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| **Your article** |
| Crosby, Harry (1898–1929) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Harry Crosby, wealthy nephew of J. P. Morgan, was a notorious rebel in moneyed Bostonian circles, an expatriate in Paris during the 1920s, and partner to the equally legendary Caresse Crosby, with whom he spent eight years living in an open marriage. History has overlooked the Crosbys for being dilettantish or the product of sensationalising hearsay rather than serious literary endeavour. Such a critical paucity is misleading, however. The Crosbys set up the Black Sun Press, famous for its *de luxe* publications of early portions of James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* among other titles, with various editions illustrated by Max Ernst. The Black Sun Press was privately funded by the Crosbys, and became, according to Sy Kahn, ‘one of the most adventurous publishers of the decade’ (1970: 45).  Harry Crosby was devoted to modernist poetry and literary innovation. A significant correspondent and reader of Hart Crane’s ongoing works, Crosby was also a silent benefactor to Maria Jolas and Eugene Jolas’s Little Magazine *transition.* Crosby funded the magazine with a regular $100 for the editors to support the best new poets of the day. |
| Harry Crosby, wealthy nephew of J. P. Morgan, was a notorious rebel in moneyed Bostonian circles, an expatriate in Paris during the 1920s, and partner to the equally legendary Caresse Crosby, with whom he spent eight years living in an open marriage. History has overlooked the Crosbys for being dilettantish or the product of sensationalising hearsay rather than serious literary endeavour. Such a critical paucity is misleading, however. The Crosbys set up the Black Sun Press, famous for its *de luxe* publications of early portions of James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* among other titles, with various editions illustrated by Max Ernst. The Black Sun Press was privately funded by the Crosbys, and became, according to Sy Kahn, ‘one of the most adventurous publishers of the decade’ (1970: 45).  Harry Crosby was devoted to modernist poetry and literary innovation. A significant correspondent and reader of Hart Crane’s ongoing works, Crosby was also a silent benefactor to Maria Jolas and Eugene Jolas’s Little Magazine *transition.* Crosby funded the magazine with a regular $100 for the editors to support the best new poets of the day. Crosby himself was a regular contributor, offering his own poems, sketches, and a translation of an extract from Comte De Lautréamont’s *Chants de Maldoror*. After Harry Crosby committed suicide in December 1929 just weeks after the Wall Street Crash, numerous contributors to *transition* paid their respects with written memories and celebrations of the young poet. Of his many texts in the journal, ‘The New Word’ stands out as a characteristic example. Crosby’s passions for solar aesthetics and neo-Romantic symbolism are secondary to his belief in the power of language to transform modern life. ‘The New Word’, he writes, ‘is a direct stimulant upon the senses, a freshness of vision, an inner sensation, the egg from which other words shall be produced, a herald of revolt’ (1929: 30). Crosby’s significance lies in this paradox: a rapidly untenable belief in the Word, such as Eugene Jolas and others framed it, stopped short by Crosby’s premature and mysterious death. His influence on Crane, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer and others is yet to be fully explored. List of Works (1928) *Transit of Venus*, Paris: Black Sun  (1929) ‘Hail: Death!’, *transition,* 14 (Fall 1928): 169–70  (1929) ‘Suite’, *transition,* 15 (February 1929): 19–24  (1929) ‘The New Word’, *transition,* 16/17 (June 1929): 30  (1929) ‘The End of Europe’, *transition,* 16/17 (June 1929): 119  (1929) ‘The Novel is Dead. Long Live the Novel’, *transition,* 18 (November 1929): 239  (1930) ‘To the Cloud Juggler — In Memoriam: Harry Crosby’, *transition,* 19/20 (June 1930): 223 Gilbert, S. (1930) ‘Harry Crosby — A Personal Note’, *transition,* 19/20 (June 1930):224–27 |
| Further reading:  (Boyle)  (Brunner)  (Cowley)  (Jolas)  (Kahn)  (Lyle)  (MacLeish)  (Soupault)  (Wolff) |