

# Maps of Literary Trails in Thessaloniki

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**Abstract:** The work presented here is an approach on the subject of Literary Cartography, which deals with the topic of space in Literature as well as with the relationships that are formed between the literary and the real world. The aim of the work was to make the subject of Literary Cartography more widely known in the Greek academic circles. It was developed in the framework of a Diploma Thesis at the Laboratory of Cartography & Geographical Analysis (*CartoGeoLab*), Department of Rural and Surveying Engineering of the Faculty of Engineering of the Aristotle University (Thessaloniki, Greece) in collaboration with the School of Philology of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Aristotle University.

Literary Cartography has a long tradition dating back to centuries ago, and yet it is only rather recently that researchers started using maps as tools to analyse and interpret pieces of literary work, as well as to reach conclusions which would have been impossible without the help of cartographic material. While maps were initially used solely as complimentary additions to books, like helping the reader with the visualization of the geography of a novel, this is starting to no longer be the case. With the advent of the digital age and the GIS technologies, cartographers are not just presented with new challenges but also with new opportunities to further research previously unexplored aspects of Cartography. With the rise of digital technologies, which can deal with the complexities of literary space, maps are no longer just descriptive tools, but they can be used as guides to reach new conclusions.

The work resulted in a series of twelve (12) thematic maps, illustrating the literary geography of the works of ten Greek writers, whose stories take place in the city of Thessaloniki in Greece.

**Keywords:** Thematic maps, Literary Cartography, Thessaloniki, Literature

## 1. Introduction

Reading a map resembles a journey that awakes the imagination, in the same sense that a good book does. A well designed map can carry the readers away in geospace and in time; although not always evident, literature and maps are linked and interrelated, in that respect. A writer, on the other hand, usually carefully chooses the place(s) in order to set her story: all literary works take place in some geographic space so that it is actually impossible to think of literature without a geospatial component. In most cases writers choose scenery that facilitates their stories and in fact all literary works take place in a real or invented geographic space: it is actually impossible to perceive literary creation without the spatial component. Usually writers place their stories in scenery corresponding to existing geographic locations and often they do so in such an accurate manner that one could use the book as a guide for the area of the plot. Even in cases where the location is invented, the geographic component is an integral part of the literary content. Literature and

Geography (and consequently Cartography) are thus per definition interrelated.

For the purpose of our work, choosing the literary space of the city of Thessaloniki as the subject was the natural result of our common interest i.e. the cartographic (*CartoGeoLab*, URL1) and the philological (*Literacy Lab*, URL2), in the framework of an academic cooperation for a theme that is unexplored so far in the Greek academia. More specifically, the philologist in the authors' team provided all the necessary information and guidance for the content to be mapped and the respective bibliography, which was also the result of an on-going research by the Literacy Lab of the Central Library & Information Centre of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, entitled "A literary walk in Thessaloniki" (op. cit.). It was therefore decided to map the works of ten writers and poets of Thessaloniki and their references to the city. The writers belong to the so-called *generation of the 1930's* and the *post-war literary generation* of Greece. Given the fact that Literary Cartography is a rather unexplored area in Greece (with the exception of

few examples to be mentioned in the following) it was thought that an effort in this field would initiate some interest towards not only the mapping itself, but also to a broader and long-term cooperation for exploring the relationships between the two.

## 2. Literary Cartography

Mapping literary places, although initially might seem a simple idea, in fact is a challenge for both philologists and cartographers. Literary stories take place in real but also in imaginary space or a combination of both, posing thus interesting representation challenges.

Digital technologies offer many possibilities in this respect, since they can provide means for documenting and visualizing the complexity of literary space taking Literary Cartography a step further.

A brief description of the subject and the influence of literary space on mapping (and vice versa) follow.

### 2.1 A brief overview

There is a long tradition of interactions between Literature and Cartography, as already mentioned. Since medieval times, many different connections have existed between writers and books on one hand and geo-space (i.e. landscapes, cities, continents) on the other (Bradbury, 2001). A thorough overview of this long history can be found in a number of essays covering the topic of Early Modern Literature and Cartography in the *History of Cartography* project, Volume 3 (see e.g. Conley, 2007).

As early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century Petrarch, the Italian poet and scholar, refers to (imaginary) travelling with the help of maps, in one of his *Letters of Old Age* from 1367- 68 (Cachey, 2007). The synergies of Cartography and Literature culminated into the production of the well-known *Isolarii* (Books of Islands) of Cristoforo Buondelmonti and Bartolomeo dalli Sonetti in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (op. cit.). As early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century an example of fictional or imaginative writing and its cartographic counterpart is Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516, English translation 1551) and the engraved maps that accompanied the Latin editions of the text (Turner, 2007). Cartographic styles are also embodied in the writing of Rabelais, Ronsard, and Montaigne (see Bouzrara and Conley, 2007). In the Iberian peninsula of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quijote* meanders and explains how a knight-errant, maps, earth-measuring and map-making are interrelated; in later editions of Cervantes' work maps are included, showing the hero's adventurous travels (Pinet, 2007). Also Portuguese Renaissance literature often refers to mapping (see Safier & Mendes dos Sandos, 2007). In German-speaking countries the literary production provided a broad basis for cartographic activities which, among others, prepared the ground for a peak in German allegorical mapping in 1670-1750 (Reitinger, 2007).

One can argue that literary traditions were shaped also through contact with Cartography, since "writers who

cast their eyes on world maps, topographic images, city views, books of islands, and allegorical projections gave birth to much of what we understand to be the foundation of modern writing" (Conley, 2007). In this sense the link of Cartography with Literature has formed a two-way street: maps represent literary items, but eventually might become sources of inspiration for writers.

More examples of Literary Cartography are witnessed from the 20<sup>th</sup> century and onwards, with most of them initially of simply explanatory nature i.e. supporting a text (Piatti et al, 2008). This has gradually evolved in the use of maps as analysis and interpretation elements for literature as e.g. in the works of Moretti (1998), Bradbury (2001) or more recently the *Literary Atlas of Europe* project (URL3). The maps are used there not only as mere representations of known data, but as generators of ideas.

The progress in digital technologies enhances this trend by offering tools and possibilities for large data manipulation and visualization, through use of databases, data analysis and innovative digital representations (see e.g. URL3). In this respect there is also a great potential for educational uses; a couple of such examples are mentioned here, namely an interactive multimedia map developed to accompany the study of the works and lives of the Romantics (writers and artists) who lived and visited the Lake District in England (see URL4) and a project about the mapping of the *Republic of Letters* i.e. the intellectual community of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe and the Americas that fostered communication during the Age of Enlightenment (see URL5).

### 2.2 The Greek case

With the exception of few examples, Literary Cartography is an unexplored area in Greece. The pioneering among these is the work of Livieratos (2001) which concerns the creation of maps that visualize various aspects of the poetic corpus of Andreas Embeirikos, one of the major greek poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Almost a decade later an attempt to map the works of a number of important greek writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century was made (Savvidou, 2012; Savvidou and Koussoulakou, 2014). The works of Ntovas and Symeonidis (2017) and Koussoulakou et al (2018) were carried out in the context of a cooperation between cartographers and philologists at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, in order to set the basis for a potential broader exploration of the field.

## 3. Literary Maps of Thessaloniki

In the following sections the process of creating the maps that constitute the outcome of the present work is described in brief. Emphasis was put on the demanding task of collecting geographic data from novels and poems, in the need for interdisciplinary work between cartographers and philologists, in the extensive research that is required to ascertain, for example, the exact location of a place described in a novel when the world that is described is slowly disappearing or is even

destroyed entirely, or in differentiating between real locations that no longer exist from imaginary ones.

### 3.1 Data collection and recording

As already mentioned the work was based on literary sources suggested by the philologist of the team, who is a staff member in the School of Philology of the Philosophy Faculty and also involved in the work carried out by the Literacy Lab. Additionally, two of the cartographers of the team were active also in data collection, since they went through all texts of literature (prose and poems) in the framework of their Diploma Thesis in Literary Cartography (Ntovas and Symeonidis, 2017). Initially four writers were chosen, but soon it was decided to include more, in order to have a broader record of works and references of interest. For all of the ten writers selected, a number of works were studied and any geospatial information mentioned was recorded. Locations refer to places where real events happened but also spots in thoughts or in dreams of the authors. The recordings were compared and cross-checked with those of the Literacy Lab. A total of thirty-two (32) works of these ten authors were catalogued, twenty-four (24) in prose and eight (8) in poem collections.

The geospatial reference of the data varied, with respect of the exactitude of a place: often locations were mentioned with a street and even a number, some other times in a more generic manner (neighbourhoods, larger city areas or streets). The data collected were identified with their current names (of streets, spots, areas). For all locations a cross-check between the data base created by the cartographers and the philologists was carried out, for every single item recorded in the respective data-base of each group; this helped refine the data and also apply some corrections.

Apart from the sometimes fuzzy references to locations another issue had to do with the places that no longer exist, or have changed (with respect to their name, function etc.)

A fact that was emphatically revealed during this step was the interdisciplinary nature of the work: for instance for the identification of locations plain reading of the texts does not always suffice; often additional knowledge or expertise on the author and her works is necessary, making it clear that for any literary map it takes two fields of knowledge -cartographic and literary- to succeed. Even if this is self-evident for academic staff, it is still important from an educational point of view to point out to younger members of the academic community: students or young researchers from all backgrounds need to realize the importance of expertise and of knowledge exchange among a team working in digital humanities.

### 3.2 Map compilation

A total of twelve maps were produced based on the thirty-two selected works of the ten writers (Fig. 1). The maps were compiled by use of data from various

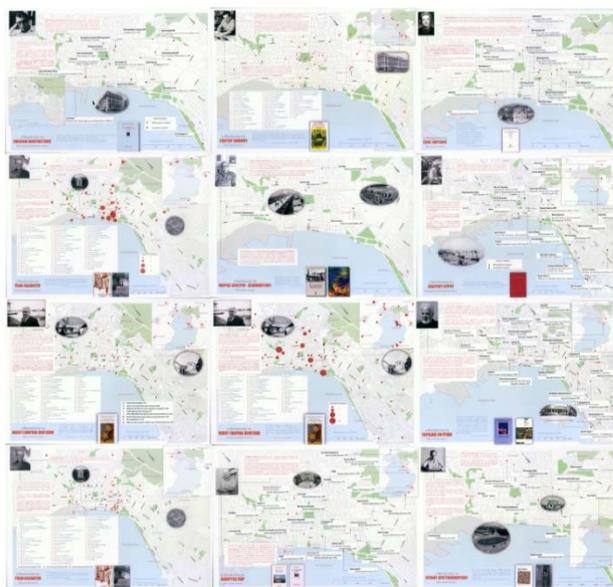


Figure 1. The twelve maps created for the ten writers and poets of Thessaloniki.

sources. For the base maps, existing *shapefiles* were combined with data available via the Thessaloniki GIS Municipality portal and via OpenStreetMap (the latter was useful for the inset maps in smaller scale, showing areas peripheral to the city). The thematic data were initially inserted as locations in Google Maps; also additional *kml* files with point information were provided by the Literacy Lab. All these data were processed and brought in a common reference system for mapping, with the help of a GIS software package (namely *ArcGIS*). The final maps were compiled in the GGRS87 (Greek Geodetic Reference System 87).

As for the size of the maps to be printed, A3 (297mm x 420mm) was considered a suitable one, combining space enough for showing the information gathered with portability. Consequently a range of scales was available for the maps, according to the distribution of the points of interest in the area; these scales were 1:10.000, 1:15.000 and 1:20.000. Additional inset maps in smaller scales were created for some spots around the city where data were also recorded and had to be shown.

For the final graphics processing of the maps before printing, the package *Adobe Illustrator* was used.

### 3.3 Map content and design

The places depicted in the maps are shown with various point symbols. Two basic ways were used for their representation: in the case of maps with a limited number of locations it was possible to create frames/windows pointing to the respective location and including information about it such as the address, the book of origin and an explanation (see e.g. Fig.2, Fig.3, Fig. 4); in

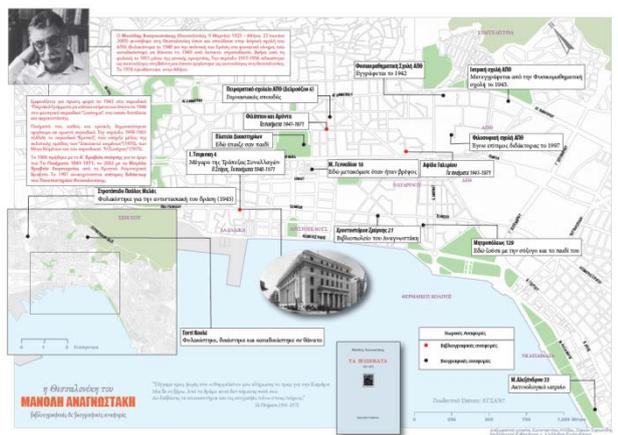


Figure 2. One of the twelve maps created, depicting biographical and bibliographical locations for the poet Manolis Anagnostakis.

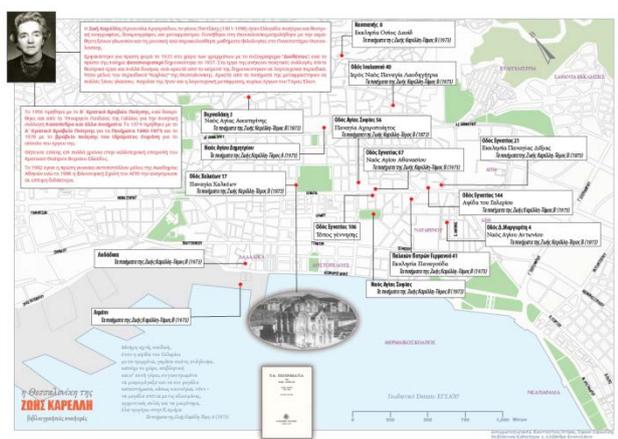


Figure 3. The locations referred in the poems of Zoe Karelli.

the case of a large number of locations a numbered list was created for all locations on the map. By using different colours for the point symbols, different books (Fig. 5) or different types of locations are depicted (e.g.

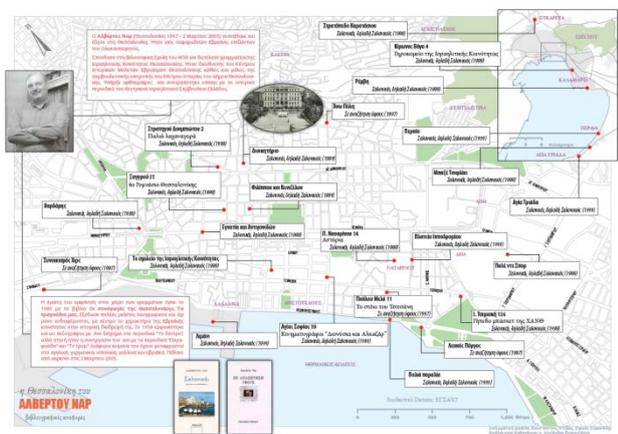


Figure 4. One of the twelve maps created, depicting locations' references in the works of author Albertos Nar.

biographical events -such as birth places, residential places, spots they used to visit etc- or bibliographical events). Some extra information on the biography of the writer was included on every map, accompanied with selected book covers.

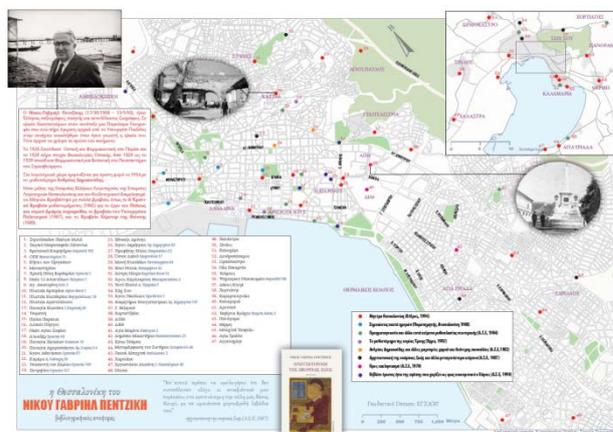


Figure 5. Locations' references in the works of author Nikos Gavriil Pentzikis.

For locations of particular interest (e.g. historical, cultural, political etc.) photos were positioned on the maps; it was tried to include photos (in b/w) depicting the situation as it was at the time the respective author referred to it. Similarly, some available spots on the maps were used to include excerpts of works by the respective author

Another type of map that was created was the one displaying the frequency with which certain places appear in the works of some authors. Proportional point symbols (circles) were used; transparency was applied in drawing the symbols, so that clutter would be avoided in areas with larger values and for map reading to be facilitated (Fig. 6).

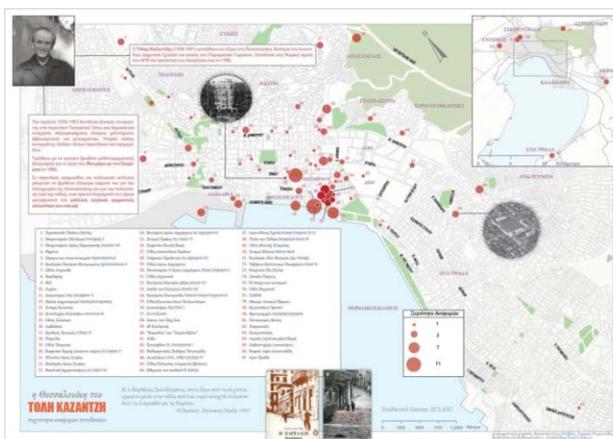


Figure 6. The map shows frequency of locations' references in the works of author Tolis Kazantzis.

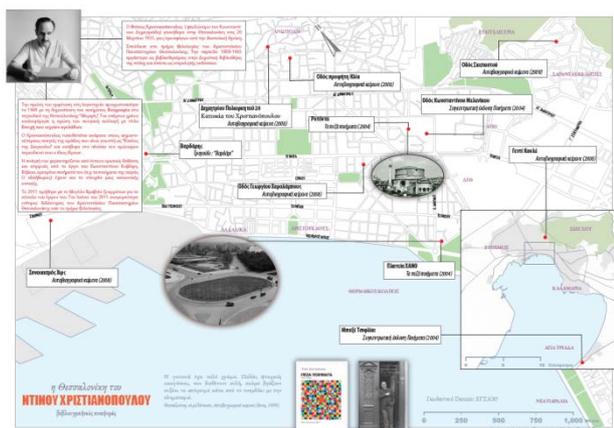


Figure 7. A map depicting locations' references in the poems of Dinos Christianopoulos.

### 3.4 Conclusions

The work described in the previous is an attempt to map the urban geo-space of Thessaloniki according to its depiction in the works of a number of native writers, in order to initiate an effort in Literary Cartography not very much practiced yet in the academic Greek environment. One of the map uses in mind was to provide prototypes to be used by philologists for supporting educational academic tasks, according to their expressed interest, manifested among others in the work carried about by the Literacy Lab (URL2).

As Malcolm Bradbury put it: “Literature itself is an atlas, an imaginary map of the universe” (Bradbury, 2001). Representing the literary space on a map offers additional perception of literary content and consequently of the space referred to. Such a map enhances geographical knowledge by delving into the literary identity and dimension of places.

Furthermore, the cooperation of people from various scientific fields is important also from an educational point of view, because it shows to students and young researchers (as it was the case here, too) the importance and necessity of interdisciplinary work, of expertise in one's field and of knowledge exchange among team members working in digital humanities.

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URL5: <http://republicofletters.stanford.edu/>