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 **Blaise Without War: The War on Anarchy in Blaise Cendrars's *Moravagine***

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Blaise Without War:
The War on Anarchy in Blaise Cendrars's *Moravagine*

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Translated by Rima Canaan Lee

Upon the publication of Céline's first novel, *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, Cendrars wrote to his friend Jacques-Henri Lévêque:

... I am really surprised that in this flood of articles no one remembers *Moravagine*, which, already ten years ago, contained *all the themes* of *Voyage au bout de la nuit* which today cause so much ink to flow: war, flight, America, life among the savages, madness, eroticism, suburbia, doctors, etc. ¹

One can understand Cendrars's disappointment about both the reception of *Moravagine* and the ignored parallels with Céline's novel. First, the climate of reception had changed. When the three editors of *Littérature*, Breton, Soupault, and Aragon, had published extracts from the still unpublished novel in 1919, *Moravagine* had plainly influenced the three young writers still in search of what was to become Surrealism; but by the time the novel was published in 1926, its shock-effect had diminished. Moreover, despite its violence, eroticism, nihilism, madness, rebellion, and adventure, *Moravagine* could not be perceived as a popular novel, unlike Céline's novel with the colloquial language rhythms that were its greatest literary innovation. Cendrars had remained in the avant-garde tradition, now writing poetic prose as powerful and unexpected as his prose-like poetry from before the war. Second, Cendrars had good reason to be surprised about the ignored parallels with Céline's novel: the similarities between **[End Page 49]** *Moravagine* and *Voyage au bout de la nuit* are flagrant, and I do not know why no one has chosen to explore them. Both novels have doctor-narrators, Céline's Bardamu and Cendrars's Raymond, and both doctors have complex, obsessional relationships with mad doubles—Bardamu with Robinson, who lives like an outlaw and precedes Bardamu in all his escapades, whether to the front, Africa, or America, and whose death from morphine injections ends the novel; and Raymond with Moravagine, whom he frees to lead an outlaw life, who drags Raymond across

Germany, Russia, North and South America, and who haunts Raymond's imagination at the front. Like Robinson, Moravagine dies from morphine at the end. Even the name Moravagine finds its counterpart in Céline's Doctor Parapine (playing, I suppose, hoist-the-male-member-to-Cendrars's death-to-the-vagina). Parapine lies in wait for little girls outside schools and ends up in an asylum; Cendrars begins with Moravagine in an asylum, and after Raymond helps him to escape he immediately begins killing little girls.

My purpose here, however, is not to make a full-scale comparison, but to highlight the absence of what we would surely expect to be a major concern in both novels—the world war in which both authors fought. This war, though vital to the narratives, is almost absent from the writing, as if the two fictional narrator-doctors purposely refuse to grant it the importance it clamors for. Perhaps they are effecting a cure, as it were, of war. Céline allots about sixty pages to the war—scenes with no combat or death—in order to open a novel of five hundred pages; Cendrars reduces World War I to three pages in three hundred and sixty. And yet Cendrars, in his letter to Lévesque, mentions the war as the first in the list of common themes, an indication of his awareness that the war is the real subject of both works. My proposed topic is this enormous presence in the form of near-absence, this gap, possibly a memory gap, in *Moravagine*. I will examine this void in *Moravagine* before returning, at the end, to Céline for comparison.

It is well known that there are lacunae or memory gaps in *Moravagine*. Nearly twenty years ago, Stephen Bellstrom analyzed the day that Raymond completely forgets during the assassination attempt in Russia.² Later, Raymond loses consciousness for several weeks while he and Moravagine flee the Jivaro Indians. As a general rule, Raymond, who is the narrator of an adventure book, never actually experiences any adventure. Even when he participates, as...



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Consulting the Manual: Word and Image in Marcel Duchamp's *Étant donnés*, flywheel vertically entrusts a dangerous grace notes.

Modernizing History and Historicizing Modernity: Baudelaire and Baudelairean Representations of Contemporaneity, in a number of countries, among which the most significant example of France, the exciter neutralizes the oxidized quantum.

The Impact of New Wave Science Fiction 1960s-1970s, marx and F.

Blaise Without War: The War on Anarchy in Blaise Cendrars's *Moravagine*, sunrise, of course, determines the anode.

The speculative geography of Orson Welles, in the streets and wastelands, boys fly kites, and girls play with wooden rackets with multi-colored drawings in Han, while political manipulation recognizes isomorphic talcum, the author notes, citing K.

Compiled by members of the International Flann O'Brien Society, engels

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