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| Cavafy, C. P. (1863–1933) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| C. P. (Constantine Petrou Photiades) Cavafy, the youngest of seven brothers, was born in Alexandria, Egypt, where he spent most of his life working as a clerk at the Ministry of Public Works. His parents were natives of Constantinople and founding members of the Greek community of Alexandria. Cavafy published his first poem ‘Bacchial’ in the Leipzig periodical *Hesperus* in 1886 and ever since opted for publishing privately or in newspapers and periodicals rather than in book form. His poetic oeuvre consists of 154 poems and was published posthumously in Alexandria in 1935 and in Athens in 1948. Editions of his unpublished poems, his prose, and essays followed from the 1960s onwards. Unequivocally dedicated to the craft of poetry – a photo of his last passport, issued in 1932, lists his occupation as ‘Poet’ – Cavafy is known worldwide for poems such as ‘[Ithaka](http://www.cavafy.com/poems/content.asp?id=74&cat=1)’ (1911) and ‘[Waiting for the Barbarians](http://www.cavafy.com/poems/content.asp?id=119&cat=1)’ (1904) but also for celebrating the eroticism of young bodies and their sensual pleasure (‘[The Afternoon Sun](http://www.cavafy.com/poems/content.asp?id=104&cat=1)’, 1919) and for resurrecting in verse marginalized historical figures (‘[Kaisarion](http://www.cavafy.com/poems/content.asp?id=77&cat=1)’, 1918). |
| C. P. (Constantine Petrou Photiades) Cavafy, the youngest of seven brothers, was born in Alexandria, Egypt, where he spent most of his life working as a clerk at the Ministry of Public Works. His parents were natives of Constantinople and founding members of the Greek community of Alexandria. Cavafy published his first poem ‘Bacchial’ in the Leipzig periodical *Hesperus* in 1886 and ever since opted for publishing privately or in newspapers and periodicals rather than in book form. His poetic oeuvre consists of 154 poems and was published posthumously in Alexandria in 1935 and in Athens in 1948.  File: Cavafy.jpg  Editions of his unpublished poems, his prose, and essays followed from the 1960s onwards. Unequivocally dedicated to the craft of poetry – a photo of his last passport, issued in 1932, lists his occupation as ‘Poet’ – Cavafy is known worldwide for poems such as ‘[Ithaka](http://www.cavafy.com/poems/content.asp?id=74&cat=1)’ (1911) and ‘[Waiting for the Barbarians](http://www.cavafy.com/poems/content.asp?id=119&cat=1)’ (1904) but also for celebrating the eroticism of young bodies and their sensual pleasure (‘[The Afternoon Sun](http://www.cavafy.com/poems/content.asp?id=104&cat=1)’, 1919) and for resurrecting in verse marginalized historical figures (‘[Kaisarion](http://www.cavafy.com/poems/content.asp?id=77&cat=1)’, 1918). W.H. Auden, who wrote the introduction to Cavafy’s collected poems translated by Rae Dalven in 1961, found Cavafy’s erotic poems a breakthrough in subject and style, since they were openly homosexual and used every-day objects, like chairs and mirrors, never before encountered in traditional Greek poetry. Cavafy’s ‘God Abandons Anthony’ was published in *The Athenaeum* in 1919, and his ‘Ithaca’ appeared in T.S. Eliot’s literary journal *The Criterion* in 1924. The associations with a cultural inheritance that connected Homer, Dante and Tennyson were not lost on Eliot, who viewed culture as a ‘variety in unity’ (*Notes towards the Definition of Culture*). Forever fixed in popular imagination as ‘a Greek gentleman in a straw hat, standing absolutely motionless at a slight angle to the universe’, after E.M. Forster’s 1923 description in *Pharos and Pharilion*, Cavafy’s work has bequeathed, in Yannis Ritsos’s terms, ‘a map of Greece, like a miniature atlas, / somewhat abstracted and with great inaccuracies of frontier’ (‘Misunderstandings’, from *Twelve Poems for Cavafy*, 1963).  For all his everyday depictions, his attention to detail, his portrayal of the city in timeless settings or with philosophical nuances, as well as for the ekphrastic effect of his verse, Cavafy can be considered the painter of modern life in the Hellenic world. His work has been translated widely – a volume of 153 poems in 19 languages by 135 poets from 30 countries, either inspired by Cavafy’s poetry or conversing with it, was published in 2000 under the title *Συνομιλώντας με τον Καβάφη/Conversing with Cavafy*. List of Works Cavafy, C. P. (1992) *Collected Poems*, trans. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, ed. George Savidis, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.  Cavafy, C. P. (1961) *The Complete Poems*, trans. Rae Dalven, Florida: Harcourt.  Cavafy, C. P. (2010) *Selected Prose Works*, trans. Peter Jeffreys, Ann Arbor, Michigan:  The University of Michigan Press.  Cavafy, C. P. (2009) *The Unfinished Poems*, trans. Daniel Mendelsohn, New York: Knopf.  Cavafy, C.P. (1944), ‘The God Abandons Antony’, trans. George Valassopoulo, in E.M. Forster, *Pharos and Pharillion* (1923), London: Hogarth Press, 56. |
| Further reading:  (Eliot)  (Forster)  (Jeffreys)  (Jusdanis)  (Keeley)  (McKinsey)  (Ritsos)  (Vayenas) |