

# Macedonia and Macedonians in *Sta Mystika Tou Valtou* (1937) by P.S. Delta

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Generations of Greeks have been brought up to view Greek history and identity – and particularly the history and identity of Macedonia – through the lens of Penelope Delta's novels. Not only was Delta practically the first Greek writer of children's books, but she is probably the most widely read Greek woman writer of all time. By 1991 – the fiftieth anniversary of her death – when her works came out of copyright, thus ending Estia's exclusive right to publish them, eight of her titles had gone through a total of more than 210 printings. It was recently estimated (*To Vima*, 25 June 1995) that one million copies of her books had been printed.

Four of her most popular novels are wholly or partly about Macedonia: *For the Fatherland* (1909), *In the Time of the Bulgar-Slayer* (1911), *Mangas* (1935) and *In the Secret Places of the Marsh* (1937).<sup>1</sup> The last of these is the most popular of all her works, having been reprinted more than forty times (thirty-three times in the years 1968–1993 alone). According to an Internet search carried out in March 1999, eighty editions of her works are currently in print, including editions of *For the Fatherland* by six different publishers, editions of *In the Time of the Bulgar-Slayer* by seven publishers, and editions of *Mangas* and *In the Secret Places of the Marsh* by eight.

Another indication of her importance is that her books have been used intertextually by at least three other writers: Iakovos Kambanellis in *Fairytales without a Name* (first performed in 1959), a stage adaptation of Delta's book of the same name; Alki Zei in her novel *Petros' Long Walk* (1971), in which the young protagonist recalls the heroes of *For the Fatherland* and *In the Time of the Bulgar-Slayer* and which incorporates unattributed quotations from these novels (unattributed because Zei expects the reader to recognize their provenance); and Panos Theodoridis in his *Sound-Novel of Captain Agras* (1994), which is partly based on *In the Secret Places of the Marsh* and is described by its author as a 'cinematic' reconstruction for radio (sic), telling

the story of Telos Agras within the context of international political and cultural history.<sup>2</sup> Of these three texts, only Zei's is intended for children.

Penelope Delta, who was born in Alexandria in 1874, was the daughter of Emmanuel Benakis, a cotton merchant who became a Venizelist member of the Greek Parliament, a government minister, and mayor of Athens.<sup>3</sup> She lived in Alexandria till the age of thirty-two, and her education was primarily in French and English. In 1906 she moved to Frankfurt with her husband (a senior employee of the Choremis-Benakis company, whom she had married at her father's behest) and she stayed there until the family returned to Alexandria in 1913; she did not settle in Greece till 1916. She had visited Greece many times before this, but had never been to Macedonia. She most probably began to be interested in Macedonia after first meeting Ion Dragoumis, Greek Consul-General in Alexandria, in 1905. This was a few months after the death in Macedonia of Second Lieutenant Pavlos Melas, Dragoumis' brother-in-law, an event that first awakened Athenian society to the importance of the Macedonian Struggle, in which the Greeks were attempting to prevent Macedonia, still part of the Ottoman Empire, from falling under Bulgarian control. Delta fell passionately in love with Dragoumis, whose family originated from Macedonia and who went on to write the novel *Martyrs' and Heroes' Blood* (1907) both as a memorial to Melas and as an exhortation to young Greeks to awake from their torpor and to go and offer themselves to the struggle in Macedonia, an enterprise that he presented as a life-or-death struggle for the very existence of Greece and Greek culture.<sup>4</sup>

Delta's writings are deeply influenced not only by her hero-worship of Dragoumis (and later of Venizelos), but by his version of Nietzschean heroic pessimism, which exalted the noble and desperate struggle of the superior man to rise above the mass of humanity and sacrifice himself heroically for the Fatherland, thus providing an example for others to follow. Just as Dragoumis saw himself as continuing Pavlos Melas' work after his death, so Delta believed she was continuing the work of Melas and (after his assassination in 1920) Dragoumis to keep the Macedonian flame alight in the hearts of the next generation of Greeks. Just as Dragoumis' novel was a *mnimosyno* for Melas, so *In the Secret Places of the Marsh* is a *mnimosyno* for the *Makedonomachos* Telos Agras (*nom de guerre* of Second Lieutenant Telos Agapinos); within Delta's novels too there are various instances of characters carrying on the work of other heroes after their death.

In his book Dragoumis paralleled the contemporary Macedonian struggle with the victorious thirty-eight-year campaign by the Byzantine emperor Basil

II against the Bulgarian emperor Samuel and his successors in the tenth and eleventh centuries, a campaign that was waged in Macedonia, in the very same areas that were again being contested nine hundred years later by Greeks and Bulgarians. It is no coincidence that it was in 1907 that Delta began studying Byzantine history, and she was particularly attracted by Gustave Schlumberger's portrait of Basil II in the first and second volumes of *L'Épopée byzantine* (1895–1900).<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that Delta, like Dragoumis, sees Byzantium and Modern Greece as a single unity, to which the ancient world (including even Alexander the Great) is more or less irrelevant.

Later Delta developed personal and family ties with Macedonia. In 1918 she carried out relief work with Greek refugees from Bulgaria in Eastern Macedonia, while her husband Stefanos was a member of the Refugee Settlement Commission working to settle refugees from Turkey in Macedonia. Their daughter Virginia married Alekos Zannas, from Thessaloniki, who was later to appear as a young character in *In the Secret Places of the Marsh*; the late Pavlos Zannas, Alekos' son, was one of the two grandsons to whom Delta dedicated *Mangas*, while another of Virginia's children, Lena, one of the dedicatees of Delta's novel *Trelantonis* (1930), is the mother of the politician Antonis Samaras, who resigned from Andreas Papandreou's PASOK party and founded the ultra-nationalist Political Spring party during the crisis over the international recognition of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the early 1990s.

Delta published two pairs of novels on Macedonia for children, the first (*For the Fatherland* and *In the Time of the Bulgar-Slayer*) set in the time of the emperor Basil II (specifically 995–1018) and the second (*Mangas* and *In the Secret Places of the Marsh*) during the Macedonian Struggle (specifically 1906–7). The first of each pair acts as both a prelude and a trial run for the second. The action of the novella *For the Fatherland* precedes and leads up to the action of the novel *In the Time of the Bulgar-Slayer*; both of these were written in Frankfurt in the period between the end of the Macedonian Struggle (brought about by the Young Turk Revolution of 1908) and the beginning of the Balkan Wars of 1912–13; this period coincided with Palamas' epicolyric poem *The King's Flute* (1910), also inspired by Basil II's victories over the Bulgarians, and a flurry of other activities in Greece related to Byzantium.<sup>6</sup>

Strangely, throughout her voluminous published correspondence, although she states her aim as being to project contemporary consciousness, ideas and ideals on to the Byzantine period in these first two novels,<sup>7</sup> Delta and her correspondents express little explicit connection between her historical novels and the contemporary struggle for Macedonia. Yet it is clear that these two

novels are allegorical: the Macedonian struggle of the twentieth century is transposed into the past; the dates and the characters' names are different, yet the place (including a large number of toponyms) is the same.<sup>8</sup>

Delta's interest in the modern Macedonian conflict as a theme in itself was aroused when she heard a soldier relate his experiences of Yannitsa Lake while she was working in a hospital in Alexandria in 1913 and thought it would make a marvellous story for children. In 1915 she wrote to Ioannis Demestichas, one of the Greek officers fighting there, to ask him for a first-hand account of his experiences.<sup>9</sup>

Yet twenty years were to pass before Delta published her first novel about the Macedonian Struggle of 1904–8. *Mangas* is narrated by a pet fox terrier (one character implausibly translates the name Mangas into English as 'Scamp') who relates the experiences of the family he lives with, a well-to-do Cretan family in Alexandria in 1906.<sup>10</sup> Vasilis, the family gardener, turns out to be from Macedonia and to have fought the Bulgarians there.<sup>11</sup> Not only that, but Vasilis (it is probably no coincidence that he bears the same name as Basil the Bulgar-Slayer) had been a member of Pavlos Melas' band; indeed, Melas had died in his arms. Vasilis tells the family his story when they demand to know why he hates their Bulgarian milkman (described by the narrator as blond-headed and flat-faced (p. 52) but by the normally mild-mannered Vasilis as a 'pig-nose' who 'wants wiping out like all the people of his place' [p. 299]). The children of the family assume that Vasilis has been fighting the Turks until he explains that the Greeks of Macedonia are struggling against the Bulgarians (p. 86); this is indicative of a widespread Greek misapprehension at the time. Thus Vasilis brings first-hand information about Macedonia, Pavlos Melas and the Struggle to the well-to-do Greeks of Alexandria who have hitherto been unaware of them; the master of the house, who had not connected his Bulgarian milkman with the Macedonian Struggle, now decides to change milkman! At the end of the novel Vasilis goes off to Macedonia with two teenage members of the family and the dog Mangas to resume the struggle. Vasilis's narrative of Pavlos Melas' exploits and death (pp. 310ff.) is based closely on the book by Pavlos Melas' widow<sup>12</sup> and on the memoirs of Germanos Karavangelis, former Metropolitan of Kastoria, who had dictated them at Delta's behest.<sup>13</sup>

*In the Secret Places of the Marsh*, which is the focus of the present article, was published two years after *Mangas*, in 1937. It employs a third-person 'omniscient' narration (though the narrator deliberately withholds information for the sake of suspense). The time-span here is shorter than in the Byzantine novels; there are more details, and there is more of a 'close-up' treatment of

characters. *In the Secret Places* can be seen as the fruit of Delta's twenty-year research into the history of the Macedonian Struggle. During this period she asked a number of *Makedonomachoi* to dictate their experiences for her, and from 1932 onwards she carried out research in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In *In the Secret Places*, as in her other three Macedonian novels, Delta takes a historical situation and historical characters and inserts a small number of fictional characters (mostly young people, and including women and children) whose chief role in the plot is to facilitate the success of the historical heroes in their endeavours. Yet in *In the Secret Places*, in contrast to the previous three books, she concentrates more on narrating the actions of the historical characters than those of the fictional personages.<sup>14</sup>

In this novel there are perhaps five factors that contribute to 'identity': (i) race (reflected in the characters' physical appearance), (ii) geography (where the characters live), (iii) the language the characters speak, (iv) national or ethnic consciousness (the concepts 'national' and 'ethnic' could not be distinguished in Greek at the time), and (v) religion (not only whether a character is Christian or Moslem but which religious authority he or she feels loyalty to). In relation to the last of these factors, the term 'Bulgarian' is applied in Delta's novel – as it was in Macedonia before 1912 – not only to Bulgarian nationals but also to inhabitants of Macedonia who owed allegiance to the Bulgarian Exarchate, which split from the Orthodox Patriarchate in 1870. To these five factors we could add secondary characteristics such as dress. These factors are difficult, if not impossible, to extricate from each other in the novel; nevertheless, it must be remembered that the real situation was extremely complex, and perhaps Delta, by not presenting it in black and white as she tended to do in her Byzantine novels, is subtly depicting a fluid situation that is more or less faithful to reality.

From the beginning, *In the Secret Places* transports the reader up to Macedonia, to the lake of Yannitsa (known locally as the Valtos or Marsh), which is being used as a hideout by both Greek and Bulgarian guerillas and where, in 1906, one of the heroes of the novel, the local teenager Apostolis, guides some Greek officers who have just arrived from Greece (these latter are historical characters). Vasilis and his two young friends (with their dog Mangas) arrive almost exactly half-way through the novel, and from then on their fates become intertwined.

The two characters who are presented to the reader at the very beginning of the novel are the fifteen-year-old Apostolis and the considerably younger Yovan.<sup>15</sup> Apostolis, an orphan, is the central fictional character of the novel. He

is presented as being totally Greek. He can be seen as a spirit of the place: he acts as a guide to the Greek officers because of his phenomenal knowledge of the landscape and the *monopatia* (by which are meant not only the paths on dry land but the passage-ways through the reeds of the lake), his ability to cover prodigious distances very quickly on foot, and his facility for merging with the landscape and moving about undetected by the enemy; he is bilingual in Greek and in the local Slav language, which he speaks with a local accent, and he also speaks Turkish. He knows the *makedonitiki dialektos* (i.e. the local Slav dialect) as intimately as he knows the *katatopia* (the ins and outs of the terrain); in this way language and landscape are identified. Apostolis is thus usefully able to pose as a 'Bulgarian' when he is on his numerous spying missions<sup>16</sup> and is also able to act as an interpreter between the Greeks from outside Macedonia and the local Slavophones. On one occasion, even when he is not deliberately posing as a Bulgarian, he walks along whistling a Bulgarian war song (p. 163).<sup>17</sup> Amid the shifting loyalties of so many Macedonian peasants, he works only for the Greeks. When Agras arrives, the latter gives Apostolis 'the sense of Hellenism, of pride and the love of freedom' (p. 524), an explicit consciousness that consolidates what has hitherto been a vague and unformulated sense of being Greek. This new *national* consciousness, be it noted, is based on quite different factors from loyalty to the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Even Vasilis the Bulgar-hater speaks '*slavomakedonika* like the creature of the place he was' (p. 296). Once again language is identified with place: both the land and the language of its people consist, at least in part, of alien elements that must be assimilated to Hellenism. (It is ironic to note that at the time of publication, in 1937, the speaking of Slavo-Macedonian in public was banned by the Metaxas regime.)

As for Yovan, he is ostensibly a *Voulgaropaido* (pp. 24, 26), and Apostolis addresses him in 'Bulgarian' (p. 12), by which Delta means 'Slavo-Macedonian', the local Slavonic dialect. As a Bulgarian-speaker Yovan too is easily able to spy on the 'Bulgarians'. Nevertheless, like Vasilis in *Mangas*, he has a secret that is not revealed until much later in the novel: he is really Thodorakis, Vasilis' son, who was abducted by the 'Bulgarians' (i.e. Slavophone Macedonians who identify with Bulgaria and the Exarchate). These people killed his mother and grandmother, and he has been brought up from then on by a 'Bulgarian'; in the process he has forgotten virtually all his Greek and speaks only 'Bulgarian'. Although Delta may not have intended such a reading (and she certainly doesn't make such an interpretation explicit), Yovan's experiences seem to replicate, within a single individual, those of all

the Slavophone Macedonians over the past centuries and in the years to come, as these experiences were imagined by Dragoumis and others. According to this reading, the Slav-speaking Macedonians are genetically Greek but have been violently snatched from their ancestral language and culture and have learned to speak Bulgarian; nevertheless, their souls continue to be Greek, and once they have been sent to school to be taught Greek *grammata*, as Yovan is sent by Apostolis, they will be transformed into Greeks again and eventually returned to their rightful fold.<sup>18</sup>

Both in the text of the novel and on the two maps included in the volume, the toponyms are the traditional ones, neither the ancient Greek ones nor the new ones that have been imposed by the Greek state since 1912. Most of these toponyms are of Slavic or Turkish origin.<sup>19</sup> Delta also uses a number of local words (again mostly of Slavic or Turkish origin) for items that are peculiar to the place, such as items of clothing and furniture, and in particular the term *plava* for the punt that is the characteristic mode of transport on the lake (each of these terms is glossed in a footnote). The existence of non-Greek toponyms and other non-Greek words is one of the features that make the area exotic and alien to the military men who arrive there from Greece. Furthermore, the maps included in the novel don't show the post-1913 state frontiers, so that the impression is given that the way Macedonia came to be carved up between Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria was by no means a foregone conclusion.

In Delta's Byzantine novels Macedonia is inhabited only by Greeks (Hellenes, never *Romaioi* or *Romioi*) and Bulgarians. In *In the Secret Places*, she normally calls the local people either Greek or Bulgarian; yet there are also references to Albanian shepherds who are hostile to the Greeks (p. 38), and 'Rumanians' (by which she means Vlachs) who often betray the Greek guerilla bands, allying with the Bulgarians to destroy the *Graikoi* (p. 379). In addition, there are Turks. Yet the situation as Delta presents it is confused. In one frequently quoted key passage, she states that, despite differences of nationality and religion, the language of all the inhabitants was one and the same, namely '*makedonitiki*, a mixture [...] of Slav and Greek' (p. 44). (It is not clear whether she is implying that this was everyone's first language or simply that everybody could speak it.) The commonly held view in Greece that the language spoken by the people whom the Greek-speakers of Macedonia still today call the *dopii* (locals) is a mixture of Slav and Greek is wildly inaccurate from a linguistic point of view; what leads to this view is that, while the grammar of the language (which, linguistically speaking, is what defines the character of a language) is Slavonic, it contains a large number of Greek loanwords (besides Turkish and others).<sup>20</sup> The representation of the local

language as a *mixture* of Slav and Greek, just as the population is largely made up of a mixture of Greeks and Bulgarians, leads logically to the idea that both language and people can be dragged in either one direction or the other, so as to become ‘purely Greek’ or ‘purely Bulgarian’.

There are other occasions too where Delta uses the term *makedonitiki dialektos* (pp. 70, 286) to refer to the Slav language spoken in the region. We may recall that both Pavlos Melas, in at least one letter to his wife, and Dragoumis call this language *makedoniki*: indeed, Dragoumis, who also claims it is a mixture, argues that ‘Macedonian’ is the correct term for this language, which the Bulgarians, he says, misleadingly call ‘Bulgarian’.<sup>21</sup>

In the passage quoted above (p. 44 of the novel), Delta claims that before the Bulgarian Exarchate was declared schismatic by the Patriarch of Constantinople in 1872, the only ‘*ethniki syneidisi*’ (national or ethnic consciousness?) of the people of Macedonia (whether they were Greeks or Bulgarians, though it isn’t clear whether her distinction is based on their language or their ‘race’) was ‘*makedoniki*’. Since then, however, the people of Macedonia have become split into ‘Patriarchist Greeks’ and ‘Exarchist Bulgarians’; thenceforth, ‘Greeks and Bulgarians had been frenziedly tearing each other apart in their struggle as to who would displace the other from the Turkish-occupied territory’ (p. 45). One of the confusing factors in Delta’s book is that, as I have already said, the term *Ellines* is applied both to Greeks from outside Macedonia and to Macedonians who have Greek consciousness, while similarly ‘Bulgarian’ is used to mean both Bulgarians from Bulgaria and Macedonians with a Bulgarian consciousness. Only occasionally does Delta use the term *Ellinomakedones* to distinguish them from the *evzones* from outside Macedonia (p. 118), though she also uses *Makedones* to refer to Macedonians with Greek consciousness.<sup>22</sup>

‘As in Byzantine times,’ writes Delta, ‘the populations were so mixed that it was difficult to distinguish a Greek from a Bulgarian – the two races that predominated’ (p. 44). I assume she is referring to physical characteristics, including not only bodily features but modes of dress. Yet the dog Mangas, according to his master, is able to distinguish Greeks from Bulgarians by smell, for ‘the Greeks have a different smell from the Bulgarians or from other foreigners’ (p. 279). Elsewhere in the novel, a Patriarchist named Yovannis, who is killed by the Turks after awakening the Greek consciousness of the Bulgarian-speakers of Ramel (today renamed Rachona) and returning them to the Patriarchal fold (p. 49), is betrayed by a man who is described as ‘a typical Slav, with small cunning eyes [...], a hard, pitiless mouth and a shallow, narrow forehead’ (p. 52); here it’s not clear whether the specific facial characteristics



that follow the words ‘typical Slav’ are intended to apply only to this one individual or to all Slavs. At one point Apostolis tells his little friend Yovan that all Bulgarians are ‘fat-nosed, pig-nosed’, yet he observes that Yovan’s nose is ‘straight and thin’ (p. 66). Now if the chief feature distinguishing Greeks from Bulgarians is their consciousness (i.e. chiefly which church authority they support), there should be no difference in facial features between one and the other;<sup>23</sup> it is clear that here, as in other instances in her novel, Delta is adopting a racist attitude.

If Delta is confused about the decisiveness of racial characteristics, she certainly makes it clear that the language one speaks is not necessarily a mark of one’s national or ethnic identity. Already in *Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Blood* (1907) Dragoumis had depicted his hero, his *alter ego* Alexis, telling the Bulgarian officer who shares his prison cell in Salonica, ‘I don’t know that the language that one speaks is sufficient proof of the *ethnismos* of a people’; and he goes on to say that the Slavophone Macedonians lost their Greek language in the same way as the (proto-)Bulgarians lost theirs (which he calls ‘Hunno-Tartar’).<sup>24</sup> When the Slavs (among whom he includes, I assume, the Slavified Bulgarians) arrived in Macedonia, he continues unconvincingly, the locals had to mix their language (Greek) with Slavic in order to communicate with ‘those savages, who were unable to learn Greek’ (pp. 98-9). Delta too casts racial slurs on the Bulgarians, characterizing them as savage and uncivilized (p. 44).<sup>25</sup> As for the racial characteristics of the Greeks, Elektra the schoolteacher in *In the Secret Places* teaches her pupils that ‘Our race is the oldest, the most glorious, the most civilized, the most poetic!’ (p. 60).

Although Delta doesn’t seem to believe the story that the Slavophone Macedonians are the descendants of Greeks who lost their language (like Yovan in *In the Secret Places*), she certainly concurs with Dragoumis on his first point, namely that language isn’t sufficient proof of someone’s *ethnismos*. *In the Secret Places* is full of characters who speak ‘Bulgarian’ as their mother tongue yet are fervent supporters of the Greek cause. Strangely, some of these are called *Voulgaroi*, while others are described as simply *voulgarofonoi*, with no clear distinction made between them. For instance, there is Agras’s guide, the ‘Bulgarian’ Barba-Paskal, a former *komitadji* (pro-Bulgarian guerrilla fighter) who doesn’t speak Greek well but has joined the Greek side (pp. 82, 156). Then there is Kapetan Gonos from Yannitsa, a Bulgarophone *Makedonas* (but decidedly not a Bulgarian) who had fought with the Bulgarians for an independent Macedonia but had subsequently joined the Greeks and become a ‘*fanatikos Ellinas Patriarchikos*’ (pp. 83, 86, 155).<sup>26</sup> And there are many others (including the famous Kapetan Kottas: see the footnote on p. 321), who are

Bulgarophone yet ‘genuine Greek patriots’ (p. 295) and ‘Greeks in their soul’ (p. 364).<sup>27</sup>

Delta talks about ‘Greek villages’ (p. 19) – and even the occasional ‘*ellinikotato chorio*’ (p. 45) – while there are other villages that are ‘*voulgarofona kai voulgarofrona*’ (‘Bulgarian in language and sentiments’: p. 462). This means that their inhabitants are primarily loyal to the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarian Exarchate respectively (and, secondarily, to the Greek and Bulgarian states). There are also mixed villages: one of the Bulgarian villages, Yandista, is called a ‘voulgarochoro’ (p. 286), perhaps by analogy with *voulgaropaido*. Some villages ‘*voulgarizan*’ (‘went Bulgar’) under pressure from the *komitadjis*, but the bravest of their Patriarchist inhabitants ‘insisted on confessing their [Greek] nationality’ (p. 367: compare the concept of ‘confession of faith’). Then there is the village of Bozets (now renamed Athyra), between Yannitsa and the Axios, a ‘nest of *komitadjis*’ (p. 368); these guerrillas are hidden by the ‘Bulgarizing’ inhabitants, while ‘the few Greeks of the village’, including the priest and the schoolteacher Eftthalia (p. 134), are known to the rest as Grecomans (p. 377).<sup>28</sup> Bozets is one of the villages whose inhabitants Kapetan Nikiforos and his band enable to ‘return to Hellenism’ (p. 381). It is as though these people, under influence of the satanic *komitadjis*, had strayed from the path of righteousness until they were redeemed by the saintly Greek officers and their Greek bands.

A noticeable feature of Delta’s novel is that none of the characters who have Greek as their mother tongue is depicted as speaking in a Macedonian dialect of *Greek*, with the exception of the older inhabitants of a single village, Koulakia, whose dialect is represented in the dialogue in a totally inaccurate manner (pp. 15–20, 210ff.), with vowels being dropped where in reality they would have been pronounced. The dialogues in which all the rest of the Greek-speaking characters speak (including Apostolis and even the daughter of the Koulakiot Barba-Lambros) are recorded in standard Greek, although this phenomenon is not explicitly referred to, nor is any explanation offered for it.

As for the Turks, the schoolteacher Elektra hates them because they had killed her family, yet she still sees the Bulgarians as the common enemy; unlike Apostolis, she speaks Bulgarian with a foreign accent. Agras has a Turkish friend and collaborator called Halil Bey (a historical character), who equally loathes the *komitadjis* for disturbing the peace. One village, inhabited entirely by Orthodox Christians, belongs to a Turkish agha who protects them from the *komitadjis* (p. 30). The Turkish language is sometimes useful as a lingua franca or interlingua, as when Kapetan Nikiforos finds himself communicating with a Bulgarian villager through the intermediary of a non-Macedonian Greek who knows Turkish (p.366)!

A certain amount of humour is generated by the long-suffering peasants of the Niaousa (today Naousa) region who are so fed up with 'Greek-Bulgarian mutual quarrelling, Rumanian treachery, Serbian propaganda, Turkish pressures' that they declare themselves gypsies and refuse to send their children to any of the schools so that they won't be the target of revenge from one of the other camps. (Curiously there is hardly any other mention of Serbs in Delta's novel.) In the towns of the region the mild, peaceable and gentlemanly Agras puts a temporary stop to the 'racial hatred' that has kept Greeks and Bulgarians separate by preaching reconciliation among Christians for the liberation of Macedonia from the Turks (pp. 462–3). It is his Christ-like mission to make the Greeks and Bulgarians 'love their enemies' that brings about Agras' death at the hands of Zlatan and his gang.<sup>29</sup>

The novel ends inconclusively, with Agras dead, and his mission, as well as that of the other characters, unaccomplished. Some of the characters, such as Mitsos and Elektra, leave Macedonia; yet Apostolis and Vasilis, the spirits of the place, remain there, vowing to continue the struggle until Macedonia is liberated. Apostolis passes up the opportunity to study and remains behind as a guide to the Greek bands.

Like Dragoumis, Delta believes Macedonia and the Macedonians are Greek at the most profound level, whatever they may seem to be on the surface. (The Bulgarians of Bulgaria want 'to make Greek Macedonia Bulgarian' as they have already done with 'the completely Greek Eastern Rumelia': p. 43.) When Macedonian peasants declare themselves as Greeks, this is presented as a free choice on their part, whereas they declare themselves as Exarchists only under duress (in the shape of *komitadji* terrorism). This implicit and unquestioning belief in the Greekness of Macedonia does not mean, of course, that Dragoumis and Delta believed Macedonia could be won by the Greeks without a struggle. In *Martyrs' and Heroes' Blood*, Dragoumis' attitude is quite cynical: he sees the Macedonian peasant as *disponible*: whether he will be a Patriarchist or a schismatic will depend on 'who will fish him'. For Dragoumis, Macedonia is up for grabs: 'Macedonia belongs to whoever will take it' – i.e. by force.<sup>30</sup> This is the view, influenced by Nietzsche, that whichever proves to be the stronger nation *deserves* to have Macedonia.

Writing after the event, Delta could afford to be both more confident and less cynical about the outcome of the struggle. As Admiral Ioannis Demestichas, the real-life Kapetan Nikiforos of the Valtos, whose memoirs were among the sources used by Delta when writing the book, wrote to her after reading her novel, she had rescued the struggles of the *Makedonomachoi* from oblivion, presenting them 'beautified and refined [...] as a lesson and

incentive to our youth'.<sup>31</sup> Taking our cue from these statements of Demestichas, we may draw two conclusions: first, that, through Delta's novel, the historical exploits of Agras, Nikiforos, and their comrades have become legendary; and, secondly, that what Greek youth has gained from reading Delta's novel over the generations is an image of a Macedonia which was naturally and rightfully Greek, but which had to be redeemed through self-sacrifice from the hands of its usurpers. Perhaps most significantly of all, Delta's book turned readers' attention away from the Greek struggle against the Turks to the Greek struggle against the Bulgarians (and the Slavs in general) – a struggle that would become topical once again during the 1940s. It is significant that the second edition of both *Mangas* and *In the Secret Places* appeared in 1947, while 1946 saw the publication of the fifth edition of *Gia tin patriida* and the fourth edition of *In the Time of the Bulgar-Slayer*.

Ever since it was drained in 1927, the Valtos of Yannitsa has no longer been there to see. Thus *In the Secret Places of the Marsh* is the ultimate memorial and reminder of the struggles that took place there: a specific place has ceased to exist, and it has been 're-placed' by a book that can be transported from place to place.<sup>32</sup> The fact that Delta's novel is an adventure story intended for children has meant that it has been far more widely read and has had a far more profound impact on the Greek consciousness than has Dragoumis' book, which lacks the impetus of a suspenseful narrative structure. The chauvinist representation of the national struggles in Delta's novel is perhaps one of the chief factors that have created the Greeks' mental picture of the twentieth-century history of Macedonia. This in turn helps to explain the huge popular outcry in the early 1990s when the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia declared independence under the name Macedonia – a name which, for the Greeks, denotes a geographical area which they have been led to believe has always and rightfully been theirs.

#### NOTES

1 P.S. Delta, *Παιδικές σελίδες. Για την πατρίδα. Η καρδιά της Βασιλοπούλας* (London n.d. [1909]), *Τον καιρό του Βουλγαροκτόνου* (London n.d. [1911]), *Μάγκας* (Athens 1935), *Στα μυστικά του Βάλτου* (Athens 1937). References to *Στα μυστικά* are to the 39th edn. (Athens 1993).

2 P.S. Delta, *Παραμύθι χωρίς όνομα* (London n.d. [1910]); I. Kambanellis, *Παραμύθι χωρίς όνομα*, now published in I. Kambanellis, *Θέατρο*, vol. 2 (Athens 1979) 17–124; P. Theodoridis, *Το ηχομυθιστόρημα του Καπετάν Άγρα* (Athens 1994); Alki Zei, *Ο μεγάλος περίπατος του Πέτρου* (57th edn, Athens 1997) 36–7, 70–1, 101, 122, 144. For Zei's use of Delta's novels see Alexandra Zervou, "'Για την πατρίδα'" στον "Μεγάλο περίπατο του Πέτρου", *Διαβάζω*, no. 300 (9 December 1992) 89–95. In addition, the novel *Και με το φως του λύκου επανέρχονται* (Athens 1993) by Zyranna Zateli contains indirect references to *Στα μυστικά* in the last two

'stories', where the family go and spend six weeks near a lake (particularly pp. 561–2). The name Gougli in the novel suggests Volvi, near Zатели's native Sochos.

3. For Delta's life see her autobiographical memoirs *Πρώτες ενθυμήσεις*, edited by her grandson P.A. Zannas (Athens 1981), and *Αναμνήσεις* 1899, translated from the French by Voula Louvrou (Athens 1991).

4. For Delta's own account of her relationship with Dragoumis see her memoir *Αναμνήσεις* 1921 (Athens 1996), edited by her great-grandson Alekos Zannas. For a well documented and highly readable account of the Macedonian Struggle see D. Livanios, "'Conquering the souls": nationalism and Greek guerrilla warfare in Ottoman Macedonia, 1904–1908', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 23 (1999) 195–221.

5. For the correspondence between Delta and Schlumberger see *Lettres de deux amis. Une correspondance entre Pénélope S. Delta et Gustave Schlumberger* (ed. X. Lefcoparidis, Athens 1962). According to Vasileios Laourdas (*Η Πηνελόπη Δέλτα και η Μακεδονία* (Thessaloniki 1958) 14), the Greek translator of the *Épopée* (Athens 1905), in his prologue, connects the feats of Basil with the current situation in Macedonia.

6. Examples of these activities are the Vyzantiologiki Etaireia, founded by Nikos Veis, with its journal *Βυζαντις* (1909–12); the popular novel *Βασίλειος Βουλγαροκτόνος* by A.N. Kyriakou (1910); and the appointment of Adamantios Adamantiou as the first professor of the history of Byzantine art and culture at Athens University (1912) and first director of the Byzantine Museum in Athens (1914). Delta planned a third Byzantine novel, *Το γκρέμισμα* (*The Collapse*), on which she was working on and off between 1911 and 1927; the incomplete text has been edited by Marianna Spanaki (Athens 1983). This novel is set in the period 1071–81, from the capture of the Emperor Romanos Diogenes after the battle of Manzikert to the accession of Alexios Comnenos. The title refers both to 'the beginning of the end' of the Byzantine empire and, increasingly, to the collapse of bourgeois progressive ideals in contemporary Greece after the electoral defeat of Venizelos in 1920; the fact that Delta's attention turns here from Macedonia to Asia Minor is significant.

7. See, for instance, her letter of 1910 to Alexandros Delmouzos, in *Αλληλογραφία της Π.Σ. Δέλτα. 1906–40*, ed. X. Lefcoparidis (Athens n.d.) 205.

8. See, for instance, the letter sent to Delta in 1911 by Bishop Germanos Karavangelis, who tells her that reading *Το κρό* he was reminded of his own struggles against the same enemy in Macedonia (*Αλληλογραφία*, 394).

9. Laourdas, *Η Πηνελόπη Δέλτα*, 22–3.

10. Although the Benakis and Choremis families were from Chios rather than Crete, it is clear that the family environment evoked in *Μάγκας* is similar to Delta's own.

11. One of the characters describes Vasilis as a *Makedonomachos* (P.S. Delta, *Μάγκας* (Athens 1994) 306) even though this term, based on earlier terms such as *Marathonomachos*, seems not to have become current till later.

12. *Παύλος Μελάς. Βιογραφία* (Alexandria 1926) was written by Melas's widow Natalia, the sister of Ion Dragoumis, but published anonymously.

13. Laourdas, *Η Πηνελόπη Δέλτα*, 24. Karavangelis' memoirs are published as *Ο Μακεδονικός Αγών. Απομνημονεύματα* (Thessaloniki 1984).

14. It is relevant to point out here that all the titles of Delta's Macedonian novels except *Μάγκας* are adverbial phrases, whether of manner, time and place. With this canine exception, none of the titles contains the name of a historical or fictional hero.

15. Laourdas (ibid., 43) claims, I do not know on what basis, that these were historical characters.

16. We can compare the espionage activities of Nikitas, Constantine and Michael in *Τον καιρό*, who also speak Bulgarian.

17. Alexandra Ioannidou ('Γλώσσες και εθνικές ομάδες της Μακεδονίας στο έργο της Π.Σ. Δέλτα'. *Βαλκανικά Σύμμεικτα* 7 (1995) 156) claims, perhaps rightly, that Apostolis whistles the Bulgarian song so as to 'disorientate the enemy'.

18. According to Haris Exertzoglou ('Shifting boundaries: language, community and the "non-Greek-speaking Greeks"', *Historein* 1 (1999) 75–92), this version of events goes back at least to

Ioannis Kalostypis, *Η Μακεδονία* (Athens, 2nd edn 1896) 139–44. Otherwise respectable Greek linguists too have argued that the Slavophones of Macedonia are descended from Greeks, but that they or their ancestors were seduced from the Greek language by the Bulgarians (see, e.g., M. Triantafyllidis, ‘Η γλώσσα μας στα σχολεία της Μακεδονίας’, first published in 1915 and reprinted in his *Άπαντα*, 4 (Thessaloniki 1963) 253–83, esp. 253–7).

19 There are a very few instances where the narrator uses the Hellenic name while the characters use the old Slavic or Turkish name: e.g. Axios vs Vardaris, and Loudias vs Kara-Azmaq: these particular names appear in pairs on the maps.

20 The chief publication in support of the theory that the language of the indigenous modern Macedonians is not a Slav dialect but a dialect of Greek is K.I. Tsioukas, *Συμβολαί εις την διγλωσσίαν των Μακεδόνων εκ συγκρίσεως της σλαβοφανούς Μακεδονικής γλώσσης προς την Ελληνικήν* (Athens 1907; recently reprinted during the new ‘Macedonian crisis’ of the 1990s), in which, by a perversion of historical linguistics, the author, a local schoolteacher who makes no claim to know any Slav language, ‘proves’ that basic items in the Macedonian vocabulary (which are in fact common Slav words) are derived from Greek. This book appeared during the Macedonian Struggle. Later, during the Greek Civil War, another local schoolteacher, Georgios D. Georgiadis, published *Το μιξόγλωσσον εν Μακεδονία ιδίωμα και η εθνολογική κατάστασις των ομιλούντων τούτο Μακεδόνων* (Edessa 1948). Georgiadis, a Slavophone himself, sets out to demonstrate that his language is a mixture of Slav, Greek, Latin and Turkish: like Tsioukas before him, he concentrates his attention purely on vocabulary rather than phonology, morphology and syntax.

21 Ion Dragoumis, *Μαρτύρων και ηρώων αίμα* (2nd edn, Athens 1914), 98. In view of Dragoumis’ attitude, it is ironic that today Greek officials and many Greek linguists refuse to countenance the existence of a Macedonian language.

22 Agras uses the term *Ellinomakedonas* jokingly about himself. Since he feels himself to be Macedonian he isn’t afraid of going to meet a fellow Macedonian – something which inevitably leads to his death at the hands of his Bulgarian enemies.

23 In addition, Apostolis symbolically changes Yovan’s Bulgarian clothes for Greek ones once he has re-learned the Greek language (p. 141): thus a parallel is drawn between language and dress, which can readily be changed – more readily perhaps than ‘consciousness’.

24 The Turkic Proto-Bulgars were converted to Christianity in 864 under their leader Boris; this facilitated their assimilation with the already Christianized Slavs.

25 We may compare the words of Constantine Diogenes, the Katepano of Thessaloniki in *Το καιρό*: ‘give no credence to a Bulgar’s words’ (22nd edn, Athens 1980, 361) – this despite the fact that in the same novel two of the Greek heroes capture the Bulgarian villain Ivatzes by trickery, and all of the novels depict Greek characters going about in disguise, i.e. claiming to be what they are not. With the phrase quoted above compare Nikiforos’s words to Yovan in *Στα μυστικά*: ‘you don’t even know Greek. How am I to believe you?’ (p. 110). Delta suggests that, unlike Greek, Bulgarian is an intrinsically *false* language.

26 Oddly, Apostolis appears surprised at this inconsistency (p. 83).

27 Ioannidou, *Γλώσσες και εθνικές ομάδες*, 151 quotes Germanos Karavangelis as using this last phrase too.

28 In a footnote on p. 164 Delta incorrectly glosses ‘Grecomans’ as the name used by the Bulgarians for the Greeks, whereas in fact it was a name reserved by the Bulgarian Slavophones for the pro-Greek Slavophones.

29 See p. 508. We may recall the saintly martyr Pavlos Melas in chapter 10 of Dragoumis’ *Μαρτύρων* and the fact that Delta herself published a *Life of Christ* in 1925. Apostolis too bears a symbolic name: he becomes Agras’ apostle after the latter’s death (this is already adumbrated in the word *apostoli* [mission] as early as pp. 59–60).

30 Dragoumis, op. cit., pp. 14, 82.

31 *Αλληλογραφία*, p. 454. Compare Gregos’ words (*Στα μυστικά*, 406), which introduce a rare self-referential note into Delta’s novel:

Every struggle is savage! Always! We don't know the whole story about 1821, because those who witnessed it and wrote about it left a lot of ugly scenes out of their narrative, or else toned down the savagery. And so it became a legend, which isn't always faithful [sc. to the truth]. The same will happen when they write about this one. The Bulgarians will say we were wild beasts and we'll say we were angels. And yet all of us – d'you hear? – all of us who've taken part in a struggle have been forced to shed blood, some justly and others unjustly.

**32** Note the spatial/geographical title of *Στα μυστικά*, as opposed to the temporal title of *Τον καιρό*, in which it is an epoch that has become a book.