

*David Wills\**

**The Salonica Campaign of the First World War  
from an Archaeologist's Perspective:  
Alan J.B. Wace's *Greece Untrodden* (1964)**

The Greek Front of the First World War was characterized by Stanley Casson, who was posted there after serving in Flanders in 1915, as a “forgotten expedition.”<sup>1</sup> One hundred years later, it can still be said that “historical research on the events of Eastern Europe, in the Balkans and in Turkey is much behind, considering the level of research on World War I in Western and Central Europe.”<sup>2</sup> But as one unnamed British officer wrote of Lake Doiran in 1918, Greece had offered brutality comparable to the more famous massacres of France and Belgium: “the very name of the battle is unknown to most. Yet, in singularity of horror and in the tragedy of defeated heroism, it is unique among the record of British arms.”<sup>3</sup> Those present in Greece with the Allied forces experienced combat in terrible conditions, internal divisions, and a fire which devastated Thessaloniki in 1917.

Alan J. B. Wace (1879-1957) is renowned as an archaeologist, Director of the British School at Athens, and collector and curator of Greek folk textiles for the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. During the First World War he worked clandestinely in Athens for British intelligence, alongside the prolific author and memoirist Sir

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1. Stanley Casson, *Steady Drummer* (Uckfield: Naval and Military Press, 2010), 97. Casson was Wace's Assistant Director at the British School at Athens from 1919-22.

2. Holger Afflerbach, “Greece and the Balkan Area in German Strategy, 1914-1918,” in *The Salonica Theatre of Operations and the Outcome of the Great War* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 2005), 53.

3. Quoted in Paul Gough, *Stanley Spencer: Journey to Burghclere* (Bristol: Sansom, 2006), 77.

Compton Mackenzie. In 1964, Wace's *Greece Untrodden* was published posthumously and privately by his wife.<sup>4</sup> The various chapters recount folk stories he had gathered during his extensive travels in rural Greece, together with episodes from the life of a fictional archaeologist, George Evesham. Though Wace himself was a scholar, he did not view contemporary Greece through a classical lens, as so many others have of his time and since. During his career he was a tireless collector of objects representing a Greek rural lifestyle which was fast disappearing in his own time. Through this book, Wace became in addition a chronicler of oral traditions and beliefs.

This paper argues that in *Greece Untrodden* Wace was satirizing those twentieth century British scholars and travellers who viewed modern Greece only through what they knew of antiquity. Evesham the archaeologist is described as foreseeing his own death during the modern industrial conflict that was World War I. Yet this is revealed to him through a meeting with a classical nymph: the reality of the present is mediated through the past. Within this collection of stories, Wace described British participation in the Salonica Front as "fruitless" because it was undertaken under a misapprehension about the country in which it took place. Wace was fully aware that so often during the twentieth century, and the period of the First World War was no exception, visitors knew more about ancient than modern Greece, and that they insisted upon finding relics of the past in the country's people and landscape. I begin here by reviewing British views of the Salonica Front, contemporaneous to the conflict; continue with a summary of Wace's career and scholarship, with particular focus upon his relationships with ancient and modern Greece and his role in the Great War; and finally discuss fully the message of Wace's *Greece Untrodden*.

4. Alan J. B. Wace, *Greece Untrodden* (Athens: Mrs Alan Wace, 1964). I would like to thank Dr Elizabeth (Lisa) French and Ann French, Wace's daughter and granddaughter respectively, for their kind advice and information during the research for this article. It cannot, of course, be assumed that they share my views.

*British perceptions of the Salonica Front*

The campaign in northern Greece saw the British army and government embroiled in a morass of disease, primitive living conditions, huge seasonal variations in combat conditions, and conflicting politics. G. Ward Price, described in his account of the war as “the official correspondent with the Allied forces in the Balkans,” lacked confidence in the political reliability of his Greek hosts: there was always the potential to be stabbed in the back. His allegations include deliberate delays and difficulties caused by local officials in producing transportation for Allied military supplies. He was, for example, told that one station-master was “pro-German, and probably won’t allow your train to pass.”<sup>5</sup> A recent historian records that around two thousand deserters from the Greek army formed themselves into an armed band which attacked and raided British supply convoys.<sup>6</sup> But Ward Price was certain that problems in Greek political loyalty began at the top: the German-linked King Constantine, until he abdicated in 1917, was “doing all he could to obstruct and restrict our action in Macedonia.”<sup>7</sup> Stanley Casson, however, found it unsurprising that, with Greece officially neutral at first, the British should encounter resentment when they were effectively seizing supplies, infrastructure and transportation. In Thessaloniki, as he pointed out, the Greeks “had been dispossessed of their own city.”<sup>8</sup> Alexander Thorburn was more complimentary than most about how the locals reacted to their benevolent invaders: “The rubbish published about riots and things in Salonica is very absurd. The town is about as riotous as Little Sutton or Raby Mere.”<sup>9</sup>

5. G. Ward Price, *The Story of the Salonica Army* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1918), 73, 83-4, 53.

6. Martin Marix Evans, *Forgotten Battlefronts of the First World War* (Stroud: Sutton, 2003), 204-5.

7. Ward Price, *The Story of the Salonica Army*, 211.

8. Casson, *Steady Drummer*, 98.

9. Ian Ronayne, ed., *Amateur Gunners: the Great War Adventures, Letters and Observations of Alexander Douglas Thorburn* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2014), 118.

In describing Thessaloniki and its inhabitants, Ward Price's criticisms plainly became an unpleasant Orientalizing characterization of attempted exploitation and duplicity. Both Greeks and Jews were alleged to have inflated prices in the city, so that "profits are very large." The standards of native services and products were placed firmly below those of the sophisticated British: "Rubbish has been sold at the price of first-class European goods because the difficulties of transport have prevented British firms from getting consignments out to Salonica." British officers seeking personal or professional accommodation had been exploited by "Oriental" pricing, because they were "unaccustomed to guile and hating a haggle." Finally, Ward Price slyly remarked that Floca's Café and the restaurant at the White Tower had "made fortunes for their very wide-awake proprietors."<sup>10</sup> Here, as in other British accounts of the time, Thessaloniki was dismissed as possessing merely the window-dressing of civilization. Scratch beneath the surface, it was thought, and the city had barely emerged from the dust of the East. For R. Guy Turrall of the Royal Engineers, writing in a letter of 1916, "after the bright streets and wholesome hotel interiors of Alex[andria] there is a decided nth rate atmosphere." Consequently, Turrall was left "devoutly hoping that tomorrow will bring orders to proceed at once up country to our respective units."<sup>11</sup>

Once away from the city, the British soldiers encountered equal but differing hardships during each season. In winter, they faced the task of moving men and materiel through villages where "a stream runs through the street, and of course there is deep mud everywhere," as British officer H. Collinson Owen later recalled.<sup>12</sup> By 1917, the fear and reality of malaria, which each summer caused more casualties than through wounding, demanded the wearing of facemasks and gauntlets in the oppressive heat of the day.<sup>13</sup> The British government and commanders had been slow to realize what was required. In his memoirs, Stanley Casson invented a conversation between a pair of

10. Ward Price, *The Story of the Salonica Army*, 76-78.

11. Quoted in Evans, *Forgotten Battlefronts of the First World War*, 193.

12. *Ibid.*, 217.

13. *Ibid.*, 230.

military medical planners in London who possessed scant knowledge of the region's location or climate. As they pored over a map in 1915, he imagines their deluded relief: "Thank heavens, Henry, then I shan't have to get any of that damned tropical equipment for them or have to write any more memos. If it's in Europe, then of course it can't be tropical. Only India is in the tropics." Meanwhile, Casson had personal experience of troops previously deployed in Turkey arriving in the snow of the Greek mountains equipped with the "sun-helmets and thin shorts of tropical service which they had worn in the blistering heat of Gallipoli."<sup>14</sup>

Greek soldiers were also, at least at first, ill-equipped for the nature of the campaign. Though possessing greater experience of mountain warfare than their British counterparts, the supposed Greek characteristic of "recklessness" caused foreign observers not to regard them as natural fighters in the static trench conditions which often prevailed on the Salonica Front.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, Angeliki Dimitriou has recently argued that Greek soldiers acquitted themselves well, following orders, mastering new trench warfare techniques, and eager to take part in major attacks when required.<sup>16</sup> Ward Price eventually conceded, no doubt grudgingly, that "as fighting material they are not at all bad."<sup>17</sup> When occupying Bulgarian villages, Greek soldiers refrained from looting and barbarity, perhaps because, as Dimitriou suggests, they recognized a lifestyle in common with the vanquished: "the Greek fighter –although the victor– after years of war had never forgotten his home village, his family, his land and his animals."<sup>18</sup>

British observers expressed dismay at the backwardness of the Greek countryside, but many found solace in their knowledge of the Classics. Alexander Thorburn employed derogatory language in describing "these hill people" as having "extremely primitive and pred-

14. Casson, *Steady Drummer*, 115, 100.

15. Angeliki Dimitriou, "The Greek Fighter on the Macedonian Front during World War I," in *The Salonica Theatre of Operations*, 178.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Ward Price, *The Story of the Salonica Army*, 238.

18. Dimitriou, "The Greek Fighter on the Macedonian Front," 181.

atory habits.” But he persisted in speaking “classical Greek” to locals,<sup>19</sup> and he was by no means alone in interpreting what he saw through the ancient past. Compton Mackenzie, for example, experienced a magical lunch in the locality of Kithaeron, “the Muses’ countryside,” viewing from a bridge as “a Naiad floated down the stream, singing to herself a low sweet song.”<sup>20</sup> At sea, en route to Turkey in 1915, Mackenzie rescued a refugee, “a woman with a baby at her breast floating in a wash-tub far out on the moonlit water.” A Classical parallel sprang readily to his mind: “Here was Danaë with the baby Perseus in that chest, in which King Acrisius had sent them floating out to sea in the hope that neither of them would be heard of again.”<sup>21</sup> Mackenzie stated much later that he “gave my heart to modern Greece” during the First World War.<sup>22</sup> The past was unavoidable for many soldiers serving in Greece, however extensive or meagre their level of education. As Casson reported, those digging trenches in the Struma Valley encountered graves, inscriptions and vases: “there was history in every square yard of this ancient valley.”<sup>23</sup>

The celebrated British artist Sir Stanley Spencer spent the vast majority of his life in the safe, comfortable village of his birth, Cookham. By the second year of war, however, he felt compelled to enlist, and found himself, after training as a lowly medical orderly, in northern Greece. It was unsurprising, given his character and background, that he found solace as well as horror in the countryside around Salonica. The artist was sufficiently traumatized to reflect that “it is not proper or sensible to expect to paint well after such experiences.”<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, Spencer’s sketches and finished works featuring Greece from that time are positive in outlook. Choosing to shy away from representing horrific details, Spencer concentrated in

19. Ronayne, *Amateur Gunners*, 38, 36.

20. Compton Mackenzie, *First Athenian Memories* (London: Cassell, 1931), 371-73.

21. Compton Mackenzie, *Greece in my Life* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1960), 25.

22. *Ibid.*, 23.

23. Casson, *Steady Drummer*, 142.

24. Quoted in Gough, *Stanley Spencer*, 85.

particular on local mules at work transporting the many wounded soldiers to dressing stations for treatment.<sup>25</sup> Such scenes inspired him as “there was a grandeur... all those wounded men were calm and at peace with everything.”<sup>26</sup> Greece at war also provided the inspiration and purpose for his largest and most celebrated project, the Sandham Memorial Chapel at Burghclere in England. Here, the inclusion of Macedonian mules sets the central painted scene of salvation –*The Resurrection of the Soldiers*– firmly in the Greek town of Kalinova.<sup>27</sup> Spencer’s Salonica Front was thus populated by gentle animals over mechanized beasts, reflecting redemption rather than recrimination.

Spencer was merely a component part of an elaborate system which had developed to cope with the increasing numbers of Allied servicemen requiring treatment for injuries and illness, as Gerasimos Pentogalos has shown. Three hospitals in Thessaloniki were taken over soon after the arrival of the Allied military in 1915, which supplemented hospital ships moored off the city, with the most serious cases being evacuated to Marseilles. Early in 1916, a number of more permanent military hospitals were created in the city and elsewhere in Macedonia, supported by five casualty clearing stations and four motorized ambulance units. Further expansion of hospital facilities was occasioned in 1916 by the official participation of Greece’s own forces in the war, and in 1918 by the outbreak of Spanish flu and ongoing problems with malaria.<sup>28</sup>

The impact on Thessaloniki of Allied occupiers and the takeover of hospitals was dwarfed by the fundamental changes wrought by the fire of August 1917. G. Ward Price predictably blamed the local authorities and exonerated their foreign hosts: “the Salonica firemen always proved themselves incapable of coping with the most trivial

25. Ann Danks and Carolyn Leder, *Paradise Regained: Stanley Spencer in the Aftermath of the First World War* (Cookham: Stanley Spencer Gallery, 2014), 8-9, 50, 52.

26. Quoted in Gough, *Stanley Spencer*, 86.

27. Danks and Leder, *Paradise Regained*, 52.

28. Gerasimos E. Pentogalos, “Medical Problems on the Salonica Front, 1915-1918,” in *The Salonica Theatre of Operations*, 211-3, 217-8.

house-burnings unless reinforced by fire-parties from our Fleet.”<sup>29</sup> An official report produced at the time praised the British for their efforts in assisting those in need, whilst noting stories of the French stealing and attacking women.<sup>30</sup> With a large swathe of the city destroyed, victims were offered emergency accommodation, food handouts for thirty thousand, and free rail transport for those who preferred to depart for other regions of Greece.<sup>31</sup> As a result of this, and post-war rebuilding, the diversity in the city’s appearance and population was reduced.

1917 was also the year in which Alan Wace’s fictional protagonist was “mortally wounded in the fruitless Allied offensive in April of that year.”<sup>32</sup> Ward Price, writing in 1918, regarded this as “the most considerable action they have yet fought in the Balkans.”<sup>33</sup> This so-called First Battle of Doiran alone produced British casualty figures of 3,163.<sup>34</sup> The “fruitlessness” of this military action, as expressed in *Greece Untrodden*, is also raised within several contemporaneous accounts. Alexander Thorburn was involved in a diversionary endeavor for this attack which he regards, strategically and in terms of casualties, as a “complete failure.”<sup>35</sup> Ward Price outlines how repeated attacks over successive days were unsuccessful: “the enemy line was entered, but made untenable for us by bombing and counter-attacks.”<sup>36</sup> As reasons for the failure at Doiran, recent scholars have identified inadequate artillery provision and outdated methods; the commanding height of the Bulgarian positions; fractured lines of communication; and an inability to keep the build-up for the attack unknown to the enemy.<sup>37</sup>

29. Ward Price, *The Story of the Salonica Army*, 81.

30. Charalambos Papastathis, “The Fire of Salonica and the Allies,” in *The Salonica Theatre of Operations*, 265-66.

31. *Ibid.*, 268.

32. Wace, *Greece Untrodden*, 90.

33. Ward Price, *The Story of the Salonica Army*, 195.

34. Alan Wakefield and Simon Moody, *Under the Devil’s Eye: The British Military Experience in Macedonia 1915-1918* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2011), 81.

35. Ronayne, *Amateur Gunners*, 51.

36. Ward Price, *The Story of the Salonica Army*, 204.

37. Wakefield and Moody, *Under the Devil’s Eye*, 74.



Writing of the whole campaign, a historian has recently noted that “The German leaders considered Salonica as an allied waste of manpower; as the greatest, and voluntary, Prisoner of War camp of the war.”<sup>38</sup> But unsurprisingly, many at the time, and since, have defended the Allied presence in Greece during the First World War, and the resultant expenditure of lives and resources. In the view of art historian Paul Gough, Britain and France’s involvement in Greece provided much-needed relief for their Balkan allies, and opened a second front which proved vital to the eventual downfall of Germany: “the campaign brought about the defeat in the field of the Bulgarian army, liberation of Serbia and the protection of Greece, and the strategic exposure of both Austria and Turkey.”<sup>39</sup>

There were supposedly other benefits for the Greeks. Vasiliki Galani-Moutafi has recently written of the nineteenth century that “Through a presumption of colonial supremacy and an ideology that boasted their self-esteem, British travellers presented England as a place that had replaced Greece as the center of knowledge and science.”<sup>40</sup> British observers of the First World War considered that they had been able to bring some civilization to the allegedly primitive region of the Balkans. This was manifest in such measures as the provision of clean water, the draining of malarial swamps, and the establishment of a farm school.<sup>41</sup> Ward Price viewed Thessaloniki itself as a “swamp” which the British had improved, so that goat tracks had become roads usable for motor vehicles.<sup>42</sup> Thus did the British congratulate themselves that they had been able to repay their debt to Ancient Greece.

38. Afflerbach, “Greece and the Balkan Area,” 59

39. Gough, *Stanley Spencer*, 89.

40. Vasiliki Galani-Moutafi, “Greece in Travel Writing and Tourist Discourse: Cross-cultural Encounters and the Construction of Classifications,” in *Travel, Tourism and Identity*, ed. Gabriel R. Ricci (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2015), 41.

41. Mark Mazower, *Salonica: City of Ghosts* (London: Harper Collins, 2004), 315-17.

42. Ward Price, *The Story of the Salonica Army*, 66.

*Alan Wace in ancient and modern Greece*

Alan John Bayard Wace was born in 1879. After receiving his Classics BA in 1901 from Pembroke College, Cambridge –the city of his birth– with a particular interest in Greek sculpture, he became a lecturer at St Andrews University in 1912. He was then, from 1914-23, Director of the British School at Athens (BSA). In a significant change of focus, he spent ten years (1923-34) as Deputy Keeper in charge of Textiles at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. He returned to Cambridge, and the world of classical archaeology, as Lawrence Professor from 1934-44.<sup>43</sup>

As an archaeologist, Wace was very *active* in more than one sense of the word. His longest and greatest association was with the site of Mycenae, beginning in 1920-23, resuming in 1939, and concluding in 1950-55, just two years before his death in Athens. His work at Mycenae led to an academic dispute with Sir Arthur Evans, the imperious excavator of the so-called Palace of King Minos at Knossos in Crete. In explaining the links between the Minoan and Mycenaean cultures, Evans sought to maintain the supremacy of “his” site by arguing that Mycenae had been a mere satellite of the Cretan civilization. In contrast, Wace emphasized Mycenae’s mainland Greek roots.<sup>44</sup> Wace’s view of the primacy of Mycenae has subsequently been vindicated: “the Mycenaean Greek takeover of Knossos has become an accepted historical fact.”<sup>45</sup> In *Greece Untrodden*, Wace refers to this controversy by having Oxford scholars erroneously declare an ancient ring from the mainland “not Mycenaean but Minoan, for all the civilization of Mycenae and everything found there came from Crete.”<sup>46</sup>

43. Linda M. Medvid, *The Makers of Classical Archaeology: A Reference Work* (New York: Humanity Books, 2000), 301; Rachel Hood, *Faces of Archaeology in Greece: Caricatures by Piet de Jong* (Oxford: Leopard’s Head Press, 1998), 42.

44. Helen Waterhouse, *The British School at Athens: The First Hundred Years* (London: The British School at Athens, 1986), 26, 35, 108-09.

45. J. Alexander MacGillivray, *Minotaur: Sir Arthur Evans and the Archaeology of the Minoan Myth* (London: Pimlico, 2001), 310.

46. Wace, *Greece Untrodden*, 98.

At Cambridge, Wace had been a student alongside R. M. Dawkins, his predecessor as Director of the BSA.<sup>47</sup> Dawkins was a folklorist as well as excavator, late in life publishing volumes of myths and tales. In 1906 and 1907, Dawkins and Wace had travelled widely in search of stories, dialects, and folk textiles in Greek islands off the beaten track.<sup>48</sup> They used a “combination of steamer and hired caique to reach areas where they felt they could see embroideries *in situ* and buy them with a direct provenance.”<sup>49</sup> Public exhibitions of the items Wace and Dawkins collected were mounted in London and Cambridge in 1905-6, 1913, and during the First World War. The majority of Wace’s important textile collection was eventually donated or sold by him to museums in London, Liverpool and Washington.<sup>50</sup> His location photography has recently illustrated a catalogue accompanying a landmark exhibition of Greek textiles in London.<sup>51</sup>

Between 1910 and 1912, Wace also undertook expeditions to northern Greece with Maurice Thompson, accompanying and observing the Vlachs in their summer transhumant journey.<sup>52</sup> These travels were conducted in a spirit of hardiness and simplicity. The historian Arnold Toynbee wrote in his memoirs of the pair being “indifferent to heat, hunger, cold or exposure to the elements... [travelling] like klephts.”<sup>53</sup> Thompson later reminisced that “he and Wace would simply put a toothbrush in the pockets of their waterproofs

47. Medvid, *The Makers of Classical Archaeology*, 76.

48. Peter Mackridge, 2009, “From Archaeology to Dialectology and Folklore: The Role of the British School at Athens in the Career of R.M. Dawkins,” in *Scholars, Travels, Archives: Greek History and Culture through the British School at Athens*, ed. Michael Llewellyn Smith, Paschalis M. Kitromilides and Eleni Calligas (London: The British School at Athens, 2009), 49-50, 57.

49. Ann French, “The Greek Embroidery Collecting of R. M. Dawkins and A. J. B. Wace,” in *Scholars, Travels, Archives*, 79.

50. *Ibid.*, 86-88.

51. Maria Passa-Kotsou, “The Women’s Costume of Astypalaia,” in *Patterns of Magnificence: Tradition and Reinvention in Greek Women’s Costume*, ed. Ioanna Papantoniou (London: The Hellenic Centre, 2014), 45.

52. Hood, *Faces of Archaeology*, 42.

53. Waterhouse, *The British School at Athens*, 22.

and so set off to Thessaly.”<sup>54</sup> The result was a 1914 co-authored study of *The Nomads of the Balkans*, which is still cited today.<sup>55</sup>

During the First World War, Wace took advantage of the hiatus in student residency to catalogue some of the BSA’s papers.<sup>56</sup> He argued for the importance to British prestige within Greece of keeping the school open during wartime.<sup>57</sup> A 1917 letter reveals that he was also continuing to purchase textiles.<sup>58</sup> In 1915 and 1916 he was able to take up his archaeologist’s trowel again, in partnership with Carl Blegen of the American School, at Korakou and Corinth.<sup>59</sup> On Christmas Day 1914, Wace happened to meet and shake hands with Georg Karo, Director of the German Archaeological Institute. But, more generally, Wace concluded that friendship and scholarly links with the Germans must be put on hold during official hostilities.<sup>60</sup> Those associated with the BSA certainly played an honourable part in the war effort: ninety former students gave war service, of which seven died. Richard Clogg, in his study making detailed use of BSA archives, notes that many of these served in Greece, “making use of their linguistic skills and knowledge of the terrain and of Greek waters.”<sup>61</sup> With Greece officially neutral until June 1917, putting the staff and premises of the BSA to direct use for the British war effort was controversial. R.M. Dawkins complained that Wace had been discouraging British soldiers from using the accommodation and recreational facilities.<sup>62</sup>

However, Clogg has shown that the role of the BSA was murkier than Dawkins’ accusation of negligence would suggest. In 1916, Wace publicly denied claims made by the Greek press that the BSA

54. *Ibid.*, 135.

55. For example, by John L. Tomkinson, *Festive Greece: A Calendar of Tradition* (Athens: Anagnosis, 2003); Tim Salmon, *The Unwritten Places* (Athens: Lycabettus Press, 1995), 137-38, 202.

56. Waterhouse, *The British School at Athens*, 24.

57. Richard Clogg, “Academics at War: The British School at Athens during the First World War,” in *Scholars, Travels, Archives*, 165.

58. French, “The Greek Embroidery Collecting,” 80.

59. Hood, *Faces of Archaeology*, 44.

60. Clogg, “Academics at War,” 165.

61. *Ibid.*, 166.

62. *Ibid.*, 174.

was harbouring and encouraging spies, but admitted in private to taking in “King’s Messengers, Foreign Office people and similar men engaged in government service.” Wace later received thanks from the British government for his “invaluable services” to the British Legation. He was styled as Director of Relief for British Refugees from Turkey. In reality, as Wace himself acknowledged later, this role was “merely camouflage for Intelligence.”<sup>63</sup> The head of British intelligence, Compton Mackenzie, lodged at the BSA for a time in 1915 and daily took lunch with Wace privately. In working for the Legation, Wace was tasked with curtailing the movement of foreign spies from Greece to Egypt, and so developed a pioneering system of visas for travellers: “from it sprang the whole of that great system of passport control around the world.” Mackenzie recalled Wace working in the Legation “at a table in one of the corridors, from which a long trail of waiting applicants sometimes stretched right across the marble entrance hall and even out into the street.”<sup>64</sup>

Described by Mackenzie as “a delightful combination of great scholarship and humour,” Wace also had, according to Rachel Hood, a reputation for sometimes being “difficult,” exhibiting “irritation with others slower than himself.”<sup>65</sup> But he was an excellent teacher and was often helpful to students in their endeavours to scale the academic career ladder.<sup>66</sup> For example, in a letter dated 4<sup>th</sup> January 1933, Wace offered the recipient, a Miss Wynn Thomas, an introduction to Dr Axel Boëthius, the Director of the Swedish Institute of Classical Studies in Rome, and wished her “the best of luck in your work and your travels.”<sup>67</sup> Wace would have often encountered earnest Philhellenes, who were later recalled by Maurice Thompson as hating the language of contemporary Greeks because it had been

63. *Ibid.*, 168-9.

64. Mackenzie, *First Athenian Memories*, 94, 208-10.

65. *Ibid.*, 194; Hood, *Faces of Archaeology*, 46.

66. Hood, *Faces of Archaeology*, 45-46.

67. Found in my copy of *Greece Untrodden*. Described in the letter in glowing terms as “an absolutely first class archaeologist,” Boëthius had worked under Wace at the excavation of Mycenae the previous decade (Medved, *The Makers of Classical Archaeology*, 42).

spoiled by picking up garbled American obscenities – “goddamson-ofabitch,” for example– when in fact “had he known it, Aristophanes would certainly have used the expression in a chorus.”<sup>68</sup> In contrast, Wace’s regard for making the most of living amongst the descendants of the Ancient Greeks led him to encourage students at the British School to learn the modern language. He maintained that certain modern beliefs, customs and practices had ancient antecedents. In an article on “North Greek Festivals,” Wace argued for connections between the mumming he had witnessed and the bawdy satyr plays of the classical period.<sup>69</sup> At around the same time, a former student of the BSA, J. C. Lawson, was espousing a theory entitled *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion: A Study in Survivals* (1910). Such explicit survivalism was dismissed by Wace’s contemporary and collaborator Dawkins, who “believed in the unity of medieval and modern Greek culture rather than in the continuity of Greek culture from antiquity to the present day.”<sup>70</sup>

### *Greece Untrodden and the Salonica Front*

*Greece Untrodden* (1964) comprises nine stories, all of which, Wace reveals in his foreword, were composed for telling around late-night campfires. The final two are folk tales from Northern Greece. The remainder concern the “mythical George Evesham,” a British archaeologist who, like Wace, travels extensively across remote parts of Greece, where the locals meet him with generosity and entrust him with “the heart of the land.”<sup>71</sup>

With an aspiration common to travellers across the ages, Evesham “liked to explore what he called untrodden Greece and any place that was off the beaten track had a special fascination for him.”<sup>72</sup> In 1909 Evesham travels to Pelos, a fictional Cycladic island

68. Hood, *Faces of Archaeology*, 110.

69. *Ibid.*, 42, 46. John L. Tompkinson (*Festive Greece*, 20-24) illustrates the furry costumes, sheep bells and elaborate headdresses sported by today’s mummers in that region of Greece.

70. Mackridge, “From Archaeology to Dialectology and Folklore,” 56.

71. Wace, *Greece Untrodden*, 7.

72. *Ibid.*, 11.

within sight of its more well-trodden neighbours of Delos, Paros and Naxos. He is aware of the insignificance of its history and the paucity of its archaeological remains, but manages to find a continuity between past and present through its primary export of ceramics.<sup>73</sup> Although he is welcomed in Pelos with traditional hospitality, Evesham learns that foreigners who fail to understand the Greeks and mock local beliefs meet an unfortunate end, as had been the case with a German who had disappeared whilst traversing the mountain of Ozia.<sup>74</sup> Evesham discovers that no locals will accompany him to the mountain on account of it being sacred to Zeus in antiquity. Persevering alone, Evesham encounters Zeus himself in the guise of a shepherd, whose hostility to trespassers in his sanctuary explains the disappearance of earlier travellers.<sup>75</sup>

Evesham's travels in Greece increasingly involve the collapse of boundaries between past and present, ancient and modern. His report to nearby villagers that he had emerged from thick cloud on a mountainous walk to be welcomed at an isolated hermitage by a monk is greeted as evidence that St Narcissus is still abroad.<sup>76</sup> Evesham protests his skepticism about such occurrences – “for there are no saints nowadays.” But he becomes more willing to believe when he learns that, rather than a beatified contemporary, Narcissus is a ghost from remote history, the lover of a Byzantine princess who took his monk's vows when their relationship was discovered.<sup>77</sup> Evesham goes on to honour the past through his refusal to disturb the saint's tomb and by lighting candles to his memory.

The narrator of the stories – named only as “Cassius” – emphasizes that Evesham was “passionately interested in everything Greek,” which extends to his “almost fanatical belief that there was some truth in such tales” of the supernatural.<sup>78</sup> Odd disturbances at a Mycenaean tomb where Evesham is excavating are attributed to the res-

73. *Ibid.*

74. *Ibid.*, 15.

75. *Ibid.*, 17, 24.

76. *Ibid.*, 36, 39.

77. *Ibid.*, 39, 41.

78. *Ibid.*, 72.

ident skeleton's vampirism, and Evesham calls in the Church to perform a ceremony and leave an icon as protection.<sup>79</sup> In a separate incident, a long-deceased British scholar of the nineteenth century, buried on a local acropolis, shows Evesham, through disturbances wrought during an earthquake, the location of Mycenaean tablets.<sup>80</sup>

The final revelation Evesham receives from the past is about his personal future – the location and circumstances of his own death. Enthusiastically joining his country's army upon the outbreak of war in 1914, he was killed fighting the Bulgarians three years later.<sup>81</sup> More specifically, Wace describes "his death in the fruitless British offensive of that month on the Doiran sector" – April 1917.<sup>82</sup> The tale of Evesham's demise begins with a girl he encounters who "walks like a goddess."<sup>83</sup> The narrator, Evesham's interlocutor Cassius, openly scoffs at him. The girl is "no different from hundreds of other Greek girls" and, in any case, she cannot resemble the ancients in that "Homer says that Hera and Athena walked like nervous pigeons."<sup>84</sup> However, Evesham and Cassius shortly discover that they are indeed in close proximity to divinity: local tradition has it that nearby Mount Exeva was the location of a shrine in honour of the Nymphs or Graces. Later, a further local girl, giving her name as Phaenna, appears in the clothes of a shepherdess to show Evesham

79. *Ibid.*, 62.

80. *Ibid.*, 73.

81. *Ibid.*, 49, 74.

82. *Ibid.*, 87.

83. *Ibid.*, 76.

84. *Ibid.* Jack L. Davis has said that Evesham is "Wace's fictional *alter ego*": Jack L. Davis, "Unbalanced Academics, Scribblers, and an 'Odd Christmas'," *From the Archivist's Notebook*, 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014, accessed 26<sup>th</sup> April 2014, <http://nataliavogeikoff.com/2014/09/01/unbalanced-academics-scribblers-and-an-odd-christmas>. I regard Wace's relationship with his fictional character as more complex than Davis' comment would suggest. As I have shown, Evesham exhibits some characteristics in common with his creator: a penchant for travelling widely in Greece on foot, for example. However, in other ways I believe that the narrator, "Cassius," more closely equates with Wace's own position. Cassius is the rational onlooker who does not share Evesham's sometimes outlandish faith in connections between classical Greece and the present day.



the correct place on the mountain to dig for the shrine.<sup>85</sup> The classicist Jenny March has noted that the Graces were minor deities who “played little individual part in myths,” and Phaenna is even more marginal in that she is named by only a few ancient writers.<sup>86</sup> During the course of the subsequent excavation, Evesham dreams one night of how he is to be killed, charging uphill amongst British troops against the Bulgars. Recognizing that he has arrived at this very location, near Lake Doiran, in April 1917, Evesham is greeted by the same Phaenna.<sup>87</sup>

Identifying the apparition as Phaenna enables Wace to demonstrate, once again, the obsessive and obscure knowledge that Evesham has of the ancient world, and to leave his fireside audience/readers with a final pun. Evesham’s last words, as he lies mortally wounded, are to cry out the name of his classical soothsayer. But this is comically misinterpreted by his less educated superior officer, as “Fanny, Fanny!”<sup>88</sup> The classical past, then, had a significant role to play in Evesham’s experience of the Great War. It led to his initial interest in visiting the modern country of Greece, his return there as a soldier, and presaged his eventual slaughter. The Phaenna who appeared to Evesham was, naturally, “good looking”, since the Graces were beauty personified.<sup>89</sup> For him, the beautiful Classical past was as real an element in his death as the brutal present. Just as the artist Stanley Spencer found solace and redemption in his experience of primitive pastoral scenes, Evesham sought the bosom of his beloved classicism (in the person of Phaenna) at the last.

Evesham appears to believe that the past can exist alongside the present. The old magic of the Classical world is to be listened to, taken seriously, and at times obeyed. This is a sort of hyperreality, a world more real than the real. The semiotician Umberto Eco coined the term hyperreality in a famous 1975 essay. During his travels across America, Eco visited waxwork museums and other heritage

85. Wace, *Greece Untrodden*, 85.

86. Jenny March, *Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (London: Cassell, 1998), 173.

87. Wace, *Greece Untrodden*, 86-87.

88. *Ibid.*, 88.

89. *Ibid.*, 83; March, *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, 173.

attractions in which the past had been (re-)constructed as more perfect than it could have been originally. For example, President Johnson's Oval Office had reappeared in Texas "using the same materials, the same colors, but with everything obviously more polished, shinier, protected against deterioration."<sup>90</sup> At the Museum of the City of New York, Eco encountered dioramas of historical events which appeared more real than the dusty documents and fragmentary archaeological objects which accompanied them. These were instances, Eco argued, where the "imagination demands the real thing and, to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake."<sup>91</sup> He was left with the "impression of entering and leaving time in a spatial-temporal haze where the centuries are confused."<sup>92</sup> Similarly, George Evesham's imagination enables him to construct his own Greek hyperreality. In such instances as the prophetic nymph and the revelations of the dead nineteenth century scholar, the ancient past leaks through, mixing with and supplanting the present in realness and vividness.

Evesham had been excited to learn that Mount Exeva had been the haunt of centaurs. His thinking about "what a Centaur's skeleton would be like" is clearly Wace poking fun at scholars who worship the classical past so much that they believe in the literal truth of its myths.<sup>93</sup> Through his travels and his studies of modern folk art and traditions, Wace had gained a respect for Greece that was not merely rooted in its past, but also appreciated its present culture on separate and equal terms. In *Greece Untrodden*, the scoffing of Cassius reflects this rational world view, though this is subverted by the eventual truthful prophecy of the nymph.

For men such as Evesham, the true heirs of the classical Greeks were the British. The modern Greeks resembled the ancients only in their physical features and apparently timeless rural habits. Civilization, in the form of roads, cities and infrastructure, was being brought

90. Umberto Eco, *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality*, trans. William Weaver (London: Vintage, 1998), 6-7.

91. *Ibid.*, 8-9.

92. *Ibid.*, 11.

93. Wace, *Greece Untrodden*, 81.

to northern Greece, and Thessaloniki in particular, in the midst and in the wake of the First World War. This process was hastened by the fire, which local backwardness in fire prevention and response had contributed to. During his visit north prior to the conflagration, Stanley Casson made clear what he regarded as the contrast between the already-Westernised capital, Athens, and the still-Balkanised second-city of Thessaloniki: “here was the mist and heat-haze of the Balkans, not the luminous colours and shapes of a more Mediterranean world.”<sup>94</sup> For such observers of the early twentieth century, it was the British, rather than the Greeks, who could most completely understand and connect with the higher civilization of the ancient world. Evesham’s belief that the ancients came alive and chose to speak to *him*, much to the astonishment of the local Greeks, therefore seemed perfectly natural.

In Wace’s fantasy tales, the “fruitless” nature of Evesham’s death of course evokes the pity of the First World War, an industrial conflict which claimed the lives of so many on the battlefields around Thessaloniki and elsewhere. But “fruitless” also, I believe, reflects Evesham’s wider relationship with Greece. Wace was issuing an admonition to those who encountered Greece that they should not be, as Evesham had been, unwilling or unable to see beyond its classical past.

94. Casson, *Steady Drummer*, 125.

