The Mediterranean of the modernists is in turmoil, aesthetically and politically: no longer, or not solely, a culture or a humanity to be consumed on location or at home, but a source of debate, ideas and forms; not “the Mediterranean submitted to being recreated in the image of British longings and aversions, hopes and fears”, but a culture addressed in its bewildering diversity and linguistic wealth; not a promised land nor a necropolis, but a laboratory and a workshop. … In its huge and often harsh contrasts, the Mediterranean speaks to modernist dramatists and novelists the language of a liberated prose and perhaps even of a liberated temporality. To the poets, as Ezra Pound well knew, as indeed he taught to his friends and disciples, to Stokes and to Stevens, the Mediterranean offered a fresh sense of the objects, the crisp reality to be laid on the page, as clearly as the outlines of a limestone sculpture; it gave the language of Anglo-American modernity the time-old chisel of a long forgotten and most needed lima amorosa.

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