



## Στα μυστικά του βαλτού

Πηνελόπη Δέλτα, *Penelope Delta*

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"Το νέο βιβλίο της κας. Δάλτα εννοιά να πνευματικό μνημεό αφιερωμένο στον μακεδονικό αγώνα και στη μνήμη του Τάλου Αγαπηνού, καπετάν Γιανναρά, του ιδανικού ρωανού. Χειρός της δημοτικής γλώσσας και της περιγραφής. Το εθνικό δρόμο, η λαϊλογοτεχνία του εννοιά βγαλμάνη από το αρχείο του μακεδονικού αγώνα του υπουργείου Εξωτερικής, από φωτογραφίες, ημερολόγια, ενθυμήσεις, περιγραφές ιδιωτών και αγωνιστών.

Τσι γερό θεμελιώμανο μεταφέρει τον αναγνώστη στην εποχή του ιερού αγώνα που η σημασία του για την Μακεδονία χειρίζεται πολλά αναλογίες με τον αγώνα του 1821. Τα "Μυστικά του Βατόνου" αρχίζουν από την παραλία του Θερμαϊκού και προχωρούν στον κομπό του Ρουμλουκιού, στον Λουδά, στη λίμνη Γιαννιτσών, και φθίνουν ως πρώτα στην δεσσαλία, εκεί που βρίθηκε κρεμασμένος ο Τάλος Αγαπηνός, ο σεμνής ρωανός καπετάν Γιανναράς. Μια ολοκληρωμένη εποχή με πρώσωπα και πρώγματα, μια ολοκληρωμένη εθνική ιστορία περνώντας από τις σελίδες της κας. Δάλτα".

Μιχ. Ροδής

"Στα μυστικά του Βατόνου"

"Ελεύθερον Βατόμα", Δευτέρα 12 Απριλίου 1937

## Στα μυστικά του βατόνου Details

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### Achilleas says

να αριστοργημα της ελληνικού λογοτεχνίας.-

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### Petros says

This book was until a few years ago recommended by any teacher in all Greek schools. And why not? It was written by a Greek, it is full of Greek patriotism, and it was making Albanians and Bulgarians to look like evil invaders. The prime directive of the school was to make us patriots; a thing counting twice for someone like me who actually lives very close to where all the events of the book took place about a century ago.

Basically, this is biased historical fiction and regards the Balkan wars of the early 20th century. After the fall of the Ottoman empire, the Balkan people were now free. But there were lots of nations and tribes who were living and mingling together for centuries, thus there were no clear borders of where does each nation begin and end. Thus we get these wars which were aiming to solidify the lines of each new founded country in those parts. In the Greek territories for example, all northern nations wanted to annex Macedonia so they could gain access to the Mediterranean Sea. But this never came to be thanks to the brave Greeks took up arms and fought relentlessly the invaders in the Axios swamps, until the Greek army found the time to build a bridge, cross the river, and get inside Thessaloniki before the others, thus claiming the whole region.

The above have to do with history alone. The book actually focuses on the adventures of a boy and the defenders of the swamp, as they constantly try to spy on the enemy, sabotage him, fend off the attacks, and even throw in a tale of vengeance to make everything even more violent than it already was.

The problem of the book is first of all that it is clearly propagandistic. Greeks are good, Albanians and Bulgarians are evil. Which I guess it's ok since it was taking place in a war and things back then really were black and white. But it is still propaganda and the author clearly takes sides. In fact, it's as if she was paid by the government to make it as such and then had every teacher for the next 80 years to be recommending it as a must for every Greek student.

I must though admit that Penelope Delta wrote one of the most adventurous and epic stories, made by Greeks for Greeks, and the historical background made it feel even greater back when we were really passionate about the "greekness" of Macedonia. Nowadays, we pretty much gave up and we try to save scraps before we go bankrupt, while FYROM in the north pretty much got all the rights to claim Alexander the Great's history as their own. So I guess for a nation which lacks good war tales, this is actually a very nice specimen; especially for the time it was written. But that is all it is.

In terms of fleshing out the setting, the books read very well. It describes in detail how they were dressed, living, eating, fighting, even used the local accents, a result of bastardization of languages by coexisting with others for too long. It is indeed a very good in its folklore aspect. The most memorable part is the camps in the swamp, as it describes how they made them float, or how they were using the boats to move fast and stealthy through the marshes. It also has some cool descriptions of how they were using gunpowder and arming the single-bullet rifles of that time. The thing is, this part seems to be most of the plot's context. Since the main events are set in stone you are pretty much reading how they lived through them and not how

they made them happen, in an almost fatalistic way. It will feel very boring for anyone not fascinated with learning of the social-political way things were back then and you get dozens of pages where all you get is uneventful slice-of-life scenes, slow built-up, and then some skirmishes. And yes, patriotism is all over the place.

Now about the action part, it tends to be very brutal. It has some really bloody and gory scenes and many important characters are killed in most horrible ways. This tends to make it exciting in a way but I can almost say it is too much for children's literature. Plus, I have actually met the great-grandson of one of the Bulgarian villains of the book and he insists that the book turned his ancestor from a mere collaborator to a vicious monster that died in a very gruesome way by a heroic defender. Thus it twists events around, which as expected as it is with fiction, it still feels stupid if you know a relative of the people mentioned in the book.

As for the characters, nobody is too memorable for anything particular. They are all everyday people and following the times, they are also illiterate and stupid. Some of them are also the same protagonists from Penelope's earlier and more kid friendly works, as she throws them all in to fight fearlessly for the good of the nation. And she is not afraid to kill most of them either. In this way it is like the Greek version of the Lord of the Rings, where a children's book like the Hobbit later on gets fused with far more epic and important events. And what a coincidence, the Hobbit was actually written the same year!

So in all it is only good for its social-political aspect and even there tends to be stretching it far beyond the average viewer's patience. It will really help you to visualize how it was back then but do not go expecting interesting dialogues, memorable characters, or exciting battles. Everything is quite basic in those departments and if you don't dig the oozing patriotism, you will probably dislike or even drop it midway. After all these years the only thing I clearly remember is the battles in the swamp and that pretty much tells you how forgettable everything else was.

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### **Xenia Orkopoulou says**

υπ?ροχο, κλασσικ?, αξεπ?ραστο

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### **Helen says**

Τι υπ?ροχο βιβλ?ο και τι καταπληκτικ? συγγραφ?ας!!

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### **Maria Thomarey says**

Σ?μερα θα το θεωρο?σαμε εθνικιστικ? . Η αλ?θεια ?μως ε?ναι πως η γοητε?α του μαγε?ει ακ?μα

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### **Dora says**

A stunning masterpiece!

The book describes the war between the Greeks, Bulgarians and Turks through the fictional story of a dismantled family, focusing on a young boy who is "adopted" by the soldiers fighting in the swamp and helps them as a scout.

It contains true historical figures and battles. Main character of the book is captain Tellos Agras (Καπετ?νιος Τ?λλος ?γρας ? Τ?λλος Αγαπην?ς) and how his efforts and death fuelled passion into the men following him, resulting into killing his assassins and drawing both Turks and Bulgarians out of the swamps and surrounding area.

The book is extremely long and can be tiring, but it's one amazing read. I wouldn't recommend it to kids though, since it contains quite a lot of violence and some graphic scenes, not meant for young audiences.

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### **Karmologyclinic says**

Πριν απο αυτ? ε?χα διαβ?σει τον Τρελαντ?vη και τον Μαγκα και το Παραμ?θι χωρ?ς ?νομα, τα οπο?α θυμ?μαι ?τι μου ?ρεσαν. Σε αυτ? το βιβλ?ο γ?ριζα με βαρι? καρδι? και εξαντλητικ? βαρεμ?ρα κ?θε σελ?δα, δεν θυμ?μαι καν αν το τελε?ωσα. Μ?λλον ?χι.

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### **vangelis says**

this is my favorite book so far. it refers to the macedonian war back in early 90s  
the author manages to give a tremendous rythm to the story which keeps the reader awake all time.i have to  
say that due to its historical backround may not fit to non-greek readers' apreciation but i would definetly  
recommend it to all my friends

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