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| Saint-John Perse (1887–1975) |
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| Recipient of the 1960 Nobel Prize for Literature, poet-diplomat Saint-John Perse/Alexis Leger moved to France after a childhood in Guadeloupe and immediately began writing about his lost Eden. These *Eloges* [*Praises*, 1911] still feel modern in their kaleidoscopic juxtaposition of images and sensations. Posted in China during World War I, he wrote his masterpiece, *Anabase* [*Anabasis*], about the founding of a city. T.S. Eliot loved this poem, translated it in 1924, and put it on the Anglo-American literary map. Rainer Maria Rilke and Giuseppe Ungaretti made it famous throughout Europe. To separate his literary and diplomatic careers, Leger adopted the strange pseudonym which combines biblical, classical and mythological reminiscences (Perse is the French name for the god Perseus and the Roman poet Persius). Resolutely anti-Hitler, he was exiled in 1940 by the collaborationist French government and spent the next 18 years in Washington. Across 21 long poems, he traces the path of one protagonist – successively child, prince, exile, lover, poet, artist and old man – in an œuvre that is both Whitmanesque in its epic scope and Mallarmean in its enigmatic ellipses. |
| Recipient of the 1960 Nobel Prize for Literature, poet-diplomat Saint-John Perse/Alexis Leger moved to France after a childhood in Guadeloupe and immediately began writing about his lost Eden. These *Eloges* [*Praises*, 1911] still feel modern in their kaleidoscopic juxtaposition of images and sensations. Posted in China during World War I, he wrote his masterpiece, *Anabase* [*Anabasis*], about the founding of a city. T.S. Eliot loved this poem, translated it in 1924, and put it on the Anglo-American literary map. Rainer Maria Rilke and Giuseppe Ungaretti made it famous throughout Europe. To separate his literary and diplomatic careers, Leger adopted the strange pseudonym which combines biblical, classical and mythological reminiscences (Perse is the French name for the god Perseus and the Roman poet Persius). Resolutely anti-Hitler, he was exiled in 1940 by the collaborationist French government and spent the next 18 years in Washington. Across 21 long poems, he traces the path of one protagonist – successively child, prince, exile, lover, poet, artist and old man– in an œuvre that is both Whitmanesque in its epic scope and Mallarmean in its enigmatic ellipses.  **Online Resources**  The Fondation Saint-John Perse in Aix-en-Provence is an invaluable resource and archive: http://www.fondationsaintjohnperse.fr/html/fondation.htm |
| Further reading:  (Perse) |