



## El pintor de batallas

*Arturo Pérez-Reverte*

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## El pintor de batallas Arturo Pérez-Reverte

En una torre junto al Mediterráneo, en busca de la foto que nunca pudo hacer, un antiguo fotógrafo pinta un gran fresco circular en la pared: el paisaje intemporal de una batalla. Lo acompañan en la tarea un rostro que regresa del pasado para cobrar una deuda mortal, y la sombra de una mujer desaparecida diez años atrás. En torno a esos tres personajes, Arturo Pérez-Reverte ha escrito la más intensa y turbadora historia de su larga carrera de novelista. Deslumbrante de principio a fin, *El pintor de batallas* arrastra al lector, subyugado, a través de la compleja geometría del caos del siglo XXI: el arte, la ciencia, la guerra, el amor, la lucidez y la soledad, se combinan en el vasto mural de un mundo que agoniza

## El pintor de batallas Details

Date : Published March 5th 2006 by Alfaguara (first published 2006)

ISBN : 9789870403401

Author : Arturo Pérez-Reverte

Format : Paperback 304 pages

Genre : War, Art, European Literature, Spanish Literature, Fiction, Cultural, Spain

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## From Reader Review El pintor de batallas for online ebook

### Dariana says

"The Painter of Battles" is the most discouraging, harsh and sad novel that Arturo Perez-Reverte wrote. But it's definitely the most lucid and ambitious.

A four days journey, full of stories about love, death, guilt and violence, with an unexpected end.

In the South of Spain, in a tower on the Mediterranean shore, a former photographer paints an enormous circular fresco: a battle landscape, where he wants to cover all the images he could not capture on his film. To accomplish his goal, he will be helped by a character returned from the past for his revenge and the shadow of the loved one, that died ten years ago.

Surprising from the beginning to the end, the novel carries the reader through the geometry of the 20th century chaos.

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### Kirstie says

If I could give half ratings, this book would score a 4 1/2 stars...it has it's flaws but quite a few passages are quite brilliant.

The basic premise is the life story, looking towards the past, of a famous war photographer. He's isolated and painting a huge battle to rival anything he's seen in real life throughout all of the countries and people he's photographing at war.

But very soon within the first part of the book, he's confronted by a man who was the subject of one of his photos...the man claims his life has been ruined by that photo, perhaps even more so than after he lost his wife and son. This is a man who has been studying our protagonist for years...every photograph has proved to be a research point up until this moment of confrontation.

What ensues for the majority of the novel, besides intermittent graphic details of war, is a philosophical debate in which the major question at hand is what responsibility lies inherent within the photographer. It's also a story, in many ways of love lost...a love that seems quite honestly rather epic even only from the male protagonist's perspective.

Besides, it has a good ending.

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### Natalie Foster says

Commenting on a book one has read in translation is a bit dicey. Whose language am I praising? Even in translation, however, it is clear Perez-Reverte is a gifted teller-of-tales and creator of character, of mood, and

of story. "The Flanders Panel" was the first of his books I read and I have been hooked ever since. If you haven't read that, run -- do not walk -- to your favorite independent bookseller and hope they have it on the shelf as well as this one. Now -- to "The Painter of Battles." Walk this way ...

A highly lauded photographer of modern war lives in isolation in a lighthouse and paints the interior walls with scenes of conflicts. The subject of one of his famous photos intrudes on him, and the conversation between photographer and subject unrolls. Read this book and pay attention. Listen to both sides of the argument. Argue a bit with yourself. Put it down for a while and think about what is being said, what is being painted, and what has been photographed. Courtesy of the author's narrative gifts, you will see the painting and the photos and the events they capture.

This is why we read -- none of us will probably ever meet, let alone have the opportunity to listen in on, two such protagonists discussing the impact each has had on the other's life. This book was initially difficult to get in to; stick with it for about 25 pages and soon you will be swimming in the warm flow of the language. Once that happened, I could put the book down, but then I found I would be plotting against the demands of my schedule to plan the time when I could pick it back up again. This is a challenging book, well worth reading. I was sorry when it ended, but then it's the sort of book that does not end just because the author stopped writing; the conversation continues.

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### **Brooke says**

I was wary coming into this one after having given up on the last Pérez-Reverte book I tried. This wariness was a little uncalled for, since I had immensely enjoyed three others he wrote, but in the end it was justified. I went back and forth between being intrigued and downright bored, and quite truthfully only the slim 200-page count convinced me to see it through.

The main character, Faulques, is a former war photographer who has retired to an old tower to paint a mural of battles, an attempt at catharsis after what he had seen and lost. A soldier who he had photographed, Markovic, shows up and announces that he is going to kill him, starting off a long conversation between the two regarding the nature of man and war.

I would say it would be characteristic of me to prefer actual plot to philosophizing in a novel, but to my surprise, every time the book left the main discussion and flashed back to the photographer's past and his relationship with his lover and their travels through war-torn areas, I nearly fell asleep. The lover, Olvido, is the sort of creature that only exists in fiction, or perhaps only in the minds of men who are dreamers who conjure up untouchable women one can never really know. She is prone to the most ridiculous, romantic (in both senses of the word) dialogue that no real person would ever consider saying. The descriptions of her reminded me of an article I read about overused elements in YA novels - "Does your character have magical green eyes? Do you keep mentioning them?" It seemed almost tragic to see it in literate fiction.

It was always with relief that I would return to the main conversation, leaving ridiculous Olvido behind. Pérez-Reverte was a war journalist himself, which adds considerable weight to the philosophizing. The conversation between Falques and Markovic is deep and uncomfortable and deserves more than two stars, but I resented Olvido's interruptions so much by the end that I can't bring myself to give it more.

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### **John says**

Arturo Perez-Reverte's *The Painter of Battles* is a compelling story of self-reflection, loss and suspense overlaid with a well-researched discussion of the history of images. If I were not already an art historian, this book may have inspired me to become one with its offering of romanticism and sentimentality that such a thought would once have entailed for me in my youth. But, of course, if I were not an art historian its many art historical references may have been too opaque to illuminate the story as they so clearly do for me now. Yes, sweet irony, yet another reason for me to so enjoy this book.

This was my first exposure to this author. I look forward to future encounters.

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### **Ally Armistead says**

Four out of five stars for "The Painter of Battles"--dark, beautiful, dense, intellectual. The story follows the odd final days of a retired war photographer, who has retreated into a watchtower in Italy to paint a ghastly war-themed mural and is encountered by a Croatian soldier he photographed years before.

Angry and grief-stricken at the loss of his wife and child, the Croatian soldier--who holds the photographer's portrait of him accountable for their deaths--intends to kill him, exact revenge, and show him the evils of his photographic exhibitionism. The Croatian visits nightly, and the majority of the novel is structured around these visits, each time revealing the motivation of the photographer and the nature of photography, how it captures the moment of life becoming death, order out of chaos, the angles and lines and geometry of the universe.

In the end we hope that the photographer has a good bone in his body--that his motives in photographing the maimed and raped and dead are just--but we discover a darkness beyond fathoming, and that even causes the Croatian to abandon his quest for revenge.

Highly recommended for anyone fascinated by war photography, the dark side of humanity, morality of the image, and dense, intellectual debates and language.

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### **Joyce Lagow says**

One of the many reasons why I love Perez-Reverte's books is that they follow no set formula or pattern except that they are all off-beat in their own way. But this one pushes the envelope, I think and in the end, after recovering from what is a very, very dark view of human nature, I think it is among his best, if not the best.[return][return]Perez-Reverte, before he took up writing full-time, was a war journalist; the list of those he covered includes Bosnia, Croatia, El Salvador, Lebanon, and the Sudan, among others. These are some of the bloodiest horrors of modern times, since too many of them were civil wars which are always the most vicious.[return][return]The protagonist in *Painter of Battles* is Faulkes who, until very recently, has been a war photojournalist. Like Perez-Reverte, Faulkes has covered all the major and most bloody wars of his lifetime, and has been very successful, winning prizes for individual photographs and publishing books of his

photos. But he is now retired. In his youth, he studied painting, but abandoned that when he realized he was not a top-flight artist. But now, he has taken up painting once more, this time to create a vast mural on the inside of an abandoned tower, which he has bought, on one of Spain's capes. No ordinary mural, it depicts war in the form of battles, both from the standpoint of those who fight them and of those who suffer from them. It isn't pretty.[return][return]Then one day, as he is nearing completion, one of his old photographs walks into his life.[return][return]That's the matrix that Perez-Reverte uses in what is basically a staggeringly dark reflection on human nature as revealed through war. I found it shattering.[return][return]There's no escaping the speculation that this is the summing up of the author's own experiences of 20th and 21st century horrors. I don't see how anyone comes through such experiences truly whole. If the book is even a pale reflection of what happened to Perez-Reverte, then he did not escape that fate.[return][return]Because of its emphasis on painting, the book describes a number of artists and their own paintings of battles; it left me very curious about these works, and I do intend to follow that curiosity up as best I can, living as I do in a country that has no major art museum where major works of art can be viewed. But I will do so as best as I can on the Internet and by means of books. At least that is a life-affirming result of reading a book which is not.[return][return]I personally view this as a major work, but it isn't for everyone.

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### **Sandie says**

The Painter of Battles is a beautifully written word picture encompassing everything from "the Butterfly effect", to art history lessons, to a morality homily on the futility of war and the evil that man bestows on his fellow man.

Perez-Reverte draws you into the story as he meticulously recounts (probably from his own experiences as a war journalist) example after example of the insanity of war and examines the cruelty and finality of its outcome. In essence, Perez-Reverte gives us and in depth look at the nature of man who he perceives as possessing an in-born inescapable evil that he has, utilizing his superior intelligence, refined through the centuries into an art form.

This story of two men, inescapably linked by a war, a chance encounter and a photograph, and the culmination of those events is mesmerizing. As the story progresses, their relationship becomes almost symbiotic in nature.

This is definitely not your "run of the mill" novel and Perez-Reverte is not your run of the mill writer. His fluent prose and evocative observations will fill your mind and soul like a fine dinner satisfies your hunger. Perez-Reverte has created his own "Butterfly Effect". By writing this book, he has effected the perception of his readers.

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### **Bettie? says**

Review

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## Louize says

Originally written here.

## SYMMETRY

After Isaac Newton laid his 3rd law of motion, almost every branch of science agreed with him. I suppose, even religion does. ***“For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.”*** It is the fundamental symmetry of the universe. Our every action draws an imaginary path, an effect. Sometimes even a small change may result to a large difference.

**Andrés Faulques**, a war photographer by profession, decided to leave his famous life and secluded himself in a tower by the sea, painting an extensive mural on its interior. A vision of nightmare: 26 centuries of the iconography of war.

*Because he couldn’t find, through the lens, “the definitive image; the both fleeting and eternal moment that would explain all things,” “the hidden rule that made order out of the implacable geometry of chaos.”*

One day an unexpected visitor came; introducing himself as **Ivo Markovic**, the subject in one of Faulques war photos, “The Face of Defeat”. And, announcing without swell that he intends to kill Faulques. But first, he wants the photographer to understand some important details.

*“I can’t just kill you,” he explains. “I need for us to talk first; I need to know you better, to be sure that you realize certain things. I want you to learn and understand. ... After that, I’ll be able to kill you.”*

The game was set, the terms were laid. But Markovic was puzzled by Faulques. The painter of battles is different from the war photographer he thought he knew. His visits were welcomed, followed by long philosophical conversations on war and the natures of man. The issues of responsibility and guilt were always present. And death was never far behind.

*“It’s here, under our skin,...In our genes. Only the artificial rules, culture, the varnish of successive civilizations keep man within bounds. Social conventions, laws. Fear of punishment.”*

The novel was both beautiful and tragic. The callousness of how **Arturo Pérez-Reverte** depicts war as art was something you cannot look away from. His prose will encourage you to look over Faulques’ shoulder and take a peek at the picture of suffering. Each was rendered in technical details. His philosophies on symmetry and violence through Faulques’ eyes can evoke a clash of feelings.

I have only Club Dumas -having read only that before this- to compare **The Painter of Battles** with. This book is different in many ways, but the strange element is also present. My only complaint is the incessant reference to the protagonist as **“the painter battles”**. Or maybe, Reverte have a certain point he wished to

drill that I totally missed. Arturo Pérez-Reverte is a great mind-bender and his games of mental-chess are something I have to get used too.

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## Biogeek says

A novel that may have been better as a short story. The premise, and some of the dialog in the first and last 50 pages, were intriguing. A retired and reclusive war photographer is visited by a Croat he once photographed retreating from a battle. That one photo, an award-winning one, had unexpected, and tragic, repercussions in the subject's life, and now he wants to kill the photographer. But not before the two engage in pages and pages of discussions about art, war, cruelty, death, love, responsibility and symmetry. Some of these conversations are fabulous, and some mind-numbingly boring.

A third character, the photographer's dead girlfriend, makes for an unwelcome addition to the story. I found myself skimming all the sections where she made an appearance. She is one of those characters that an author finds amazingly attractive in his head, but then ends up being horrible on the page. She seems cold and pretentious in almost every conversation, and wastes our time with lines like, "I heard once, or read, that if you over-analyze events you end up destroying the concept. Or is it the other way around? That concepts destroy events?"

This made me wonder, does a poorly rendered character destroy the novel, or does a bad novel destroy a character.

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## Πα?λος says

Ειναι το δε?τερο βιβλιο του Ρεβερτε που δι?βασα. Το πρ?το ?ταν η λ?σχη Δο?μας ? η σκι? του Ρισελι? το οπο?ο με ε?χε εντυπωσι?σει τ?σο πολυ που εδ? και τρ?α χρονια το μισ? αριστερ? μου χ?ρι ?χει ζωγραφιστε? με π?νακες του βιβλιου.

Δυστυχ?ς δε με ενθουσ?ασε τ?σο ο ζωγρ?φος των μαχ?v. Καλ? και ?ξυπνη ιστορ?α με πολλ?ς προεκτ?σεις αλλ? με αρκετ? φλυαρ?α. Η βασικ? ιδ?α συνοψ?ζεται στα εκε? ακ?λουθα:

Ο Φουλκες ειναι ?νας 50αρης πρ?ην φωτογρ?φος και νυν ζωγρ?φος απομονωμ?νος σε ?να Π?ργο στη Μεσ?γειο τον οπο?ο και "ντ?νει" με μια μεγ?λη τοιχογραφ?α που αναπαριστ? μ?χη η οπο?α με την σειρ? της κρ?βει μ?σα ?λες τις φρικαλεοτητες των διαφ?ρων πολ?μων που κ?λυψε ως φωτογρ?φος. Ξαφνικ? εμφαν?ζεται ?νας πρωταγωνιστ?ς μιας εκ των σημαντικ?τερων φωτογραφι?v που ε?χε τραβ?ξει ποτ? ο οπο?ος ο?τε λιγο ο?τε πολυ του εξομολογε?ται ?τι ?ρθε για να τον σκοτ?σει. Το αν θα τον σκοτ?σει αλλ? και το το θα ειπωθε? μεταξ? τους το διαβ?ζουμε στο περιεχ?μενο...

?πως προαν?φερα, ?ξυπνη πλοκ? με πολλαπλ? μην?ματα σχετικ? με την εμπορευματοπο?ηση του π?νου και του πολ?μου μ?σω των τεχν?v αλλ? και αρκετ? ?σκοπη φλυαρ?α για θ?ματα που δε φα?νονται να εξυπηρετο?v κ?ποιο σκοπ?.

Θα το πρ?τεινα μ?νο σε αναγν?στες του κατα τα αλλ? εξαιρετικο? Ρεβερτε καθ?ς αν κ?ποιος αποπειραθε? να διαβ?σει για πρ?τη φορ? τον Ισπαν? λογοτ?χνη, θα αδικηθε? απο το συγκεκριμ?νο βιβλιο.

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### **Jose Luis (Liantener) says**

La obra más intima, profunda e impactante del autor español, que se aleja de las novelas de misterio y suspenso anteriores, pero que resulta muy agradable.

Por lo regular evito las descripciones de contraportada, pero en esta ocasión, no hay mejor manera de definir la trama que lo que dice la contraportada del libro, así que la transcribiré tal cuál: En una torre junto al mediterráneo, en busca de la foto que nunca pudo hacer, un antiguo fotógrafo pinta un gran fresco circular en la pared: el paisaje intemporal de una batalla. Lo acompañan en la tarea un rostro que regresa del pasado para cobrar una deuda mortal, y la sombra de una mujer desaparecida diez años atrás.

Supongo que a partir de su inclusión en la Real Real Academia Española, Pérez Reverte decidió demostrar que este hecho no fue obra de la casualidad o del volumen de ventas. El lenguaje en esta novela es mucho más rebuscado que en sus otros libros, pero sin caer en el estilo que usa en "Las Aventuras del Capitán Alatriste". Esta es la voz de Pérez Reverte en su forma más filosófica y profunda. Sin duda alguna su personaje es muy parecido a él, un fotógrafo de guerra, y por lo tanto todas las reflexiones, pensamientos e ideas deben ser un reflejo de las propias, o por lo menos de gente cercana.

Cada personaje y cada idea nos ponen a pensar. Incluso cada frase del autor, llena de metáforas y pasión, se vuelve una reflexión. Encontré que éste es el libro más "referenciable" del autor. Hay infinidad de frases que ya quisiera uno poder recordar para utilizar en conversaciones civilizadas.

Un libro por demás disfrutable, que encantará a todos los fans del autor y a quienes gustan de la buena ficción literaria.

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### **Jim Fonseca says**

An internationally-known war photographer has hung up his camera and retired as a hermit to an abandoned structure near Barcelona. He is painting the entire interior of his lighthouse-type structure with a battle scene. It is a battle scene that transcends time, partly re-creating famous battle paintings from ancient ones to more modern ones like Guernica.

The painter's work is interrupted by a visitor, a former soldier that the photographer captured on film in Croatia and made famous. The soldier and his wife were of different ethnic groups in the conflict; not a good thing when war breaks out between the two ethnic groups. (I'm reminded of the violence suffered by a couple – an Arab man married to a French woman -- during the Algerian war of independence against France, the theme of the book *The Lovers of Algeria* by Anouar Benmalek.) The Croatian soldier was imprisoned and tortured; his wife and child were killed. He announces he is here to kill the photographer for bringing this curse down upon him.

Here the real story begins. The soldier who plans to kill the artist returns day after day. The two men discuss art, photography, life and death, violence, war, responsibility and guilt. There is a lot of technical talk about painting and photography: brushstrokes and shutter speeds.

The book is slow in parts. The author knows his subject: he was a war correspondent covering wars all over the world. The book is translated from the Spanish.

Paintings from top: The Battle Painting by Nocolas Poussin [fineartamerica.com](http://fineartamerica.com)

Guernica [pablopicasso.org](http://pablopicasso.org)

Battle of Little Big Horn by Edgar S. Paxton [paintingandframe.com](http://paintingandframe.com)

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### **Nevena says**

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### **Disha Bose O'Shea says**

A war photographer has retired to an isolated island off Costa Brava, where he spends his days painting a large mural on the insides of the walls of an old deserted watch tower. The painting is a summation of his experiences, his beliefs, his view of the world and war and art. He has lost the woman he loved and he is no longer a passive artist on battlefields, capturing a moment. Until, a man he had photographed in the past arrives on the island - to kill him.

The plot is fantastic, the writing and the sentiment are both moving. Although I can only imagine how much of it is lost in translation, but it is beautiful and atmospheric nonetheless. However, in my opinion it went on for very long. I have nothing against a mega-prose style of writing, but unfortunately it just didn't suit the lack of action or suspense that ideally a book should possess if they want to keep the reader interested.

Not to mention, Olvido - the protagonist's lover who died and who is introduced to us only through his memories of her. Picture a hard-to-get movie star, a beautiful and intensely artistic woman; a woman who spews intellectual thoughts while walking down a piazza completely oblivious to the fact that she is breaking the hearts of all the men who gaze upon her. This woman makes love passionately, follows our hero faithfully wherever he goes, her only flaw is perhaps that she is so perfect - yeah basically she was insufferable throughout the book.

Reader engrossed in the dialogue between the painter and the man from his past, as they discuss moral philosophy.

Olvido makes an entrance in the form of a memory, says something enchanting like:

“Every good painting has always aspired to be a landscape of another landscape not yet painted, but when the truth of a society coincided with that of the artist, there was no duplicity”

Reader: &\*%K off the page Olvido

Why you should read it:

Some very interesting discussions on war, morality, society

Graphic accounts and visuals of war crimes (the author was a war photographer himself)

Why you shouldn't read it:

It is the poster-child of modern mega prose

An unrealistic love story

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## **Tony says**

Perez-Reverte, Arturo. THE PAINTER OF BATTLES. (2006; Eng. trans. 2008). \*\*\*\*.

This is an author that must be read. His early novels, including “The Club Dumas,” “The Flanders Panel,” and “The Seville Communion” were historical crime novels (if they can be classified at all) that were unexcelled in their plotting and execution. This novel is very different from his earlier works. It is the story of Sr. Faulques who was a war photographer who retired in order to paint. During his career, he saw and photographed all the horrors of war in almost every country that was involved in conflict either internally or with bordering states since the Korean War. During that time, he met and fell in love with Olvido, a woman photographer whose interest in wars was not people, as was Faulques, but with objects, things. She was later killed by stepping on a land mine, which pushed Faulques over the edge. Faulques decided to retire to the coast of Spain, where he bought an old tower. His project was to cover the walls of the tower with paintings that depicted the horrors of war through the ages. Before starting on this, however, he studied previous paintings around the world by many of the masters on the same subject. He then narrowed down the number of painting he would borrow from to about twenty or so. His wars started from the beginnings of recorded history – the Trojan War – to the latest conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. After beginning his project, an unexpected visitor arrives at his door, and challenges the painter to remember him. Faulques struggles to remember the face, but cannot do so. The visitor then tells him that he was the subject of an iconic photo that Faulques took years ago in a war zone, and which won the photographer many prizes. Faulques then asked his visitor why he had come looking for him. The visitor answers, “Because I’m going to kill you.” Turns out that the visitor, Ivo Markovic, was a Croatian involved in that recent war and had just gotten out of a concentration camp. He, too, was familiar with the same horrors that the photographer had endured during his career. These common experiences lead to a long dialog between the two that centers around not just the future fate of Faulques, but the nature of war, love, and human cruelty. The novel is a stunning exposition on

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morality and a deeply affecting discourse on life and art. Recommended.

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### **Kitty-Wu says**

Este libro me ha gustado en cierta manera y me ha cansado en otra. Se reconoce bastante al autor en el personaje de Faulques, y me parece interesante la introspección del personaje sobre el tema de la guerra y los horrores de la condición humana, especialmente en la confrontación con Ivo... pero Reverte me parece penosamente pedante en otros momentos, pretendiendo tener la verdad absoluta sobre el mundo y los hilos ocultos que lo mueven... no niego que seguramente, tanto el personaje como el autor, por sus experiencias vividas, tengan una visión y una comprensión de las cosas muy alejada de la mía, pero es como si yo (o cualquier otra persona) pretendiera tener el saber absoluto por haber estudiado filosofía... no sé, ese gesto de "superioridad" me carga, así como el abuso retórico-estilístico... pero en general me ha parecido interesante.

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### **Stefanos Vlasakakis says**

Περ?μενα αρκετ? περισσ?τερα. Σχετικ? απογοητε?τηκα. Παρ? τις πολλ?ς εικ?νες που υπ?ρχαν σε περιγραφ?ς η ιστορ?α ?ταν στατικ?. Ανο?σιοι δι?λογοι και στοιχε?α που τρ?βηξαν σε μ?κρος χωρ?ς λ?γο. ?χι κ?τι το ιδια?τερο.

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### **Desislava Filipova says**

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