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HONORING CAVAFY IS A PLEASURE

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I. PERSONAL RESPONSE

Honoring Cavafy this year (in 2013) signifies to me personally:

The echo (in memory) of George P. Savidis' voice resonating in Harvard halls as he would read Cavafy's poems to his classes and seminars (listen now at <http://www.snhell.gr/lections/writer.asp?id=60>)

an endless challenge — and pleasure — to the careful reader/philologist;

the precision of the acute diacritic (ψιλή) in Νέα Ὑόρκη (112.4);

my respect for those who have chosen to specialize in aspects of Cavafy's thought, reading and writings in order to clarify them to others.

2. PHILOLOGICAL-BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESPONSE

In considering the broader significance of Cavafy today, it may be of interest to consider:

The four 'complete' English-language translations of Cavafy's poems that were published in book-form prior to 2000 (Mavrogordato 1951-52, Dalven 1961, Keeley and Sherrard 1975, and Kolaitis 1989) have been succeeded by three new complete translations published between 2000 and 2004 (Theoharis 2001, Sachperoglou 2003, Haviaras 2004) and subsequently by seven new full translations (Barnstone 2006, Boegehold 2008, Manolis 2008, Sharon 2008, Mendelsohn 2009, Chioles 2011, Economou with Deligiorgis 2013), along with reprints or new editions of previously mentioned full translations. No other (modern) Greek poet can claim such a reception in English.

In tandem with the growing proliferation of 'complete' translations of Cavafy's poetry in English, the number of essays on Cavafy that have been published (in printed form) in English has kept increasing 'exponentially'. Starting with the 112 "article-length" essays (in addition to two special issues of periodicals) published in English in all decades up through 1987, readers now have access to 156 additional essays published in the seventeen years 1988-2004, and in the few years from 2005 to today 111 print essays have been added. (For full-length books containing essays the picture is somewhat different: ca. ten books on Cavafy published in all decades up through 1987; fifteen books on Cavafy from 1988 through 2004, plus two special issues of periodicals; and five books on Cavafy from 2005 to today, plus one edited volume of collected essays.) Cavafy challenges the imagination of readers who wish to hold a continuing dialogue, and those numbers show steady growth.

The above information is based on the update of the CENSUS of Modern Greek Literature (1824-today) that Wim Bakker and I are preparing for publication in a second enlarged edition (1st ed.: MGSA, 1990).