

Cavafy's Places – Mapping of Literary Routes

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Abstract

This study deals with the places, where Constantine Cavafy lived and created. Its purpose is to promote his work, through the creation of mapped cultural literary paths, in the footsteps of the Alexandrian poet and writer. Cavafy's poetry has withstood the test of time, as it is always relevant, because it can always be read, in such a way, as to force the reader to reflect on the problems of his time. His work attempts to capture, but mainly to interpret, historically, this key time, in order to make everybody understand the endurance of Cavafy's poetry over time. This article, recognizing the author as a timeless tourist product, attempts to promote the cultural heritage around his name, in order to promote the tourist exploitation of the places that marked his course.

Keywords: literary routes, route mapping, Cavafy Museum, Onassis Foundation.

1. Literary tourism – Literary routes

Literary tourism is an important and growing branch of the tourism industry. This kind of tourism is inextricably linked to sites and places that became known because of their literary depiction or due to their connection with important figures of literature (Busby & Klug, 2001). It arises mainly due to the great influence of the author and by extension of his literary works, which lead readers to visit the places he mentions or describes and are, therefore, related to his work (Manola, 2020). Literary experiential journeys are an extension of literary tourism. Many psychologists claim that they stem from the inner need of an individual, as a spiritual and emotional entity, to feel and unite the real world with that of his/her imagination (Manola, 2019). Thus, the literary work, or even its creator, can act as a motivator, for many, to visit the place associated with the respective literary work (Tsirakidis, 2018).

2. Cavafy literary routes – Mapping

Cavafy, as the heir of 19th century aesthetics, treats life itself as a work of art. He listens to his time, experiences the atmosphere of its decline and is drawn to it, while, simultaneously, maintaining his dignity, without suffering from any illusions or delusions (Pesketzi, 2018). The timelessness and originality of his work was a motivation for many fans, who follow his "route", in order to experience his work, as well as the places, where he lived and were a source of inspiration for the Alexandrian poet.

The journey of his life begins on Sheriff Street in Alexandria, where the poet was born in 1863. Together with his family they go to England and, specifically, to Liverpool and London

until 1876, when they return to Alexandria (Figure 1) and “Lyceum of Hermes”, where he begins to attract the attention of his fans, by writing entries for a historical dictionary (Boukalas, 2014). In 1882 Cavafy fled to Istanbul, where he kept a diary of his travels and composed “Leaving Therapia” (Figure 1).



Figure 1.

Then his journey continues in Alexandria in 1885 and, inspired by the Athenian romanticism movement regarding the Greek language, he writes “When, my friends, I loved” and “To Nichori”. Recognition and interest in his work draw his attention and interest in visiting and staying in Germany for a short time. The magazine *Esperos* of Leipzig hosts his first published poem entitled “the Bacchic”. His journey continues with his brother John in the spring of 1897 in Marseille, Paris and London. Returning to Alexandria, he continued to write and publish new poems (Tsirkas, 1971) (Figure 2).



Figure 2.

For the first time his journey brings him to Athens in 1901, with an intermediate short visit to the city of Patras, while at that time he writes the diary of his trip in English. In 1905 he returns to Athens, due to the illness of his brother Alexander, who, a few days later, dies and he records his last days.



Figure 3.

With his work “The end of Antonios” he leads the readers to his new residence at 10 Lepsios Street. His artistic journey in 1920 reaches Egypt and its culture again. He composes folk songs for the educational group of Egypt. Cavafy’s artistic career focuses on Alexandria, as well as other cities in the Eastern Mediterranean that have been a source of inspiration for his works. His works are a source of inspiration for travel and tour to the places, where he lived and was inspired by. Particularly well-known and important is his poem “Ithaca”, which speaks directly to the reader. It played a great symbolic role as it transforms Ithaca as the destination that every reader would use as an excuse to make a trip, but also enjoy a unique life experience (Koukoulomatis, 1988).

The literary journey of this great poet begins and ends in Alexandria. The years before his death he lived at 4 Sharm El Sheikh Street, which was later renamed Constantine Cavafy Street. The apartment has been turned into a museum and features original manuscripts, as well as many photographs and portraits.

3. The impact of Cavafy’s work

The impact of Cavafy’s work can be characterized through a phrase that reveals the timelessness of the poet and specifically “The Cavafy Archive, archive of the future”, according to Stergioulas (2018), which was widely used by fans of his works. This phrase was dictated with the awareness that a time would come, when the works of the poet would have a great impact, both in Greece and around the world. There are many books that have dealt with the analysis of Cavafy’s poetry. There are many writers, who have influenced and incorporated in their work, the poetry and thoughts of the poet. It is important that his poems and his work, in general, have a great impact in universities outside Greece, since special studies are done on them (Kurbana, 2013).

According to the Vassilis Lambropoulos (Kapetanis, 2013), “Cavafy is a global and constantly expanding field. Cavafy has become a diva, stock, capital, product, brand, and copyright. It is not for sale, it sells. It is produced, consumed, performed”. Today, the impact of

Cavafy's poetry, both in our country and abroad, has acquired a huge dimension, if we consider that he is a poet of previous generations, read as a poet who is rediscovered. The study of the poet's literature seems to be appreciated, since the glamor and charm of his work, from his death until today, shows an upward trend. The same applies to the impact of poetry on foreigners, which attracts interest, but there are also many readers, as well as scholars, who are influenced in their creations by elements of Cavafy's poetry.

Cavafy's influence internationally is a very important phenomenon. This can easily be explained, if we consider the impact that the poet experienced from the wider readership, which has been helped by the translations of his poems. More specifically, it is worth mentioning the influence of many of his foreign language colleagues, which is extremely large. Proofs of this are the findings of a study conducted by the Greek Language Center (Vagenas, 2000). This study aimed to record the influence of works by foreign poets had on Cavafy, as well as the collection of poems and works that have been influenced or even imitate the works of the multi-translated Constantine Cavafy. The research was conducted on a sample of 20 countries and confirmed that Cavafy is still read today, and considered a modern poet. It clearly proves that he and his work have, not only the characteristics, but also the prestige of a world poet. Through research he showed that the charm of his work has led to the creation of a large number of foreign poems, which, as being influenced by Cavafy's works, have been, along with some influenced Greek poems, a special kind of poems, the so-called "Cavafogenic".

The above survey was conducted in 21 countries (Egypt, Argentina, Bulgaria, France, Romania, Germany, Albania, Ecuador, Spain, Italy, Catalonia, Colombia, Britain, the Netherlands, Portugal, Australia, Russia, Serbia, Chile) resulted in the creation of a volume entitled "Conversing with Cavafy-Anthology of foreign Cavafy poems." This anthology contains 153 poems by 135 different poets, which have been translated and written in nineteen languages, having been influenced by works of Cavafy or even "conversing" with them (Vagenas, 2000).

The highlighting of the value of travel as an experience and life goal is analyzed in "Ithaca" as a cyclical reunion of the start and arrival at the destination and as the realization of an expectation (Carbonetto, 2007). Ithaca as a destination can be compared to the centripetal call to home, where the reassuring circle is represented by Penelope's faith. The statements in Cavafy poetry have a timeless force, in combination with situations and concerns regarding the issue of adolescents' sexual identity, and are a topic of discussion and reflection in schools (Nikolovieni, 2019).

Cavafy's resonance around the world is very great and, consequently, the continuity of his literary course, both by fans and by his colleagues, is worthy of admiration, despite a possible controversy surrounding the name and value of the poet.

4. Cavafy Museum – Alexandria

The Cavafy Museum has been a reference point for the literary tourist in Alexandria, Egypt since 16 November 1992.

"In the house where Cavafy grew up, he had a French teacher, an English governess, an Italian carriage, an Egyptian horseman and 4-5 Greek servants! His furniture, cars, silverware, glassware were of rare luxury. His father, however, died in 1870, leaving a very small fortune to his family, as he spent most of the property he earned from trade, to look 'great and important'" (Kordatos, 1983). The Alexandrian poet lived the last years of his life on the now renamed Cavafy Street. This apartment is a museum with objects related to the life and work of the poet. With the help of the poet's friends, the museum now gives out a sense of the poet's life and work.

The library containing many of the poet's bibliographic works, as well as translations of his poetry into various languages, along with articles and reviews written about his poetry, has been saved. In the museum there is a room especially dedicated to the writer Stratis Tsirkas, who had engaged in and was influenced by the work of the Alexandrian poet. The Attarin region, which the poet called the "capital of memories" and where he lived for some time, is also a favorite destination for visitors, who follow in the footsteps of the Alexandrian poet's life.

The museum owes its creation, to a large extent, to the educational advisor of the Greek embassy in Egypt, Kostis Moskof, as he was the first to support the idea. Although his heirs had already sold the personal belongings and furniture of the poet, thanks to the valuable help of friends, who remembered quite well the details of the house, but also the photographs that were found and collected, furniture was made, the same as those he owned. Responsible for the rescue of the only library and archive staff, was George Panou Savvidis. His house on Lepsius Street was visited by the cultured people of Alexandria and his Greek guests. According to the people who came in frequent contact with him, his unusual publishing method, his character whims and his targeted and caustic comments about writers and books, are the elements that began to create the image of a legend around his name.

The statements of popular writers and poets, who had visited Cavafy, such as the ecumenical writer Nikos Kazantzakis, Costas Ouranis and many others, contributed to the formation of his public image. Some broadcasts of personal conversations and interviews between Cavafy and Palamas are evidence of personal disagreement and controversy, as well as competition (Garantoudis, 2005). At the beginning of the 20th century in Cairo and Alexandria, there were publications of books and publications of ironic diaries and literary issues as expressions of the philosophical and artistic tendency that had developed around Cavafy (Tsirkas, 1971). All issues and magazines included Cavafy poems, as well as analysis and commentary on his work, which were not always pleasant. His special character, who always remained lonely and isolated in his house on Lepsius Street, in the heart of Alexandria, without electricity and telephone, is a proof of the poet's uniqueness that was the subject of commentary and irony. His poetry had a continuous and upward course, thus gaining loyal fans and followers, as well as chronic opponents (Tsirkas, 1971).

The house-museum is today a reference point for many tourists-admirers, who try to connect and learn more about his life and work, combining travel with experiential knowledge for the poet.

5. Cavafy tour from the Onassis Foundation

The Cavafy archive contains manuscript poems, printed publications, literary texts, articles, analyzes and personal notes. It also includes correspondence, texts and photographs of the poet. In 2012, the Onassis Foundation began managing the archive, in order to secure its stay in Greece and to discourage the idea of a possible fragmentation. In addition to securing the archive, the Foundation tried and succeeded in digitizing it and making it public, so that his work could be easily accessed worldwide. This achievement was the result of painstaking and long-term teamwork of experts and scientists, who were able to convert more than two thousand files into digital form. The archives contain all the works and a lot of his unpublished material, as it results from the continuous research in his archive. In addition, it contains, not only basic information about the poet, but also some specific information about the influence of Cavafy's poetry around the world. The digital version of the archive is the work of the school and is owned by the Onassis Foundation (onassis.org.).

The aim of creating the archive was and still is to remain open and accessible to the general public and researchers, as well as the dissemination of the valuable work of the

Alexandrian poet and the global character of his poetry. The Onassis Foundation also worked on the creation of a scholarship program for the study and research of Cavafy studies for Greeks and foreigners, while, at the same time, it created relevant laboratories. It also mapped Cavafy elements in different collections in our country and internationally. On the 87th anniversary of Cavafy's death, in 2021, the Onassis Foundation invited people to multiple events serving to get them acquainted with its programs and activities, in order to highlight the important events of his life and to explore the digital collection of his archive (Onassis.org.)

6. The concept of “journey” in Cavafy's poetry.

The cultural dimensions of Cavafy's work have, from time to time, been the core of the work of many scholars. The poet's contact with topics such as Arabic literature, cosmopolitanism and his life in an international urban center such as Alexandria, are some of the features he mentions in his works.

Born in Alexandria, Egypt, he grew up in London and lived in Liverpool, Istanbul and Greece. He is inspired by the places he lived and traveled, thus, bringing a cosmopolitan dimension to his poetry. Other places come to life through his works, i.e., Syria, Sparta, Thermopylae and Troy.

During his stay in Istanbul, he wrote the diary of “Constantinopoliad-an epic”. At the same time, he wrote his first works in Greek and English, as well as short poems of encyclopedic character.

Together with one of his brothers he travels to Paris and London. In 1901 he traveled for the first time in Greece, visited Piraeus, Athens, Neo Faliro and, on his return, he went to Patra and Corfu. During this journey, the poet keeps a diary entitled “Walking in Athens with Constantine Cavafy.” He describes his daily life in Athens, the hotels, the monuments, the museums he visits, the cafes, the meals in the restaurants, the people he meets and the impressions they leave on the whole.

From 1908 until the end of his life, he lived in Alexandria, Egypt in the apartment of the then 10 Lepsius Street, which was later renamed Sharm el Sheikh and then renamed Cavafy Street.

The main references that a Cavafy's scholar encounters, as far as places are concerned, are made to Alexandria, Syria, Rome, Sparta, Thessaly and the Peloponnese. Particularly well known is the poem “Ithaca”, where Ithaca is rendered as a metaphysical and psychological search of the reader, for life experiences, while Lehonitis (1942) argues that the same poem does not refer to Ithaca, but is an excuse for readers to dare make a life journey to gain experience, knowledge and goods beyond the original purpose of the traveler. The poem entitled “The Ship” refers to the poet's return from Athens to Alexandria (Savvidis, 2019). For the poet, Alexandria is a city that satisfies, above all, the “eyes of the mind”, while in the poem “God is missing Antonio”, Alexandria becomes a symbol that has the power to inspire the “worthy” (Keeley, 1995). The poet's life has been a long journey and through his work he motivates readers to travel to the places, that he lived in and captured in his work. His worldwide fame can be traced to film tourism with small and large screen movies, such as Spinalonga's example with Hislop's *The Island* (Manola & Gioka, 2021) and Levi's book *The Mother of Italy* (Manola & Tsatambassoglou, 2021). Literary and cinematic tourism like any other type of tourism, contributes to the improvement of both domestic and international tourism.

It includes mystery, curiosity, search, emotion, emotional bonding, diversity, while also promoting the exchange of ideas and culture through literature.

7. Conclusions

The places that Cavafy visited and inspired through the mapping we did, can be tourist attractions for the literary tourist. In addition to recording his journey and how the author has contributed to tourism, this study could also be a suggestion for the reader to get to know the author better and to enter the process of traveling and experiencing the world through his own literary look. Literature has always been an occasion for travel and in recent years it has been rapidly growing.

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