

1961

Preliminary Pages

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**t h e
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DEDICATION

On October 23, 1960, the Nobel Prize was awarded to Alexis Leger, a poet who writes a mysterious, elemental poetry under the name of St. John Perse. His personal influence has been admitted by Gide, Claudel, Breton, Char, Spender, MacLeish, Tate, Guillen, Poggioli, Ungaretti, Eliot, and Rilke. Yet, today, at the age of seventy-three, the poet is just beginning to receive the worldwide, popular attention which is his due.

Perse's first book of poems, *Eloges*, was published in 1910. It was followed by *Anabase* in 1922, *Exil* in 1942, *Vents* in 1953, and *Amers* in 1958. The poems are all marked by an undercurrent of primal breath, a rhythm of natural poetic force which reaches quite beyond the phrase, the line, or the individual poem, and constitutes a personality within his total work. It is, perhaps, this ineffable sound, as secret and as definite as the voice of wind and sea or of the nervousness in man, which has bridged the gap between the poetry of nature and that of art. Certainly, there is a life within his verse which escaped the dry leaves of the last stagnant symbolists. For he is a symbolist in the most vital and connotative sense of the term. The potency and fertility of the undefined symbol is proved by the fusion of word and voice in his poems. And the magic behind the poetic force is the poet's secret.

It is our wish that this poet be known and honoured by the readers and writers of this magazine. And in an age which knows neither nature nor art, Perse speaks to those who seek that magic;

*Descends, Sculpteur, et le coeur — car l'oeuvre est grande —
parmi les filles, tes manoeuvres, et tout ton peuple de carriers.
Revois, o Songe, ton ouvrage; non point le bouclier d'orfèvre, ni le
miroir d'argent cisele ou court l'ignaminine des roses.*

Go down, sculptor, great of heart — for the work is great —
among your daughters, your laborers, and all your host of quarriers.
O Dream, look again on your work: not the shield of the goldsmith,
nor the mirror of chased silver overrun with the ignominy of roses.

St. John Perse: *Amers*
(Translated by Wallace Fowlie)