

## REVIEW

## HONOURING ERNST BADIAN

Carol G. Thomas, ed., *The Legacy of Ernst Badian*. Erie PA: The Association of Ancient Historians, 2013. Pp. 99. Paperback, \$18.00. ISBN 978-0-615-79212-5.

At the annual meeting of the Association of Ancient Historians in 2012, Professors Corey Brennan and Jerzy Linderski each gave an address in honour of the late Ernst Badian. These talks form the nucleus of this slim but absorbing volume which, together with three additional contributions by Badian's close colleagues, Professors Carol Thomas, Gene Borza and Stanley Burstein, deal with the five areas that particularly interested him: the promotion of Ancient History in North America, historical methodology, classical Athens, Alexander the Great, and republican Rome. The overall result stimulates and delights, not least because of the profusion in every chapter of anecdotes that illustrate Ernst's curiosity, dedication to finding the truth, memorable turn of phrase, and wry, idiosyncratic sense of humour. Like Alexander, he became a legend in his own lifetime and 'Badian stories', which over the years accrue intriguing variations, continue to circulate among ancient historians. In addition, two photographs of Ernst in locations where one might expect to find him: among the ruins of Pella, and engaged in conversation at a conference, as well as a complete bibliography comprise this fine tribute to one of the twentieth century's most influential historians. The book is both a touching memento for his colleagues and past students and a *vademecum* for aspiring historians, who will benefit from this informative collection of his insights.

Carol Thomas' introductory chapter ('Ernst Badian and the Association of Ancient Historians') details how, soon after his arrival in North America, Ernst drew 'people of common interests together' in congenial (and convivial) circumstances, to form the nucleus of the Association of Ancient Historians. She emphasises his enthusiastic but arms-length involvement with the AAH, his support for and encouragement of students and young scholars, his eagerness to visit campuses all over the world, as well as his non-academic interests such as his enthusiasm for postcards, animals and birds.

Corey Brennan (Chapter 2, 'Ernst Badian's Methodological Maxims') recalls the trepidation he felt as a first-year graduate student at the sight of Ernst's comments ('a sea of red') on every page of his first term-paper (12) and its positive 'pedagogical ... and psychological effect'. Indeed, established scholars and fledgling graduate students alike trembled before his methodo-

logical ruthlessness. Since Badian never systematised his ‘rules’ of historical methodology which appear *passim* in his published and unpublished work, and which informed his classes, lectures and conversations, Brennan usefully selects some of his salient ‘methodological maxims’. These relate to his ‘meticulous argumentation’, rigorous teaching method, ‘scholarly accuracy and ... restraint’ (13), as well as his insistence on seeing the ancients in terms of their own times and values (16). Ernst eschewed the ‘large and exciting problems’ for minor details that have ‘bearing on a major problem’, since neglect of minutiae that elucidate evidence leads to misconceptions becoming ‘enshrined in textbooks and standard reference works’. His intellectual honesty demanded that ‘historians must yield to the facts’ and that theories should fit the facts, not *vice versa*, since evidence interpreted in the light of *a priori* assumptions ‘constitutes a “gross oversimplification” of the complexities of the past’ (24).

Stanley Burstein’s contribution (Chapter 3, ‘A Peltast Among Hoplites: Ernst Badian and Athenian History’), examines his belated entry in 1971, as ‘a mere peltast where only a trained hoplite can compete’, into the field of fifth-century Athenian history, a discipline at the time dominated by a phalanx of experts such as R. Meiggs, D. M. Lewis, A. W. Gomme and the authors of the *Athenian Tribute Lists*. His revisionist approach dispersed the idealistic aura surrounding Themistocles, Pericles, and Demosthenes (29), and questioned, *inter alia*, Thucydides’ reputation for infallibility (37, 40). We discover that his interest in fifth and fourth-century Athens arose partially from the courses in Greek history that he taught at Harvard (28); his graduate seminars in 1975, on ‘the Freedom of the Greeks’ and in 1977, on Demosthenes, informed respectively his 1976 Sather Lectures and the Martin Lectures of 1979. Although the lectures were never published, they noticeably influenced subsequent scholarship on these subjects.

Chapter 4 (‘Ernst Badian’s Alexander’) comprises Borza’s excellent Foreword to the *Collected Papers on Alexander the Great*. Since Ernst regarded his scholarship ‘as a work in progress’ subject to change in the light of new evidence and especially of new questions about existing evidence (58), he never attempted a biography of his subject, because ‘biographers discern patterns in their subject’s behaviour’ to which they have to conform (54). For Badian, hypotheses should emerge from the detailed analysis of evidence. His brief but exemplary two-part essay on Alexander’s life, in *History Today* in 1958, (not included among his 27 *Collected Papers*) is his only exercise in this genre. Borza also suggests that his 1962 article, ‘Alexander the Great and the loneliness of power’, first published in *AUMLA* and included in the *Collected Papers* (and in which Badian himself in the epigraph expressed ‘some reluctance’ in including), is ‘very close to ... a *bios* of which Plutarch might have approved’ (50). Ernst’s ‘Alexander’ was unique for its time, fitting neither Droysen’s and

Wilcken's construct as the artificer of the Greek Unity and World Empire, nor of the idealistic visionary of 'the Unity of Mankind', promoted by W. W. Tarn, and C. A. Robinson. He saw Alexander's career as 'a *process*' by which he felt required to prove himself 'as a king in his own right' (54) through fear and admiration—'a loner struggling to free himself from the constraints of a powerful group of Macedonian nobles' (55), and set about by conspiracies, real, imagined and manufactured.

In Chapter 5 ('Ink and Blood: Ernst Badian, Rome, and the Art of History') Jerzy Linderski examines the style and rhetoric of Ernst's Roman essays to find out why his words have such an impact on, and such a hold over the reader. His compelling dissection of a paragraph from the 1970 article 'L. Sulla: The Deadly Reformer' (Badian's 'diagnosis and equation' for Sulla's 'unexpected and unexplainable' abdication of his dictatorship), reveals a discourse unusual in academic prose, startlingly harsh, emotive and Sallustian. A comparison of his phraseology with that of Ronald Syme's in *The Roman Revolution*, relating to the same historical context, exposes what Badian saw as the lurid realities of the first-century Republic in contrast to his mentor's more subtly ironic and 'gentlemanly' account of the events (63). Similarly, in *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic*, Badian's 'realistic' Julius Caesar, 'the greatest brigand of them all' and the 'perpetrator of the greatest genocide in Roman history', undermines the German adulation of the dictator as 'Wegbereiter Europas' (72).

The five chapters illuminate Ernst's multifaceted approach to his subject: as historian, psychologist, philologist, literary critic, shrewd observer of human nature, and as a detective who gleefully pursued his quarry with the relentless logic of a Holmes or Poirot.

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