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The meaning of Cavafy today

Well, to be honest, I can tell you very little about Cavafy and what he means today.

I met him, I recall, years ago, in a grey classroom, in high school. His Ithaca left me with a taste of bitterness, of loneliness; even of disappointment, I would say. This is the famous Ithaca?

Years pass. I am now in college. I need, I must - somehow - show her that Greece differs from what her family, her teachers and the media have told her. I offer her a book with his poems translated into English. Don't get me wrong. Cavafy is not a way to Hellenize her (that would pre-suppose that I first undergo a process of Hellenization) but to create a common language, a common *topos* between us.

More years pass. Time to abandon Athens. Time for me to go to some other land... to some other sea... Alas! The city... a city shall always follow me.

More years have passed and here I am, ready to write a law dissertation. Like poetry, dissertations in law deal not with proof but with interpretation. My research explores how social conduct, wise as it has become, so full of experience, turns into law. A journey from is to ought – yet another Ithaca. My work is about what lawyers don't like: non-written laws. But now I know. For, they are, those laws... a kind of solution.

Years have now passed since I sent her that letter. With no consideration, no pity, no shame, she has built walls around her, thick and high.

Years are passing and - I know, don't ask me how, don't ask me why; I just know - the day is coming when either the great Yea or the great Nay must needs be spoken. May I have the great Yea within me...

But now, my dear friend, you shall excuse me. So much thinking, so much remembering...

Oh yes. I met the man – and it was not in that grey classroom. But, trust me, there is not much I can say about what Cavafy means today... to you.