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STUDIES IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERATURE

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SPECIAL ISSUE ON BLAISE CENDRARS

GUEST EDITORS

Monique Chefdor and Jay Bochner

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Introduction. Blaise Cendrars: A «symphonie contrastante.» Monique Chefdor	113
Icarus and Jonah: Flight and Containment in Cendrars's Work. Nicole Dupré	123

Abstract. The study of two dreams and other related texts will show the ambivalent dynamism of Cendrars's imaginary universe.

The first dream is a claustrophobic nightmare. The evident symbolism of the images reveals Cendrars's visceral need for changes and evasion as well as his constant rejection of limits. Both life and work follow the dynamics of escape and promote an ideology of separation.

The second dream is a dream of flight. Its symbolism and the numerous thematic variations encountered stress the dynamics of ascension and outline an ideology of the quest, complementary to the first dream. This attitude is defined as an Icarus complex, the metaphysical dimension of which explains Cendrars's disappointment with action and adventure.

A third group of figures suggests a new direction for Cendrars's aspirations, now related to the dynamics of fall. A strong desire for isolation and reclusion bears witness to a Jonah complex.

Torn by contradictory longings, Cendrars's split personality cannot experience unity except in a very transitory and frail stage such as the ambulatory cell or the dark room of imagination. Only writing, Cendrars's voluntary prison as well as spiritual adventure, allows the author to transcend the original dilemma. (ND)

Orphism in the Poetry of Blaise Cendrars.

Howard Nitzberg 137

Abstract. The story of Orpheus has undergone numerous changes in religion and poetry throughout the ages. My essay on Blaise Cendrars is the first study of him in an orphic context. He does not transpose the Orpheus myth directly. Rather, Cendrars contributes to the story of modern orphic poetry by the personal expression he gives to certain orphic concepts and themes. His poetic vision consists of the exploration of his being, the primacy of subjectivity, and the autonomy of the thought processes. Although Cendrars is usually considered an *avant-garde* poet of the early twentieth century, this article demonstrates that he can be placed in the heritage of Symbolism by the particular use he makes of autonomous thought as a creative means. In this regard, references are made to poems of Mallarmé. (HN)

Cendrars's Variegated Poetic Persona: Seduction and Authenticity
in *Prose of the Transsiberian* and *Nineteen Elastic Poems*.
Everett F. Jacobus, Jr. 153

Abstract. Since Cendrars recognizes the protean nature of his personal and public self, it is not surprising that the persona of his poetry escapes easy definition. My essay studies the consequences of this fact on the relationship between the poetic persona and his reader. Seduction, set against a Freudian and transactional-analysis conceptual background, provides a methodological metaphor for my analysis. In the same way that for Freud the real event of seduction only becomes psychologically effective as a fantasy and eventually as a structural pattern for the male-female relationship, our use of the seduction metaphor takes an initial naïve event between persona and reader and transforms it into a characteristic structural relationship. The persona's initial demand of intimacy from the reader is seen to be but one position in a narrative pattern which alternates the persona's attitude vis-à-vis his own narration between intimacy and detachment (or irony). The reader's role in connection with the persona is finally not one of sympathy but one of collaboration in inflecting a reading of the persona's narrated presence. Cendrars's manipulation of the persona-reader relationship is thus a primary component of his literary appeal. (EFJ)

The Beckoning Void in *Moravagine*.

Stephen K. Bellstrom. 173

Abstract. The Chapter «Mascha,» lying at the heart of Cendrars's *Moravagine*, contains within it a variety of images and themes suggestive of emptiness. The philosophy of nihilism is exemplified in the motivations and actions of the group of terrorists seeking to plunge Russia into revolutionary chaos. Mascha's anatomical orifice, symbolizing both a biological and a psychological fault, and the abortion of her child, paralleled by the abortion of the revolutionary ideal among her comrades, are also emblematic of the chapter's central void.

Moreover, Cendrars builds the theme of hollowness by describing *Moravagine* with images of omission, such as «empan» (space or span), «absent,» and «étranger.» *Moravagine's* presence, in fact, characteristically causes an undercurrent of doubt and uncertainty about the nature of reality to become overt. It is this paradoxical presence which seems to cause the narrator (and consequently the narrative) to «lose» a day at the most critical moment of the story. By plunging the reader into the narrator's *lapsus memoriae*, Cendrars aims at creating a feeling of the kind of mental and cosmic disorder for which *Moravagine* is the strategist and apologist. This technique of insufficiency is an active technique, even though it relies on the passive idea of removing explanation and connecting details. The reader is invited, or lured, into the central void of the novel and, faced with unresolvable dilemmas, becomes involved in the same disorder that was initially produced. (SKB)

A Geography of Reading in 'Paris, Port-de-Mer'.

Jay Bochner. 187

Abstract. «Paris, Port-de-Mer» is chosen purposely for its apparent lack of focus as an example of the difficulty of reading the author's later work. The way into the text is made twice, once via the presumed topic of Paris as a seaport, once with the help of Descartes' *Discours de la méthode*, which supplies the terms for various metaphors operating in the narrative. The topic quickly goes underground, only to emerge after it is understood that the many books and libraries are to be treated somewhat like the port, places of arrival and departure, but not of permanence. The text is similarly a port, or «trace», as Cendrars calls it. The narrative is an inventory of books, but at the same time a departure from them. The «most beautiful library of the

world,» though never explicitly named as such, is no doubt the bookstalls on the quais, and the narrator as reader is, at his best, peripatetic. (JB)

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