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| **Cendrars, Blaise (1887-1961)**  Blaise Cendrars (Fig. 1) was one of the leading experimental writers of the twentieth century. A key participant in the Parisian avant-garde prior to the First World War, Cendrars experimented with free verse, image and text, and unusual narrative structures that combined the historical with the biographical and imaginary as means of capturing the experience of modernity. Following the war 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. | **[cendrars2.jpg](http://www.aprweb.org/author/blaise-cendrars)** Fig. 1 |

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 using the French words *braise* and *cendres* (embers, cinders, ashes). In 1912 he settled in Paris and worked closely with GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE. In the

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| [Transsiberien.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Transsiberien.jpg) | 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. |
| Fig. 2:Section of *La Prose du Transsibérien,* 1913 |

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.

**List of Works**

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)

*Feuilles de Route* (1924)

*Blaise Cendrars: Complete Poems* (1992), trans. Ron Padgett, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Novels

*L’or, la merveilleuse histoire du Général Johann August Sutter* (1925; *Sutter’s Gold*, 1926).

*Moravagine* (1926, rev. 1956; trans.1968).

*Dan Yack (Le plan de l’aiguille)* (1927; *Dan Yack*, 1987).

*Les Confessions de Dan Yack* (1929; *Confessions of Dan Yack*, 1990).

Memoirs

*L’Homme foudroyé* (1945; *The Astonished Man*, 1970).

*La Main coupée* (1946; *Lice*, 1973).

*Bourlinguer* (1948; Planus, 1972).

*Le Lotissement du ciel* (1949; *Sky: Memoirs*, 1996).

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

**References and Further Reading**

Perloff, Marjorie (1986) *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Chefdor, Monique (1980) *Blaise Cendrars*, Boston: Twayne.

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