



ERNST BADIAN

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1925–2011

THE ANCIENT HISTORIAN ERNST BADIAN was born in Vienna on 8 August 1925 to Josef Badian, a bank employee, and Salka née Horingner, and he died after a fall at his home in Quincy, Massachusetts, on 1 February 2011. He was an only child. The family was Jewish but not Zionist, and not strongly religious. Ernst became more observant in his later years, and received a Jewish funeral.

He witnessed his father being maltreated by Nazis on the occasion of the *Reichskristallnacht* in November 1938; Josef was imprisoned for a time at Dachau. Later, so it appears, two of Ernst's grandparents perished in the Holocaust, a fact that almost no professional colleague, I believe, ever heard of from Badian himself. Thanks in part, however, to the help of the young Karl Popper, who had moved to New Zealand from Vienna in 1937, Josef Badian and his family had by then migrated to New Zealand too, leaving through Genoa in April 1939.¹ This was the first of Ernst's two great strokes of good fortune.

His Viennese schooling evidently served Badian very well. In spite of knowing little English at first, he so much excelled at Christchurch Boys' High School that he earned a scholarship to Canterbury University College at the age of fifteen. There he took a BA in Classics (1944) and MAs in French and Latin (1945, 1946). After a year's teaching at Victoria University in Wellington he moved to Oxford (University College), where

¹K. R. Popper, *Unended Quest: an Intellectual Autobiography* (La Salle, IL, 1976), p. 111, recalled that 'a committee in Christchurch was constituted to obtain permits for refugees to enter New Zealand; and some were rescued from concentration camps and from prison thanks to the energy of Dr. R. M. Campbell, of the New Zealand High Commission in London'.

he was tutored in ancient history by George Cawkwell—another New Zealander, as it happens—and completed Greats in two years, appearing in the first class in the honours list of 1950; he had also won the Chancellor's Prize for Latin Prose. The British School at Rome awarded him a scholarship for 1950–2.

In January 1950 Badian married Nathlie Ann Wimsett of Wellington, whom he had met at Canterbury some five years earlier; his second great stroke of good fortune. She was a Classics graduate and an accomplished violinist, who later earned a doctorate in special education and child psychology and had a fruitful career, including research, as a child psychologist. Together Ernst and Nathlie had two children, Hugh (b. 1953) and Rosemary (b. 1958); there are now seven grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren.

What led Badian into ancient and specifically Greek and Roman history is scarcely to be guessed, though a number of his experiences may have caused him to reflect about the construction and the durability or otherwise of empires. His school friend E. A. Judge, later a professor at Macquarie University, recalls the influence of L. G. Pocock, Professor of Classics at Canterbury and a specialist in the late Republic. Cawkwell's vigorous personality must also have had a considerable influence.

Clearly a third New Zealand scholar, Ronald Syme, who had become Camden Professor of Ancient History at Oxford in 1949, was a powerful inspiration; he suggested the subject of Badian's doctoral thesis and supervised it. Both Syme and Badian sought to unearth the power structures of Rome rather than meditate on its constitutional structure, and in consequence they both pursued lines of prosopographical research that had been opened up a generation earlier by Friedrich Münzer and a whole group of other German scholars.

By contrast, the British School at Rome, then directed by John Ward-Perkins, seems not to have had much impact on Badian. One of his first articles,² 'Notes on Roman Policy in Illyria (230–201 BC)', appeared in the

²There is no full bibliography in print, but see C. G. Thomas (ed.), *The Legacy of Ernst Badian* (Erie, PA, 2013), pp. 79–99, which, however, omits reviews, including the seven substantial essays that Badian contributed to the *New York Review of Books* between 1974 and 1982. Quite apart from the *NYRB*, some of the reviews that are omitted are variously interesting, for example the withering critique of J. Carcopino, *Profils des conquérants*, in *Journal of Roman Studies*, 53 (1963), 181, in which he noticeably declines to mention that scholar's Vichy past. It is to be hoped that one of his former students will publish a full bibliography.

1952 volume of the school's *Papers*, but Badian neither then nor later showed any interest in Roman material culture or Ward-Perkins' ways of studying it. It is striking that when he came to publish his doctoral thesis, under the title *Foreign Clientelae, 264–70 BC* (Oxford, 1958), he wrote that 'this book is above all an Oxford work: almost every idea in it was formed in Oxford and almost every word in it was written there',³ even though he had spent two of his six years of thesis preparation in Rome, followed by two years at the University of Sheffield (1952–4) as an assistant lecturer and then by two more years at Durham, where he served as a lecturer from 1954 to 1965.

Foreign Clientelae was a highly impressive work for a young scholar. Its title gives little idea of its sweep, or of its ambitious attempt to link the structure of Rome's 'foreign policy' to the structures of internal politics. Self-confident and well informed, it rapidly became obligatory reading for all Roman historians. It maintained an overarching thesis of considerable interest, to the effect that Roman senators imagined Rome's relationship with other states on the pattern of a Roman patron's relationship with his *clientes*. This was an attempt to 'throw some light on the importance for Roman history of a specifically Roman category of thought' (p. 14).⁴ What seems questionable about the book in retrospect is that it provides an incoherent account of the attitude of the Roman senatorial class towards territorial expansion—sometimes they engage in 'conscious imperialism', more often they showed 'no desire for expansion'. But it contained so much else, and its account of Roman politics from the Gracchi to Sulla was regarded for some years as the best available.

This dissonance about imperialism can be understood from its context. The historiography of Roman republican imperialism that prevailed in Britain in the 1950s was chiefly the work of M. Holleaux, H. H. Scullard and A. N. Sherwin-White, which sometimes reached hallucinatory levels of exculpation. And these were of course the years when the British Empire was rapidly disintegrating (Suez, 1956; 'the wind of change', 1960). What was surprising about the Roman imperialism of *Foreign Clientelae* was not that it so often softened Roman actions (the military conquest of peninsular Italy produced a 'protectorate', and so on) but that its author occasionally saw through the then-conventional tale.

³E. Badian, *Foreign Clientelae* (Oxford, 1958), p. viii. The oddity of this assertion is heightened by the fact that the book was dedicated, with gratitude, to G. F. Tibiletti and to the author's 'other Italian friends and colleagues'.

⁴This thesis was effectively criticised by J. Bleicken in a review in *Der Gnomon*, 36 (1964), 176–87, in which, however, he recognised the book's many merits.

Badian's other most notable scholarly achievement in these years was the first—and most important—of his many articles about Alexander of Macedon, 'Alexander the Great and the unity of mankind'.⁵ (It was, incidentally, a salutary doctrine of Badian's that a historian of the classical world should eventually work on both Greek and Roman history.) In twenty pages he overturned a central claim of the chief anglophone authority of the time on Alexander, Sir W. W. Tarn,⁶ according to whom Alexander hoped and planned that the numerous peoples he had conquered would become 'partners in the realm rather than subjects'. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this article of Badian's was the beginning of the end of the idealised Alexander who had beguiled many others besides Tarn; it helped to establish the ultra-violent, brutal and paranoid Alexander who is now familiar to all interested scholars.

Badian continued to work on topics connected with Alexander: his posthumous *Collected Papers on Alexander the Great* (London, 2012), which was his other big book besides *Foreign Clientelae*, contained twenty-seven items, while omitting a number of others. He is thought by some to have aimed at a large-scale work about the Macedonian conqueror, who was certainly a lifelong obsession, but he told his friends, by 1971 at least, that he had no such intention. The nearest thing to a synthesis is his admirably realistic chapter 'Alexander in Iran' in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, written in the early 1970s though not published until 1985.⁷ Even though he more or less detested most other people's attempts at big books about Alexander, in particular Robin Lane Fox's *Alexander the Great* (London, 1973), they did not provoke him to write one of his own. There is more to say about this.

Meanwhile, there had been both difficulties and recognition. In 1962–3 Badian was convinced that his health was seriously compromised. The nature of this illness is obscure, and doctors could never apparently diagnose anything specific, but nonetheless Badian's friends took the matter seriously and P. A. Brunt suggested the publication of a volume of his *opera minora*, which came out as *Studies in Greek and Roman History*

⁵E. Badian, 'Alexander the Great and the unity of mankind', *Historia*, 7 (1958), 425–44, reprinted in his *Collected Papers on Alexander the Great* (London, 2012). He also assailed Tarn in 'The eunuch Bagoas: a study in method', *Classical Quarterly*, 8 (1958), 144–57 (reprinted in *Collected Papers*), while characterising Tarn's major book as a 'masterly work'.

⁶Tarn died at the age of eighty-eight, a few months before Badian's article was published.

⁷E. Badian, 'Alexander in Iran', in I. Gershevitch (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 420–501, was not included in *Collected Papers*. The chapter extends far beyond Iran in the narrow sense. It also benefited from the author's tour of Iran and Afghanistan in the winter of 1971–2.

(Oxford, 1964). Quite unusual for a scholar of thirty-nine! The following year, while still a lecturer at Durham, he was elected to the Academy—one of the youngest Fellows in many a season (even Ronald Syme had been a year older when he was elected)—and was appointed to the Chair of Ancient History at Leeds.

In 1965 Badian went to South Africa to lecture, and to explore local conditions. The great majority of educated Britons believed by that date that they knew quite enough about apartheid without inspecting its operations at first hand, but a visit was not of course an endorsement (the ancient historian Russell Meiggs also intended to visit that year, though ill health prevented him). All the signs, however, say that Badian was opposed to any dramatic improvement in the rights of the country's black inhabitants. The year 1965 was also that of a much contested political event—the unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) by the white settlers in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Britain was unwilling to grant independence without a plan that would lead to majority rule. Some of Badian's new colleagues at Leeds were surprised—surprisingly—to see a poster on his office door that read 'Recognize Rhodesia Now!'

It was in Pretoria in 1965 that Badian gave the lectures that became his brief book *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic* (Oxford, first edition, 1967; revised edition, 1968). I may not be thought the ideal person to comment on that production because it struck me from the first as superficial and doctrinaire, with the consequence that I attempted to negate some of its central contentions—including its claim that the Roman imperialists of the second century BC had no 'economic motives'—first in an article and later in more detail in several chapters of a book. *Roman Imperialism* contains in fact a fair amount of good sense, and much of the time it represents a further very definite retreat from the doctrines of Holleaux, Scullard and Sherwin-White. But there was too much half-voluntary misuse of language, as when the author conspicuously maintains, with no good evidence, that the mid-republican Senate regularly 'reject[ed] opportunities for the extension of power' (p. 1: what he meant was that it declined opportunities for outright annexation, opportunities that in my view are mostly modern illusions). But now he was certainly much more inclined to see ruthless warmongering for what it was, especially when it was the work of his second—and arguably more complex—bête noire, Julius Caesar, who was in his opinion 'the greatest brigand of them all'.

Then there was Badian's phobia of the moderate left, not to mention the far left, which comes out in a somewhat absurd way when he speaks in

this book of other scholars of the time as ‘a generation nourished on Marx’: there was of course, as of 1968, no such generation of ancient historians anywhere in the English-speaking world. And Badian’s anti-Marxist vehemence prevented him from seeing that economic motives quite different in kind from those whose existence he attempted to disprove were real and important forces in republican Rome. It also led to the radically limiting, yet carefully hedged, final sentence of the book: ‘The study of the Roman Republic—and that of the Empire to a considerable degree—is basically the study, not of its economic development, or of its masses, or even of great individuals: it is chiefly the study of its ruling class.’ This was inherited from Ronald Syme, and apparently it was a comforting vision. It accompanied his obsessive idea that reformers of all kinds were misguided and extremely dangerous. From Tiberius Gracchus through Sulla (some reformer!) to Julius Caesar and Lyndon Johnson, they did nothing but harm.

The Badians had first visited the United States in 1960 or 1961 and had found it to their liking. The offer of a professorship at the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1969 was accepted with alacrity, partly it seems because of the existence in Buffalo of a school that the Badians thought suitable for their gifted daughter Rosemary. Badian’s friends were surprised that he agreed to live so far from a first-rate library, but it was a short stay: two years later, thanks in good part to Glen Bowersock and Bernard Bailyn, he was invited to move to the Harvard History Department, where he stayed until his retirement, as John Moors Cabot Professor of History, in 1998. (Early in his Harvard period he was also given a courtesy appointment in the Classics Department, which he found more congenial.) There he trained a number of ancient history scholars, but not as many as might have been expected; his own view was that he was more demanding than the professors in other places such as Columbia and Yale, and he may have been right.

Throughout the rest of his career Badian complained about Harvard, and he would probably have moved to Cornell in 1974 if Cornell had agreed to find a position for Nathlie. In the mid-1970s he apparently thought of returning to Buffalo. Eventually he came to blame Harvard for what he perceived, by 1986 at the latest, as his ‘ruin’ as a scholar.⁸ Yet it remains unclear why he so much professed to hate the place. Was it simply because in a large group of other established scholars who gave no primacy

⁸‘Harvard, which I detest and which has ruined me as a scholar’ (letter to Charles Garton, 4 January 1986).

to the Greeks and Romans he inevitably counted for less than he had at Leeds and Buffalo? There were indeed objective frustrations, but outsiders found it hard to believe that Harvard was any more annoying—or less stimulating—than any other sharp-edged first-rank American university. An excellent library, outstanding students, ample secretarial help, no huge administrative burden, plenty of interesting visitors—this combination never staunched his unceasing complaints.

The 1970s were full of projects, some of which turned out well, others less so. Lectures delivered at the University of Otago resulted in another fairly short book *Publicans and Sinners: Private Enterprise in the Service of the Roman Republic*,⁹ in which the political message indicated by the subtitle interferes to no more than a moderate degree with his scholarly history of the republican *publicani*.

Badian was himself a man of enterprise in this period. He played a very important role in bringing into being North America's Association of Ancient Historians, organising the meeting at Harvard in 1974 at which it was formally constituted after a period of informal meetings. He was never its president and it passed into other hands. The Association is alive and well.

But he began to spend too much time on editorial projects that did not allow him to develop much as a historian. In the late 1960s he began a prolonged attempt to publish in translation a collection of the *kleine Schriften* of Friedrich Münzer, which was at best a quixotic enterprise. Much hard work was compounded by the decision to list all Münzer's prosopographical contributions to Pauly-Wissowa's monumental encyclopedia, which are said to number more than 5,000. The book was eventually completed but no one would publish it.¹⁰ Then, starting in 1973, Badian also undertook the republication of the extensive minor works of Ronald Syme, a worthwhile project that led in the end to a permanent cooling of the relationship between the older man and the younger. The problem was ostensibly the index of persons, necessarily quite a long one in the work of a prosopographical scholar. It did not help that Badian employed someone else to do the work, or that he took it upon himself to bring Syme's footnotes up to date (nowadays this would be regarded as the author's job). The Clarendon Press waited more than six years for this

⁹E. Badian, *Publicans and Sinners: Private Enterprise in the Service of the Roman Republic* (Oxford, 1972).

¹⁰Eventually Münzer's collected papers were edited, in the original, by M. Haake and A. C. Harders (eds.), *Kleine Schriften: Friedrich Münzer* (Stuttgart, 2012).

index, and finally printed the first two volumes of *Roman Papers* without it.¹¹ A. R. Birley fortunately became the editor of the remaining volumes, and in twenty months completed Volume III with a detailed index of all the first three volumes. The project had consumed a huge amount of Badian's time, not to mention the goodwill of Syme and others.

Starting in 1976, supported by a small but distinguished editorial board, he began to publish the *American Journal of Ancient History* (*AJAH*). This he continued to manage for many years. At first it was reasonably successful, and it seemed to disprove the opinion of those who supposed that there was no need of a new journal of this description. It was after all true and regrettable that there was no journal devoted to ancient history in the English-speaking world, while such journals existed in France, Germany and Italy. The ill effects of this lack live on. After about five years, however, Badian's journal began to fall behind its calendar date, and then it fell far behind—the 1984 issues came out in 1990 and so on. The number of publishable submissions declined. The contrast with the later history of the successful *Journal of Roman Archaeology* is instructive. Such an enterprise probably has to have real institutional support, which the *AJAH* never had. And the ideal editor of a new journal needs to be a person of tact, capable of dealing effectively with printers as well as professors; it probably helps if he or she is not associated with extreme or dogmatic views of any kind. And in modern times few scholars have edited journals for long periods and simultaneously brought large research projects to fruition: everyone knows that it is a hugely time-consuming activity. (John Ward-Perkins, as it happens, was one of those who managed both challenges at once for a long period.) Badian's *AJAH* eventually ceased publication after fifteen volumes, a sad conclusion which, however, allowed him much more time for his own work.

Also in 1976 Badian gave the Sather Lectures at Berkeley, a noteworthy honour that usually leads to a book published by the University of California Press. Badian wanted to lecture about Roman provincial administration but also wanted to publish his book on that subject with another publisher. Finding that he could not escape his obligation to the California Press, he decided at the last minute to lecture at Berkeley on 'The Freedom of the Greeks', a huge and difficult topic. A similar subject had previously frustrated Arnaldo Momigliano, and, sure enough, Badian never succeeded in turning his six lectures into a book (by the mid-1990s

¹¹ Ronald Syme, *Roman Papers I-II* (ed. E. Badian) (Oxford, 1979).

the project was no longer even mentioned). The provincial administration book was never completed either.

The history of scholarship also attracted Badian's attention in the late 1970s. If there was a large project involved I have not been able to discover it, but a good deal of work went into studying both Gibbon and Barthold Georg Niebuhr. The work on Gibbon resulted in two solid articles, both well informed and interestingly free from the customary adulation.¹²

That there was indeed a certain scholarly trailing off would be hard to deny. Caution is necessary, since it is after all every scholar's right to decide what to work on, and many of us have had the experience of being told by wiser persons that we were studying the wrong thing, only to be more or less vindicated later. Badian regularly produced sixty or seventy pages of learned articles every year for many years, but intellectually he ran into the doldrums—as he seems to have felt himself. His not completing the larger projects that he started (the Martin Lectures that he delivered at Oberlin in 1979 on the subject of Demosthenes went unpublished like the Sather Lectures, and in this case the topic seemed quite manageable) was an unhealthy sign. By the early 1980s his work consisted mostly of minor questions, expertly handled—and he clearly knew that.

Some have suggested that this trailing off was due to perfectionism, others that it was simply the consequence of spending too much time on the *AJAH* and on helping other scholars with their manuscripts. And it is true that very many young scholars who were not even Badian's pupils benefited considerably from his detailed critiques (he expected gratitude, not unreasonably). He really went to extraordinary lengths in this respect, and he was repaid with a sizeable Festschrift in 1996.¹³ But neither perfectionism nor voluntary distraction is a wholly satisfying explanation. Perhaps fortune had been a little too kind a little too quickly, but that does not provide a neat psychological explanation. Badian was not in any case one of those Britons who were elected to Oxbridge fellowships on the basis of promise rather than achievement.¹⁴

Badian did not take any part in the opening up of ancient history that gathered strength in the late 1960s and early 1970s under the initial impact

¹² E. Badian, 'Gibbon on War', in P. Ducrey (ed.), *Gibbon et Rome à la lumière de l'historiographie moderne* (Geneva, 1977), pp. 103–10; E. Badian, 'Imposing Gibbon', *New York Review of Books* (13 October 1977).

¹³ R. W. Wallace and E. M. Harris (eds.), *Transitions to Empire: Essays in Greco-Roman History, 360–146 B.C.*, in *Honor of E. Badian* (Norman, OK, 1996).

¹⁴ In fact he was passed over at Magdalen in 1958 in favour of a scholar who turned out to be something of a disappointment.

of scholars as diverse as Peter Brunt, Moses Finley, Keith Hopkins and Peter Brown. A vast expansion in the subject matter of the ancient historian made demographic and economic history, social history and slavery, gender history and sexuality, ethnicity and identity history and visual commemoration into topics as worthy of a scholar's attention as politics and warfare—topics which were themselves beginning to be looked at in new ways—if not more so. Badian expressed interest in Keith Hopkins' work on slavery and on demography and added a demographic detail of his own, but such work provoked no emulation.¹⁵

The scholar whom Badian denounced most violently in the 1970s and 1980s, to anyone who would listen, was Peter Brunt (the latter's kindness during Badian's illness prevented this viewpoint from appearing in print), for the fairly obvious though not explicit reason that it was Brunt who, more than anyone, brought to an end the obsession of anglophone Romanists with prosopography, and by means of articles and his book *Italian Manpower 225 B.C.–A.D.14* (Oxford, 1971) showed the way to a new and broader history of the Roman Republic. The resentment was no doubt all the greater because in 1971 Brunt was elected to the Camden chair in succession to Syme. This is not a simple matter, for Badian was not entirely opposed to the new social history, as his relatively tolerant attitude towards the work of Hopkins demonstrates (it probably helped that the latter was considerably younger). In my view Badian was much impeded by the notion that the boundaries between fields were very hard to cross, so that sociology and anthropology, for example, were far away indeed from Greek and Roman history. This was an attitude that was fairly widespread in American Classics departments, and even in History departments, in the 1970s.

In this intellectually conservative context it is intriguing to reread Badian's lengthy review of Geoffrey de Ste Croix's well-known Marxist summa *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (1981).¹⁶ The review appears to be the work of an 'admiring dissident', in the words of Robert Parker. It predicted that 'the writing of ancient history, at least in English, will never be quite the same again', not a particularly fortunate prophecy. The reviewer claimed to recognise de Ste Croix for what he in fact was, a

¹⁵ Compare his long review of Hopkins' *Conquerors and Slaves* in E. Badian, 'Figuring out Roman slavery', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 72 (1982), 164–9; 'mixed', as its author says. The pertinent detail concerns the likely sex ratio in a frontier or colonial population.

¹⁶ E. Badian, 'Marx in the Agora', *New York Review of Books* (2 December 1982). For Robert Parker's comments see R. Parker, 'Geoffrey Ernest Maurice de Ste. Croix, 1910–2000', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 111 (2001), pp. 473–4.

man of profound learning and integrity; and no reader, he said, could fail to feel the latter's passionate hatred of injustice. What is discordant about this is that anyone minimally acquainted with Badian knew—and his private letters confirm—that he violently disapproved of de Ste Croix's scholarship and politics alike. The best interpretation seems to be that Badian thought that if he seemed to dilute his hostility towards *The Class Struggle* his disagreement would be all the more effective; he may also have thought that if he could disprove the central contentions of the most scholarly of all Marxist historians of antiquity—a title that de Ste Croix certainly deserved as far as the English-speaking world was concerned—he would have no need to bother with the rest.

But why did Badian consider that he had been 'ruined' as a scholar by the mid-1980s? He continued to produce learned articles in his old manner. Was it simply because so many years had passed since the publication of his last book and no book of his was anywhere near completion? Some people thought that such an abrasive critic should have the nerve to set out his own views for others to assess. It should have been easy for him to finish his book on Demosthenes. I suppose that Badian very much wanted to be at the centre of attention within his own *Gebiet*. But the centre was steadily moving away from him, and he was too informed and too acute to be unaware of the fact. Blaming others (Harvard in particular) made it all the more difficult to get away from the critical mode and return to the constructive mode.

Not that he was ever anything less than a hard worker. Being always concerned that inexpert readers would have precise facts at their disposal, he reserved time for works of reference, and in particular for the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. The huge improvement in the latter between its second edition (1970) and its fourth (2011) was as much due to him as to anyone else except the actual editors of the third and fourth editions. The recent proliferation of inaccurate works of reference makes this work all the more valuable.

Two more collections of previously published essays were to come: *From Plataea to Potidaea: Studies in the History and Historiography of the Pentecontaetia* (Baltimore, MD, and London, 1993), and the posthumous book about Alexander. *From Plataea to Potidaea* was Badian's considered contribution to the modern refighting of the Peloponnesian War (or more accurately to the assigning of war guilt). Left-leaning historians such as de Ste Croix have always tended to blame authoritarian Sparta for the outbreak of the war, making ample use of Thucydides. That was not Badian's view. But Thucydides' reputation as a disinterested objective his-

torian had long been in trouble, thanks to de Ste Croix himself, to Robert Connor, Virginia Hunter and others. Badian brought his full battery of critical artillery into this battle. He critiqued the arguments of others with gusto, but he could not write the history of the Athenian Empire. Philip Stadter's judgement of this book was precise: 'B.'s prosecutorial rhetoric creates a Thucydides who is in the end a very simple writer, deceptive and artistic (a negative word), but easily caught out by the perceptive reader. Not everyone has [found] or will find him so transparent.'¹⁷

Another paradox concerns the Austrian scholar Fritz Schachermeyr (1895–1987), who was best known to scholars for his writings about Alexander of Macedon, especially his book of 1949, which attempts, not very successfully, to avoid the sort of hero worship that Badian later deplored. Schachermeyr was a productive scholar in his day but Badian was undoubtedly unique in thinking that he was 'one of the towering figures in our discipline in this century, who need not fear comparison with any other who might be named'.¹⁸ What was always known about Schachermeyr, however, was his fervent support for Nazism: he was quite openly an energetic member of Hitler's ideological army. How we should treat the scholarly work of people who were complicit in the Nazi regime and in the Holocaust is of course a familiar question. Many would presumably say that we should take the work of such scholars for what it is worth, ignoring their political and moral acts. But it is another matter entirely to go out of one's way to commemorate and heroise such an individual.¹⁹ Badian in fact befriended Schachermeyr in 1975.²⁰ He wrote to Peter Brunt that Schachermeyr had been 'the historical theoretician of the [Nazi] movement'; 'one cannot forget ... but one ought to forgive'.²¹ It

¹⁷P. A. Stadter, 'Badian on Thucydides', *Classical Review*, 44 (1994), 338.

¹⁸'Editor's Introduction', *American Journal of Ancient History*, 13 (1988) [1996], 1. A. B. Bosworth's sober assessment, in the same volume, of Schachermeyr's work on Alexander does nothing to justify Badian's assessment. The point of departure for any study of Schachermeyr is the massive biography by M. Pesditschek, *Barbar, Kreter, Arier: Leben und Werk des Althistorikers Fritz Schachermeyr* (Saarbrücken, 2009); cf. M. Willing, 'Konsequente "geistige Durchordnung". Fritz Schachermeyr, der Nationalsozialismus und die alte Geschichte', *Das Altertum*, 58 (2013), 201–36.

¹⁹It is to be regretted that Badian printed in the *AJAH* a thoroughly bowdlerised version of Schachermeyr's bibliography (see Willing, 'Konsequente', 227; and G. Dobesch, 'Schriftenverzeichnis', *American Journal of Ancient History*, 13 (1988), 79–91).

²⁰On their first meeting Badian found Schachermeyr 'a delightful Austrian gentleman... It is impossible not to forgive him his murky past and to be very fond of him' (to Zvi Yavetz, 9 September 1975).

²¹To Peter Brunt, 15 February 1979. It is evident from Badian's paper, 'Some recent interpretations of Alexander', *Entretiens* [de la Fondation Hardt] *sur l'antiquité classique*, 22 (1976), 279–303,

remains very difficult to explain his heroisation of Schachermeyr in a satisfactory fashion. He repeatedly referred to him as a ‘genius’, without explanation, incidentally setting him above Syme.²²

It is evident that in his old age Badian felt some nostalgia for Austria, and in 1999 he accepted the Österreichische Ehrenkreuz für Wissenschaft und Kunst (as did Antony Raubitschek and Erich Gruen). This nostalgia may have dimmed his perception of the Austrian scholar’s disgraceful record. It is also clear from Badian’s correspondence that by 1987 his paranoia about Marxists had reached the point that he was willing to find allies anywhere.²³ But that does not resolve the strangeness.

Schachermeyr takes us back to Alexander, who inspired all of Badian’s better work in his old age. The liveliest of these essays is probably ‘Conspiracies’ (2000), where he puts the various conspiracies by and against Alexander into a broader historical context and makes use of his lengthy experience with the sources (while also finding I. F. Stone guilty of ‘treason’).²⁴ But the central problem of Alexander studies, as Badian often stated, is precisely the weakness of the sources, which make any kind of psychological analysis hypothetical. Yet no modern book about that extraordinary figure can possibly do without a certain minimum of psychological analysis, and it is scarcely sufficient to conclude that he was ‘a mystic in his ultimate motivation’.²⁵

Badian always had a circle of devoted academic friends, some of whom treated him as a rather fearsome kind of mascot, instantly recognisable by his small stature and his self-consciously Trotsky-like beard. But many scholars of various nationalities who encountered him found him ill-mannered and inconsiderate (anecdotes proliferated). He would help the young, but there were not many contemporaries or rivals with whom he succeeded in remaining on amicable terms. It is not the role of a British

esp. 282–6, that he took Schachermeyr’s disowning of his racial views at the end of the Second World War in the most naïve possible way.

²²To Konrad Kinzl, 11 January 1988.

²³‘Some historian in a very distant future will no doubt [illegible] the penetration of American universities by Marxism and the collaboration of academics with a (future) Marxist regime here. There are some very interesting articles in some of the right-wing magazines I occasionally read, with ample documentation’ (to Gerhard Wirth, 3 February 1987).

²⁴E. Badian, ‘Conspiracies’, in A. B. Bosworth and E. J. Bayham (eds.), *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 50–95, reprinted in *Collected Papers*, pp. 420–56.

²⁵Badian, ‘Alexander in Iran’, p. 473.

Academy memoirist to issue judgements about the subject's personality, especially when the memoirist was not an intimate acquaintance of the person being commemorated. But it should be said that Badian's virtues and vices both made his life more difficult. He spent a generous and inordinate amount of time advising others, quite apart from his professorial responsibilities, both about their manuscripts and their lives, but in the end it was to the detriment of his own work.

By the time he was thirty-two, Ernst Badian had written two of the most important ancient historical works of the 1950s (*Foreign Clientelae* and 'Alexander the Great and the unity of mankind'), but although he continued to be a consistently productive and precise scholar into his old age he never equalled those achievements again, which was and is a cause of some surprise. He helped to create important new frameworks for the discipline of ancient history in the United States, first as co-founder of the Association of Ancient Historians, a little later as founder and first editor of the *American Journal of Ancient History* (1976), yet—somewhat paradoxically—his relationships with his colleagues were often unusually difficult.

Ernst Badian did not in truth fulfil all his potential as a scholar. He continued to publish, but did not complete major projects that arose out of his early work, nor did he, over a period of forty more years of active scholarly life, branch out into any of the more or less adventurous directions that ancient history had begun to explore. Even within his existing expertise one might have hoped for so much more. Yet he was an exceptionally hard-working scholar, with a remarkable knowledge of Roman republican institutions and an unrivalled knowledge of Alexander of Macedon.

The most marked of his eccentricities was his passion for parrots, part of a larger interest in the animal kingdom which, according to Carol Thomas, led him to many a zoo. At one point there were as many as seven parrots in residence; whether their claws were as sharp as their master's is not recorded.

Ernst Badian was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1974, he was a Member of the Institute for Advanced Study in 1980–1 and 1992–3, he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1984, and he was a Fellow at the National Humanities Center in 1988–9.

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