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| Cendrars, Blaise (1887-1961) |
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| Blaise Cendrars (born Frédéric-Louis Sauser) (Fig. 1) was one of the leading experimental writers of the twentieth century. In addition to being a Franco-Swiss poet, novelist and journalist, he was also a filmmaker and explorer. Although his career spanned many decades, Cendrars is now best known for his involvement in the Parisian avant-garde just prior to and following World War I. Cendrars experimented with free verse, image and text, and unusual narrative structures that combined the historical with the biographical and imaginary as a means of capturing the experience of modernity. Immediately following the war he wrote *La Fin du monde filmée par l'Ange Notre-Dame* (1919)*,* the first poem to assume the form of a screenplay. During the years of his career that followed WWI, Cendrars turned to the novel and continued to experiment in a variety of genres including the grotesque, reportage, and historical fiction. He died in 1961 shortly following the publication of a tetralogy of memoirs. |
| Blaise Cendrars (Fig. 1) was one of the leading experimental writers of the twentieth century. In addition to being a novelist and journalist, he was also a filmmaker and explorer. Although his career spanned many decades, Cendrars is now best known for his involvement in the Parisian avant-garde just prior to and following World War I. Cendrars experimented with free verse, image and text, and unusual narrative structures that combined the historical with the biographical and imaginary as a means of capturing the experience of modernity. Immediately following the war he wrote *La Fin du monde filmée par l'Ange Notre-Dame* (1919)*,* the first poem to assume the form of a screenplay. During the years of his career that followed WWI, Cendrars turned to the novel and continued to experiment in a variety of genres including the grotesque, reportage, and historical fiction. He died in 1961 shortly following the publication of a tetralogy of memoirs.  Born Frédéric Louis Sauser in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, Cendrars travelled extensively in the early years of his life passing through the emerging modern cities of Saint Petersburg and New York. Shortly before returning to Europe he renamed himself using the French words *braise* and *cendres* (embers, cinders, ashes). In 1912 he settled in Paris and worked closely with Guillaume Apollinaire. In the following year he established the radical journal and small press *Les Hommes nouveaux*, which published his most famous work *La Prose du Transsibérien et de la petite Jehanne de France*, in the form of an artist’s book, interlaced with illustrations by Sonia Delaunay (Fig. 2). Although Cendrars denied he was part of any movement, Marjorie Perloff has argued that *La Prose du Transsibérien* is a key emblem of the ‘Futurist Moment’ with its restlessness, dynamism, spirit of revolution, conjoining of text and image, and courting of controversy.  In 1914, Cendrars joined the Foreign Legion, losing his right arm in an attack on Navarin Farm in the following September, the same day as the death of his major literary influence Remy De Gourmont. Returning to Paris, Cendrars completed a number of poems, which anticipated the later development of Surrealism. In 1926 he published his most widely read novel, *Moravagine,* which charts the hallucinatory journey of a madman and his doctor through the major events of the early part of the century.  As with many other French modernists, Cendrars was an early cinephile. He collaborated with Abel Gance on *La Roue* (1923) and his essay *L’ABC du Cinema* (1926) adopted a rapturous, millenarian tone in relation to the new medium; ‘[a]ll indications suggest that we are heading towards a new synthesis of the human mind,’ Cendrars wrote, ‘a new humanity, and that a breed of new men will appear. Their language will be cinema.’ In its combination of media theory and messianic sociology, Cendrars’s ideas anticipated the theories of Marshall McLuhan. In the 1930s, Cendrars travelled to Hollywood to report on the American dream-factory for the French press. His dispatches, collected in *Hollywood: Mecca of the Movies*, betrayed a less utopian, more sardonic appraisal of the American entertainment industry and its attendant culture of spectacle and fame. Selected List of Works:Film *La Fin du monde filmée par l'Ange Notre-Dame*(1919; Éditions de la Sirène)  *L'ABC du cinema*(1926; Les Écrivains Réunis)  *Hollywood, La Mecque du cinéma*(1936; Grasset) Memoirs *L’Homme foudroyé* [*The Astonished Man*] (1945; trans. 1970)  *La Main coupée* [*Lice*] (1946; trans. 1973)  *Bourlinguer* [*Planus*] (1948; trans. 1972)  *Le Lotissement du ciel* [*Sky: Memoirs*] (1949; trans. 1996) Novels *L’or, la merveilleuse histoire du Général Johann August Sutter* [*Sutter’s Gold*] (1925; trans. 1926)  *Moravagine* (1926, rev. 1956; trans. 1968)  *Dan Yack (Le plan de l’aiguille)* [*Dan Yack*] (1927; trans. 1987)  *Les Confessions de Dan Yack* [*Confessions of Dan Yack*] (1929; trans. 1990) Poetry *Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jeanne de France* (1913)  *Le Panama ou Les Aventures de Mes Sept Oncles* (1913-14)  *La Guerre au Luxembourg* (1916)  *Dix-Neuf Poèmes Élastiques* (1919)  *La Fin du monde filmée par l'Ange Notre-Dame* (1919, Éditions de la Sirène)  *Feuilles de Route* (1924)  *Blaise Cendrars: Complete Poems* (1992, trans. Ron Padgett, Berkeley: University of California Press) Selected Texts in English *Selected Writings* (1966 ed. Walter Albert, New York: New Directions)  *Modernities and Other Writings* (1992*,* ed. Monique Chefdor,Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press) |
| Further reading:  (Bochner)  (Chefdor)  (Perloff) |