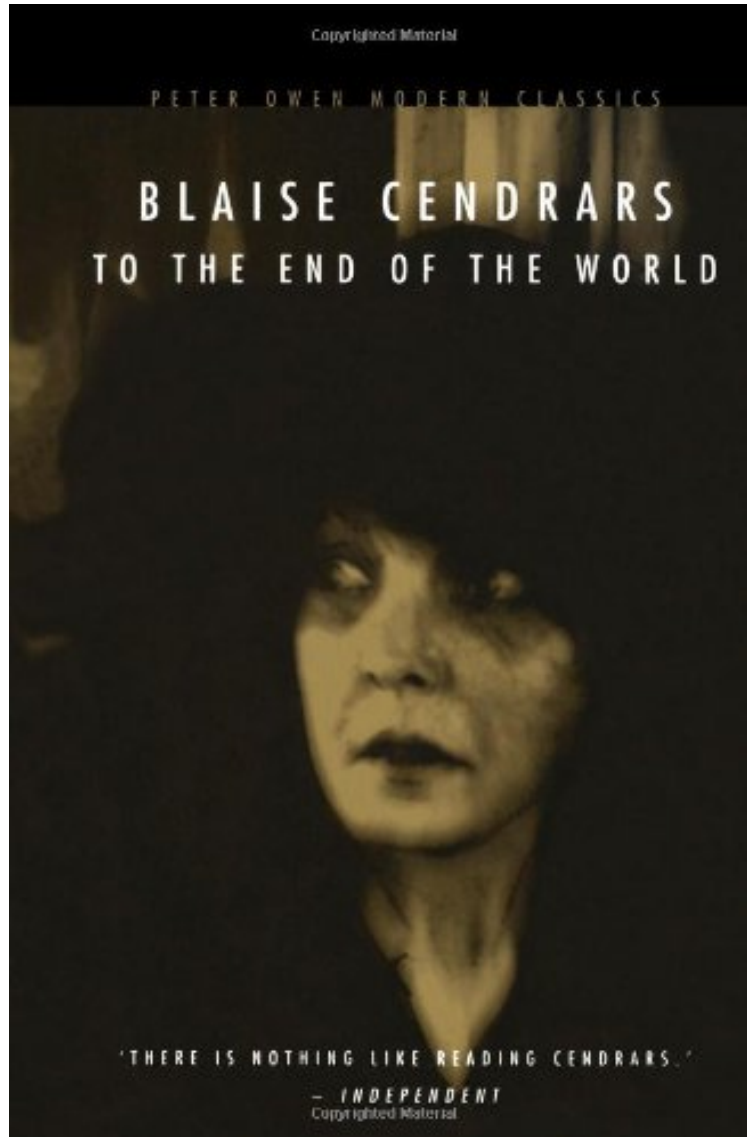


[Mobile ebook] To the End of the World (Peter Owen Modern Classic)

To the End of the World (Peter Owen Modern Classic)

Blaise Cendrars

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Blaise Cendrars : To the End of the World (Peter Owen Modern Classic) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised To the End of the World (Peter Owen Modern Classic):

10 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Reel upon reel of manically energetic, fragmented, modernist prose By Doug Anderson Cendrars was a modernist pioneer who understood man's incessant need for change and so his poetry and prose have a kind of manic restlessness to them that I've never encountered anywhere else. This quality has its pros and cons for his work can come across as inspired but it can also come across as forced or overblown. One of

the great loves of Cendrars' life was cinema and his work shares something with filmmakers like Eisenstein. Like Eisenstein he is not really interested in plot as much as he is interested in the cumulative and dizzying effect of his rapid-fire sequences and images. It's impossible not to admire the energy and ingenuity of the work but reading Cendrars can be disorienting and exhausting (which of course is the point). The first chapter of *To the End of the World* is perhaps the best example of this manically inventive style. It works here because the main protagonist of the novel is also an artist who is driven by this same need for perpetual reinvention that drives Cendrars. Even though the protagonist is a 79-year-old actress we recognize that she is who she is but she is also Cendrars. After the first pages which are more like an explosion than a chapter the book calms down and it is in the calm that one realizes that for Cendrars a calm is simply a chance to re-load. Cendrars was always more fond of the people of the street than he was of any other social group and so his work always seethes with the sights and sounds of the lower depths. And nowhere is that more evident than in this book which is a book of the streets. But Cendrars is no realist; he's too much of a fanatic to be contained by the objective world alone. Cendrars is a hyper-realist. He takes from life what he needs but whatever he finds there is amped up to a level that suits his needs for constant stimulation. He is something of a speed junkie in need of a constant fix. Cendrars gets his fix by writing new books; his main character gets her fix by playing new roles. But there is also something erotic in this restless search for new life, however temporary it may be, and for Cendrars as for his main character artistic discovery is intricately linked to sexual discovery. And so "new life" is usually encountered 'midst rousing encounters with inspiring others. Still, it must be said that this is not Cendrars' best novel. That honor would have to go to *Moravagine*. But Cendrars is one of those writers who never can quiet his creative imagination and the best of Cendrars is probably the first three volumes of his "autobiography" (*Astonished Man*, *Lice*, *Planus*) which are in reality just as inventive as his fiction. If you are new to Cendrars I would start with his masterpiece, the poem "Prose of the Transsiberian Railroad", and then move on to *Astonished Man*, *Lice*, and *Planus* and lastly to the novel *Moravagine*.

Blaise Cendrars' last novel is an original and often very funny portrayal of the Parisian criminal underworld of the late 1940s that crackles with the fires of an abundant imagination. Yet *To the End of the World* is not total invention as, like all Cendrars' works, it has some basis in real life. The narrative races between a Foreign Legion barracks in North Africa and the theaters, cafes, dosshouses, and police headquarters of postwar Paris. The central character in this roman à clef is Thérèse, a septuagenarian actress who was once the rival of Sarah Bernhardt herself. Her passionate affair with a young deserter from the Foreign Legion (in which Cendrars himself served) is interrupted by the murder of a barman and the impact this event has on all their lives. With its bold and colorful supporting cast—a subterranean gallery of ex-legionnaires, theater types, black marketeers, dubious aristocrats, sexual adventurers, and freaks—entwined with numerous subplots and minor themes, *To the End of the World* amounts to a grandly picaresque adventure. When it appeared in France in 1956, it offered a ready antidote to the sense of negativity and existential futility that pervaded many novels of the era.

From *Publishers Weekly* In *Therese Eglantine*, Cendrars (1887-1961), the cubist poet and echt modernist, created a character reflecting the need in "our day and age Paris, late '40s for precision, for speed, for energy, for fragmentation in time and diffusion in space." Therese, however, is no nubile bohemian but a 79-year-old actress who likes to be beaten, a Parisian sparrow gone to seed. She is the star both of a play--perhaps, speculates Crosland, Giraudoux's *The Mad woman of Chaillot*--and of a subterranean galaxy of ex-legionnaires, theater people, black marketeers and freaks. Although Cendrars complained about difficulties with the plot, there really isn't any, just events juxtaposed to show Therese as mistress of the improbable: her prolix self-defense in the face of a possible murder charge; her fascination with a legless woman, the Presidente, and a violent man, Jeannot. Cendrars's sharp humor ("They're aerophagous, and you can smell it on their breath") is the high point of a book which is perhaps not as compellingly manic as Dan Yack. It should also be noted that, even without the first dozen pages (in which Cendrars portrays the gamut of sexual, sanguinary and excretory activities), this novel is not for everyone. Copyright 1992 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* Cendrars's 1966 novel features the flamboyant Parisian actress Blaise, who gets involved in the murder of a barman. The book also serves as a portrait of Paris in the 1940s, with characters and parts of the story based on the author's experiences there. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. "It is typically paradoxical that in his last great novel Cendrars, who in all his previous works had celebrated the dominant, ruthless, adventurous male, should finally come around to producing a book with a heroine. And what a heroine!" —*Times Literary Supplement*