speech, informed by the inner ear and disdainful of "music" other than the rhythms immanent in

imaginary thinking, analogies whose *encounters* elicit every type of humor — and instead of language becoming a means of infinite imaginary combinations — most established American poets of this century have given us a massive literature of sensibility, self-narration, virtuosity and literal confessions signed very energetically by the stylus of the death-wish.

\* \* \*

The only pleasure I can possibly derive from this necessary critique of the bankrupt tendencies in American pseudo-poetry is in proportion to the possibility of an effective *disruption* among the youth who are being oppressed by a programed set of misdirections and blind alleys projected in the schoolrooms whose categories evoke the names of nauseous adjuncts to bourgeois-bureaucratic culture. The most pernicious and mystifying tendency — and the more pronounced within the last decade — has been the application of the misnomers "surreal" and "surrealistic" to the *sham article*, causing the gravest difficulties among the uninformed and misinformed, a despicable practice which all authentic surrealists everywhere have always denounced. To affirm, for example, as some academician did recently, that "surrealism has become almost anything at all" since it is "the language our poets speak," not only is tendentiously flippant but more seriously represents the blatantly confusionist tactics of a whole gang of literati who have managed to do nothing better than dabble with the surface effects of genuine surrealist expression in order to proffer fake semblances which, for those of us in whom *individual discovery* is a matter of *sustained quest*, can elicit only our entire contempt.

\* \* \*

Surrealism rejects the scaffolding of the priesthoods of Literature and Art pompously sold in the commodity exchanges of schools and museums as "the Classics." Analogous to the bureaucratic mind of political domination is the literary one which comes crowing with its moribund "dominant tendencies," "the spirit of the times," and ejaculations of "talent" and "genius" to characterize this or that travesty of human potential. Rigidity, confusion and mystification, a stultifying provincialism, are the usual hallmarks of this parasitic literary charade played at the expense of any sign of disinterested and unqualified human freedom, for which these *respectable* gangs of the pimps of Literature and Art do their utmost to isolate, if not by a noisy confusionism, then by well known "conspiracies of silence" and scandal mongering. Each day there appear myriad articles, essays and other visible means of funneling the promotional lies concerning "reputations," "traditions," and the cabals of "masters" and apprentices of this or that coterie, wrapped in the guise of the inevitable "newness," the predictable fad and fashion perpetrated more than a hundred years since Rimbaud's lucid rejection of "the rotten game of two thousand years!" It is this same rotten game of aesthetic manipulators that pretends to close, except by a sneering recuperation, any insight into those who in the twentieth century carried incandescent and convulsive poetic activity by absolute signs of the Marvelous.



These are our immediate precursors. Samuel Greenberg was one of the most disquieting figures in the twentieth century, one whose great imaginative power is not in the least lessened for his having projected his Promethean reveries within the "romantic" idiom, thereby doubly offering us a glimpse of what is missing in late nineteenth century poetry in America, and gifting us with a view of perturbation and irrepressibility revealing the human condition as Kafka and Alfred Kubin had from other vantage points. Greenberg's tubercular illness is the other side of his salutary intelligence-of-the-heart that sounded, poignantly and radiantly, in poems that are veritable *wounds of wonder* transpiring in those last years of his approaching death in 1917, at age 23, from a bed in the "Sea View Hospital" on Staten Island, and *singing beyond it*.

With Mina Loy's *Lunar Baedeker* (1923) we encounter a singular flowering of what Hegel rightly announced to become *after him* the most fecund vehicle for poetic thought, in its specifically mythic function, and which Jacques Vaché located contemporaneously with Mina Loy's appearance, as *umor* — alternating her subtleties of wit between sensible convulsions in *darkest luminosity*.

In the 1920s Harry Crosby, a true dandy of explosively Promethean desire, left in *The Mad Queen* and elsewhere, signs of a "Sadean" magnanimity in the realms of mad love; before him, in America, perhaps none but Poe, in a few of his most "ectoplasmic" descents (and in the spirit of *Eureka*), comes to mind as purely comparable.

\* \* \*

As young as tomorrow, throwing its shadow over the moment's irrepressible desires, surrealism is at once what originated through certain historical confluences and astonishing discoveries (enhanced by what has evolved to this moment in systematic exploration and interpretations of the human condition), which came to the *foreground of consciousness* around 1920 in the minds of André Breton and a few of his friends who could assert not long after that they had indeed refound the long-sought "philosophers' stone," in the disinterested revolt of imaginative power capable of demolishing in one stroke any fixed notion of reality. A recent sign of surrealism's historical efficacy was noted where Breton suggested its *permanent birth* "in the genius of youth" who in May 1968 inscribed their watchword on the walls of Paris for all the world's eyes to register: "All power to the Imagination!"

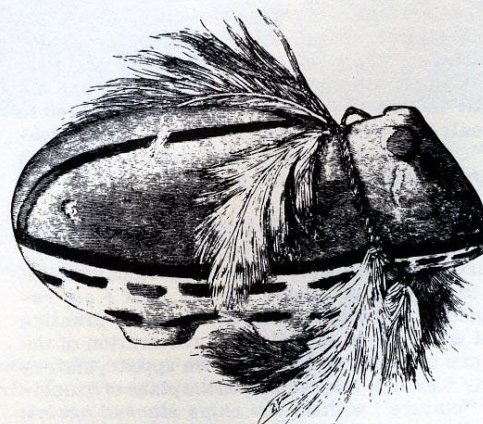
Since Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* re-established these certain sources for poetry: *play, enigma* and *the hermetic*, we can all the more comprehend surrealism's consistent activation of these three zones of human expression, by liberating the unconditional and disinterested play of imaginary thought, revitalizing the enigmatic, and revealing the concealed. Ultimately, automatism's *raison d'être* is the quest to reveal the latent content of human existence in its entirety.

\* \* \*

In Arizona I was privileged to witness a series of Hopi Indian ceremonies which suggest a *living myth* fulfilling Lautréamont's prophetic

injunction of "*poetry made by all*." The Hopi *Katchina Dancers' symbolique* achieves a synthesis of primordial rhythms, imagery and symbolic iconography confluent with a linguistic-sonic structure collectively realized by the Masked Dancers and expresses, dynamically and visually, Hegel's definition of poetry as "the universal art." How much more satisfying is this exalting experience of collective imaginative activity, in the Hopi's peculiar synthesis of all "the arts" and rooted in a vast complex of cosmological ideas, than all the moribund mythologies and moral pretensions associated with the reified Greco-Roman classical authors.

The Hopi's vital imagery, at once magical-convulsive, became for me a veritable moving vehicle of the Poetic Marvelous, transporting me straight to those regions in the mind surrealism has always exalted. Here among a people who have retained a high degree of poetic expression in a cohesive collective form, I was made aware of a complementation of those structures, reuniting dream and concrete reality, past and present, rational and irrational, which surrealism aspires to set into free operation on the *social plane*, and suggesting analogous elements of the "new myth" surrealism has evaluated in our present civilization during the fifty years of its intrusion as a revolutionary matrix. It has become obvious that surrealism exists as a permanent means toward initiating a completely *new sensibility and civilization*, playing a role in the world communist societies of the future comparable to the festivals of living myth associated with "primitive communism" though, of course, uniquely rooted in the mythico-marvelous elements revealable in our own cultures and on another turn of the spiral of humanity's evolution through the revolutionary destruction of all alienating systems. Instead of a fragmentation of the poetic principle and suppression of its sensibility generally, as in present-day global societies, surrealism's annunciation of its *rendezvous with history* constitutes the necessity for the infinite widening of the structure of *poetry made by all* beyond its minority practice in surrealist groups, extending the concrete universality of surrealism's vital myth through which a permanent revelation of humanity shall become a *new way of life*.



ZUNI HUNTING FETISH

## APPENDIX C – PERMISSIONS

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Anitra Budd  
Managing Editor  
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Dear Ms. Budd:

This letter will confirm our recent telephone conversation/e-mail exchange. I am completing a doctoral dissertation at Indiana University of Pennsylvania entitled "Harry Crosby, Experimental Materiality, and the Poetics of the Small Press." I would like your permission to reprint in my dissertation excerpts from the following:

Equi, Elaine. *Decoy*. Minneapolis: Coffee House, 1994.

The excerpt to be reproduced is the poem "To Harry Crosby at the Hotel des Artistes," page 81.

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