

THE LITERATURE PARKS OF SICILY AS EXPRESSORS OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE ISLAND

DOI: 10.26341/issn.2241-4002-2021-1b-2

Michopoulou Aikaterini

MSc Tourism Business Administration, Hellenic Open University
michopoulou.k@gmail.com

Foteini Maniou

Graduate of Philosophy NKUA, Msc University of the Aegean
ftinimaniou@yahoo.gr

Costas Trikalitis

Phd C. of University of Western Attica
kwstas_trikalitis@hotmail.com

Abstract

Sicily is the island of Myth...

Odysseus, Homer's epic hero, landed on the island

attracted from the song of the sirens, during his long return home.

This study deals with literary parks as an extension of literature routes and as a lever for the improvement, development and evolution of Literary Tourism. The case of Sicily as a tourist destination which has taken advantage of the rich literary and cultural heritage creating literary parks and experiential routes is the field of research and analysis of this effort.

Keywords: *Literary parks, "writers' road", Sicily, literary routes*

1. Literature parks

This peculiar type of cultural tourism may represent a small part of the global tourism but can be a great asset in its development to contribute to the extension of the tourist season.

The faces, the events of a book can be the reason for a journey with a new point of view, a new tone, a new theme. The mystery encloses the unexpected, the curiosity the search, the emotional bonding, diversity, the other look (Manola, 2019).

Literary Parks⁷ are geographical areas that refer to an author and his work. Their purpose is to lead the visitor to the places of inspiration of the writer and to help preserve his literary memory. Literature as an art form is according to **Aristotle** intertwined with human life itself as an expression of communication (Aristotle, "On the Soul")⁸.

People visiting literary parks, experience the paths in the life and work of the author but also simultaneously they cover their inner need to approach, to share, to live with the writer (Manola, 2020 (a)).

These paths are a new approach to literature through tourism and meet a psychological need of the person who desires even for a while to become a protagonist and to be identified

⁷ The Literary Parks (25 in Italy, two (2) in Norway, two (2) planned in Greece and Albania) are in turn areas characterized by different combinations of natural and human elements depicting the evolution of local communities through the key of literature interpretation.

⁸ Leszl W. (2006: 286)

with his favorite author or with the main character of the novel, to live within the limits of fantasy and reality (Travlos, 2011).

It is the result of a unique cultural journey to places that honor literature and consider it the cultural heritage of the region, capable of helping in the economic upgrade and cultural promotion of each place. This is an initiative, which allows a productive transformation of the places emphasizing the cultural identity of the reference place, through economic, social and cultural movements.

The parks are related with the place of birth of the poet or writer and the places where he spent a long time of his life. Inside the parks you can also learn about the writer's or poet's achievements. The existence of the parks aims at the re-emergence of the collective identity within the cultural memory (Cocozza - Roncarati, 2003). According to an article by Stamatis (2020), literature and theme parks are now organically linked. A great example is Disneyland, a theme park based on comic book characters that we all know how popular it became.

Sicily currently has six (6) literary parks:

1. **"Luigi Pirandello" (1867-1936)** Literary Park. **Luigi Pirandello** is resting today near his birthplace and what he called the "African Sea".
2. **"Leonardo Sciascia" (1921-1989)** Literary Park. The Literary Park begins from **Racalmuto**, **Sciascia's** birthplace, and continues to **Caltanissetta**, where he spent his youth and experienced a fundamental education in literature and politics.
3. Literary Park **"Salvatore Quasimodo" (1901-1968)**. The park is located in **Montica**, in the museum of the house that took its name, enriched with **"Quasimodoteca"** located in the main square of the city: a picturesque path through panels that allows a virtual immersion in poetry. At **"Quasimodoteca"** the visitor can find through networking systems the entire poet's work (such as at the website: www.quasimodo.it)
4. Literary Park **"Giovanni Verga" (1840-1922)**. Along the **"Archipelago of Cyclops"** in **Catania** you can find the park dedicated to **Verga** and the movies that were filmed based on his novels.
5. Literary Park **"Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa" (1896-1957)**. Includes a huge area of western Sicily, near Palermo, with evidence of his life and accomplishments.
6. Literary Park **"Elio Vittorini" (1908-1966)**. Since 2003, his homeland Syracuse has become a park named after him. The parts of Syracuse that are the backdrop of **Vittorini's** life and achievements are stages of an emotional journey following in the footsteps of the writer. The island of Ortigia, the walk to Ponte Umbertoino, the Piazza Duomo, is some of the highlights of this trip. Movies are shown at the **Museo del Cinema**, in the noble palace of **Corpaci** inspired by his novels. Vittorini himself becomes a valuable guide for tourists to discover Syracuse and their province. The itineraries that the great writer saw and lived become the protagonist of a story that involves all the senses.

2. Literature tourism in Sicily

Literary tourism is a result of the author's correlation and intersection with the sets and characters of his achievements. (Fawcett & Cormack, 2001).

In this way places become social constructions and tourist products, having as a sole purpose to attract stakeholders from all over the world (Herbert, 2001).

Sicily, the birthplace of world-renowned writers, narrators and poets, includes a historical, cultural and environmental universe. It has the advantage of being centrally located at the Mediterranean and is considered unique in Europe due to its rich history and cultural heritage. The region justifiably pays tribute and organizes celebrations and special events in

order to display the work of prominent artists, places, landscapes, history, traditions and the flavors that inspired them.

Despite the huge territorial disturbances, aggressive modernization processes that have surpassed the traditional order in Sicily, the possibility still exists today to assess the historical cultural heritage in a harmonious way in coexistence with nature. The European Union for the Protection of Territories has passed the law (92/43 / EEC), which led to the creation of the **Natura 2000** network consisting of sites of Community interest and special protection areas.

Along the Region's literary paths and within the literary and archaeological parks, there are many statues and monuments, witnesses of its history and culture within the area, which act as an attraction for tourism and education.

3. Literary route in Sicily (Strada degli Scrittori)

It is a "**literary itinerary**", which follows the places where important Sicilian writers lived. The itinerary is described through their literary work. It is called **Strada degli Scrittori**⁹ and is a road of about 32 km of literary and cultural interest. It unites the places that the authors lived in a tourist -cultural circle, which encourages the visitor to have fun and enjoy the artistic, monumental, archaeological and naturalistic richness, to appreciate the tradition of food and wine, but also to be informed literary and culturally. The "literary itinerary", crosses the **Valley of Temples**, and is located in a green environment, between the sea and the modern city **Agrigento** and includes a number of surviving temples such as the **Temples of Castor and Polydeiki and Hera**, protected by UNESCO. This is a unique path of theaters, castles, palaces, museums and enchanting landscapes(**Manola, M,2020d**).

The route is officially known as **Strada Statale 640**. The project was designed by **Felice Cavallaro**, a Corriere della Sera journalist on 11/11/2013 in **Racalmuto**, in the presence of the then Minister of Cultural Heritage **Massimo Bray**. "**The route of the writers**", combines culture and tourism and is dedicated to **Luigi Pirandello, Leonardo Sciascia, Andrea Camilleri, Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, Antonio Russello and Pier Maria Rosso di San Secondo**. However, it is not just the story of these writers and the Valley of the Temples but also emblematic places such as the **Scala dei Turchi** and the Historic Libraries of **Caltanissetta**¹⁰.

The route starts from **Porto Empedocle** and reaches **Caltanissetta**, crossing the **Valle dei Templi**¹¹ (**Valley of the Temples**) and it passes through theaters, castles, palaces, museums and stunning landscapes. The park, about 1300 hectares wide, maintains an excellent monumental and local heritage that includes the ruins of the ancient city of Akraga and the surrounding area, until it reaches the sea. The area also includes opportunities for discovery, such as **Favara**, the country of author **Antonio Russello**, in which the contemporary art of **Farm Cultural Park** operates.

In a more detailed note:

As a starting point we can define the places where **Andrea Camilleri** lived and was inspired [**Scieli (named in his book as "Vigata") - Porto Empedocle and Montelusa**]. At **Porto Empedocle**, the first stop is the "**Tower of Charles V**", where the author was inspired by the "**forgotten massacre**". Next stop, **Montelusa**, and the area of **Rabato**, which refers to "**His King Girgenti**". Sicily as presented in **Camilleri's** novels is multidimensional. A place where absolute beauty and absolute horror coexist. The house where the author was born and

⁹ <https://www.zingarate.com/italia/sicilia/strada-degli-scrittori.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.casevacanza.it/idee/strada-degli-scrittori-itinerario-in-sicilia>

¹¹ <https://www.parcovalledeitempli.it/>

the 18th century cottage that was his grandfather's home will host the future headquarters of the **Camilleri Foundation**.

- The second stop is **Agrigento**. **Casa di Luigi Pirandello** is located in **Contrada Caos Villasetta**. The museum located on the first floor of the house, hosts temporary exhibitions dedicated to the author and, permanently, a huge collection of souvenirs, photos, letters, reports, awards and books in their first edition with tributes (Manola, 2020 (a)). The path outside the Nobel awarded author's house leads the tourist to a pine tree over 100 years old. The famous pine tree, where according to the author's Will, his ashes were scattered after his death. **Pirandello's** tomb is nothing more than a stone slab, created by the sculptor **Marino Mazzacurati**. Visits are made to his grave from nine in the morning until sunset. At the same time throughout the province of **Agrigento** guided tours, of the places that inspired the author, are organized. The Municipality of Agrigento has created eight (8) itineraries and guided tours to discover the places, the scenarios, the events and the characters of the author (Manola, 2020 (b)). Another visiting point is the L. Pirandello Theater in Agrigento, it took the name in 1946, as well as the square of Agrigento which was renamed to Pirandello square. This particular author seems to be very dear in Greece and has influenced both intellectual people and theatrical audience (Manola 2020 (c)).
- **Palma di Montechiaro** is one of the most important places that inspired **Tomasi di Lampedusa**. In the center of the city, in the palace and in the monastery of the Benedictines, the traveler can walk in the footsteps of the writer and taste sweets prepared, according to ancient recipes, by Benedictine's experienced hands.
- **Racalmuto**, the city that gave birth to **Leonardo Sciascia** (1921-1989). The tourist has the opportunity to experience a literary journey in the footsteps of the author. The starting point is the house where **Leonardo** was born, the **Regina Municipal Theater Margherita**, where he usually attended screenings of his performances and **Leonardo Sciascia** Foundation, a permanent museum dedicated to the author's work.
- **Pier Maria Rosso di San Secondo** (1887-1956). He was born in the city of **Caltanissetta** Of Sicily. His father was a mine owner. Among his most important works is "**La sirena ricanta**", which debuted in 1908 and "**Marionette, che passione!**", in 1917, a work that piqued **Luigi's Pirandello** interest. Today the visitor, walking through the historic center, can discover the places that inspired the author. The center's traces are on a route from the historic city center in the **S. Lucia** area, at **Jesuit** College, at the monumental cemetery. Situated in the same area are the mineralogy museum and the sulfur museum which hold special interest from visitors. The visitor can also see many places visited by **Leonardo Sciascia**, such as the Municipal Library "**L. Scarabelli**" which was the center of research on the texts that inspired his historical novels or the historic **Bar Romano**, where **Sciascia** stopped to enjoy gastronomic traditional confectionery¹².

4. Activities: festivals-events

The tourist area **Valle dei Templi**¹³ and the **Strada degli Scrittori**¹⁴, under the auspices of the Presidency of the Regional Assembly of Sicily, often organize a series of events concerning the whole area around the authors. Participating in this event, are Municipalities, young people, clubs, artists and schools. These events include: 1) Photography Exhibitions with important cultural and literary moments, 2) Exhibitions entitled "**At the table with the**

¹² <https://www.stradadegliscrittori.it/ss-640/>

<https://www.stradadegliscrittori.it/girgenti/>

¹³ <https://www.parcovalledeitempli.it/>

¹⁴ <https://www.zingarate.com/italia/sicilia/strada-degli-scrittori.html>

authors", inspired by food tradition, 3) Literary Dinners, with menus inspired by authors, 4) Concerts hosted by Sicilian Musicians and 5) Awarding of prizes to local emerging writers.

In addition, Memorial Events are held. In one of them the award ceremony of the National Theater Award, took place in the birthplace of the writer, at the end of the **Strada Degli Scrittori** Festival, in the presence of the President of the Republic.

According to the Mayor of Agrigento and President of the tourist area **Valle dei Templi**, the city begins to deal with itself and creates a new relationship with **Pirandello**.

An equally important initiative, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the birth of **Pirandello**, is the one that took place on his birthday and lasted seven (7) days. The **Strada Degli Scrittori** Festival, chaired by **Felice Cavalloro**, was dedicated to the Sicilian writer and multiple events took place, both artistic and literary, while all the resounding names of the intellectual world of Italy attended.

As the general director of the **Treccani** Encyclopedia, **Massimo Bray**, comments, such initiatives are one of the smartest examples of cultural tourism for which we talk every day and it could make the country's budget stand on its own two feet in relation to heritage and landscape.

Also, the president of **Ars Giovanni Ardizzone**, adds that there must be initiatives like these as the importance of cultural resources resemble other important resources such as oil.

Research by **Wang and Zhang** (2017) concludes that a literary destination should meet five basic requirements to be attractive and efficient, concerning Tourism:

- i. Technical perfection,
- ii. To express emotion to the visitor,
- iii. To have service
- iv. To have comfort and convenience,
- v. To radiate authenticity.

We consider that "**La strada degli scrittori**" and "**Il valle dei tempi**" meet the basic conditions concerning profit, and the proof for this is the increase of tourist traffic on the island and especially in the aforementioned areas. Studying the number of visitors, we can conclude that tourism which has as its starting point the personality and contribution of the authors and Sicilian poets is an important factor in the country's economy.

5. Conclusions

Many vacation packages can provide specialized tours to the places mentioned above. Authors with their life and work give an incentive to tourists to visit Sicily exploring beyond the already known sights the landscapes of their art and why not the landscapes of their own lives.

The preservation, the re-evaluation and recovery of Sicily's vast literary heritage, the heritage of a land of narrators and poets, is due to the creation of Literary Routes and Literary Parks, as a journey of human, literary and cultural experience. The path of writers is a sign of a new sensitivity towards cultural symbols of the area that are becoming more and more realistic, and thanks to this, national pride is displayed and local traditions as well as a sense of local identity are also preserved. The Literary Parks provide the necessary tools that help anyone to understand, redefine, protect and increase the value of the landscape's identity history. Careful and responsible management of cultural heritage, associated with the care of the parks, contributes to the development of the wonderful land, which is the home of saints, writers and prominent people. Continuous care and promotion is a pole of attraction for domestic and international tourism but also an example of imitation for the exploitation of culture literary and historical heritage in most countries and places.

References

- Coccozza Roncarati. (2003). "The literary parks. Particular places of memory at the seeking protection and enhancement?". *Le istituzioni del federalismo* 3/4.2003 Available from:
https://www.regione.emiliaromagna.it/affari_ist/rivista_34_2003/583611%20Coccozza-Roncarati.pdf On line [Accessed January 29, 2021].
- Fawcett & Cormack (2001). *Guarding authenticity at literary tourism sites*. [Accessed January 31, 2021]. Available from:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/223407698_Guarding_authenticity_at_literary_tourism_sites
- Herbert, D. (1996). "Artistic and literary places in France as tourist attractions", *Tourism Management*, 17(2):77-85. [Accessed January 31, 2021]. Available from:
www.sciencedirect.com/journal/tourism-management/vol/17/issue/
- Leszl W. 'Plato's attitude to poetry and the fine arts, and the origins of aesthetics'.
- Part III. *Etudes Platoniciennes*, p. 245-336.
<https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesplatoniciennes.997>
- Manola, M. (2019). *Literature - Tourism - Culture*. Athens: Tsotras Publications
- Manola, M. (2020a). *Literary Routes in Attica*. Athens: Tsotras Publications
- Manola, M. (2020b). *Literature and Culture. Pirandello's Reach. Projects and Thoughts. (2014-2020)*. Athens: Tsotras Publications
- Manola, M. (2020c). Approcci stilistici in scrittori greci e italiani. Studio del caso Pirandello - Kazantzakis - Matesis. *Intercultural Translation Intersemiotic*, vol.9/2020. Available from: <https://ejournals.lib.auth.gr/iti-iti>. [Accessed January 30, 2021].
- Manola, M. (2020d), *Ο Λογοτεχνικός Τουρισμός ως φαινόμενο - Παραδείγματα σε Ελλάδα & Ιταλία*. Available at: 27/11.INTEREEG GREECE ITALY.POLYSEMI.
<https://bit.ly/3746TZZT> [Accessed 27 November 2020].
- Stamatis, A. (2020). "The literature theme park" 13/3 . [on line] *to vima.gr* [Accessed February 2, 2021]. Available from: <https://www.tovima.gr/2020/03/13/opinions/to-thematiko-parko-tis-logotexnias/>
- Traylou, P. (2011). *Lovers of writing. Reflections on words on paper*. Athens: Psychogios Publications
- Wang, H. J. & Zhang, D. (2017). Comparing literary tourism in Mainland China and Taiwan: The Lu Xun Native Place and the Lin Yutang House. *Tourism Management*, 59:234.

Websites

- <https://www.casevacanza.it/idee/strada-degli-scrittori-itinerario-in-sicilia>
- http://pti.regione.sicilia.it/portal/page/portal/SIT_PORTALE/SIT_ItinerariPredefiniti/Parchi%20letterari
- <https://www.zingarate.com/italia/sicilia/strada-degli-scrittori.html>
- <https://www.stradadegliscrittori.it/ss-640/>
- <https://www.stradadegliscrittori.it/girgenti/>
- <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/41170272.pdf>
- <http://www.visitsicily.info/en>
- Scala dei Turchi and the stories of Caltanissetta Bibliotheca
- <https://www.casevacanza.it/idee/strada-degli-scrittori-itinerario-in-sicilia>
- <https://www.parcovalledeitempli.it/>