Blaise Cendrars. *To the End of the World*. Trans. Alan Brown. Peter Owen Ltd./Dufour Editions, 2002. 253 pp. Paper, $19.95.

Blaise Cendrars (1887-1961) has a stimulating and askew view of the world, developed by his life as an adventurer, as a film-maker, and as a soldier in the First World War, in which he lost an arm. Though a Modernist /**146**/ poet and novelist, he stands outside all isms. His economical style and poetic eye are in service to an extravagant imagination. *To the End of the World* (1956) is a *roman à clef* set in the post-WWII Parisian theater scene. The opening pages are typically Cendrarian, merging violent sex with war atrocities and physical sickness. Sentences propelled by strong verbs create an intense and rich oratorical flow, while the characters, depicted first as ordinary beings, are soon converted, in a natural progression, into larger-than-life creations. One of the seemingly paradoxical delights of Cendrars is that when he references historical events or inserts real personages (in this novel, Mallarmé, George Moore, Dégas), the reader can barely refrain from interrogating what's presented. When Cendrars includes himself, as he does here (and as he did more explicitly in *Moravagine*, from 1926; well translated by Alan Brown in 1968), he deliberately invites investigation of the novel's veracity. On that last point, this edition lets one down somewhat. Advertised as part of the book is an introduction by Margaret Crosland, but it is missing. It appeared in the 1991 hardcover and, while brief, helpfully described the novel's setting. Additionally, the translation, from 1966, is too dated and too British for such a singular stylist. Yet Cendrars in English is hard to find, so every edition is welcome. His oeuvre runs to several volumes in French. It would benefit from a North American publisher dedicated to bringing Cendrars's complete works to English readers in a contemporary language and manner.