only [that phrase again] be regarded as the culminating disaster of the whole series.’. Then, on the Roman takeover (p. 159): ‘the year 64 marks, for Syrians, only the arrival of yet another group preying on their apparent wealth. Syria’s agony continued and intensified’. The model is of decline from that golden age when the Persians needed Phoenicia as the base for their naval power.

It’s regrettable to have to find fault with a book which, in detail, is so useful. Grainger is good on use of literary sources and good on numismatics. His maps, and comments on archaeological remains, are illuminating. The discussion of the relevance of epigraphical texts to the understanding of Phoenician trade (pp. 205-217) is very clear and balanced. It’s a shame that the points he seems the keenest to stress are the ones that are in most need of qualification. And finally, there’s a sting in the tail (or is it only an inconsistency?). Having been told ad init. that ‘the Phoenician response is as valid as that of the Greeks and the Jews’, it’s only ad fin. that we hear from the author his general definition of that response. It was, Grainger says, to trade and gain wealth. ‘They were a people who had forewarned the possibility of power and empire, and settled merely for riches’ (p. 219). The multicultural ideal meets the acquisitive impulse! This is par excellence, then, an academic monograph for the nineties.

Paul McKechnie


If Fortune had handed us a very few nice palimpsests or papyrus rolls, we might have been able to read Hieronymus of Cardia, Ephorus, Theopompus, Posidonius. Instead, we have Diodorus Siculus. The everlasting temptation is to mine his work for what it shows about his forebears.

Sacks has produced a study of Diodorus himself. To achieve this, he’s felt a need to be radical — ‘this book’, he says, ‘avoids as much as
possible the practice of *Quellenforschung* (p. 7). He's focused on the writer himself and spoken against a whole range of assertions based on the view that Diodorus wasn’t capable of writing anything for himself — or at least that he would never compose when he could copy.

Many of Sacks’ arguments are compelling. He insists that Diodorus speaks substantially with his own voice in the prefaces to his books. The relation of sources and models to these passages is discussed and some consistency of purpose on Diodorus’ part is established. Sacks treats the main preface as a programme for the whole work and aims to maintain that Diodorus’ *Library of History* develops its themes, some of them first touched on in the main preface, consistently (p. 6). To some degree this can be accepted: Diodorus keeps referring to the idea of the moral benefits of history for the reader. History is ‘the mother-city of philosophy’ in I, ii. 2 — and that view of history’s importance gets reiterated in different words in a number of places. But apart from history’s benefits, the themes Sacks suggests Diodorus is developing are chance, and the decline of empires (p. 23). Here the argument becomes weaker.

Sacks admits that Diodorus makes a wide range of uses of the idea of chance or fortune (p. 38). The difficulty is that fortune isn’t a theme, isn’t even a ‘consistent sentiment’ (p. 23), unless there’s some particular idea about fortune that always or usually comes across when it’s discussed. As it is, Diodorus on fortune can be extremely earnest, as at XII, i. 2 (quoted at p. 38): ‘it was Fortune who beyond their hopes presided over the course of events and unexpectedly brought to a happy issue an undertaking that appeared impossible and fraught with peril’ — or at other times, he can throw in some casual reference that implies ‘well, God only knows why it turned out this way, but it did’. There isn’t an idea about fortune that’s a ‘consistent sentiment’: it’s simply that to a late Hellenistic writer, a comment about Fortune was a common element in moralistic explanations.

‘Decline of empires’ might be a more promising suggestion, but Sacks is lukewarm about the idea of Diodorus as an anti-Roman writer. ‘An author who has made an accommodation with reality’ is his verdict (p. 158). He traces approval shown by Diodorus for moderate behaviour towards subjects and enemies (pp. 35, 79, 179) and covers Diodorus’ strongly favourable view of Caesar (pp. 182-184) — but even at the moment when Diodorus lets the mask slip a little and attacks Roman avarice (XXXVI, xxvi. 2), it remains impossible to pin him down as anti-
But the assertion that Diodorus was capable of developing thematic ideas in a sophisticated way isn’t necessary to Sacks’ main argument. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the narrative and its relations to the sources Diodorus used: with author after author from the list of presumed sources, Sacks shows points where Diodorus differs, or ways in which his treatment is distinctive. Some examples: Duris of Samos, pp. 94-95; Polybius, pp. 98-99; Appian, p. 103; Ephorus, p. 112; Timaeus, pp. 112-115. Though the reader may have reservations about the need for a phrase like ‘Diodoran thinking’ (p. 103) — which could imply a school of thought, or at least some disciples — the warning to students of the earlier authors is clear. The hope that Diodorus was unintelligent enough, or lazy enough, to be a simple copyist must be abandoned.

So what were Diodorus’ aims as he wrote, if not merely to find the easiest crib for the next period of history? As Sacks says, his purpose was ‘to serve as witness to the universality of certain moral values’ (p. 82). There’s always a moral point. If the author wasn’t developing a carefully articulated theory about fortune, then at least he was steadily pointing readers in the direction of admiring good moral examples and qualities or of avoiding the bad. Even the praise of moderation, though perhaps a special characteristic of Diodorus’ comment on empires, can be viewed simply as application of the basic moral commonplace — ‘nothing too much’.

If the moral point of Diodorus is straightforward, so also is the rationale of the whole work. Why did Diodorus spend thirty years of his life on it? Sacks picks up Diodorus’ line about history being the mother-city of philosophy and suggests that he ‘may be insisting on the subordination of philosophy, which Posidonius had argued was the great civilizer’ (p. 80) — but again, he’s asking a brief remark to take a lot of weight. Better to assume that Diodorus’ aims weren’t at all analogous to a modern writer’s motivations: C.S. Lewis in The Discarded Image speaks of how material and examples existed in plenty for medieval writers — they used their predecessors’ stories with no thought of what we’d call ‘plagiarism’, and achieved an originality they didn’t consciously aim for when they ‘improved’ the stories — putting in what they thought should be there. If we think of Diodorus writing his history like that I think we’ll be close to his method and motive. It takes us a long way from Thucydides and Herodotus.
How to place Diodorus socially? He visited Egypt from 60 until maybe 56. From then on he seems to have worked in Rome. No apparent connections with literary or political circles in Rome. Sacks' conclusion is 'perhaps having enough money to sustain him and feeling a certain alienation from his Roman masters and their Greek followers, he lived apart from society' (p. 190). Again the 'perhaps' is vital. The guess that he had a private income (p. 185) is probably fair enough, but could be taken a step further: from what? Land near Agyrium, presumably. In which case the assumption that Diodorus was always financially secure would be fragile, with Octavian's actions against Sicily (p. 192). The idea that Diodorus wasn't a teacher (pp. 184-185) isn't by any means proved by the 'unrhetorical' qualities of the Bibliothek. What if he spent his mornings teaching Homer to schoolboys?

Sacks has moved the debate in the right direction. His writing, too, has an appealing quality: use of 'the Cymean' (for 'Ephorus', pp. 13, 26) and 'the Apamean' (for 'Posidonius', p. 22) gives a smell of the style of a more spacious age — like 'the Stagirite' in Pope (Essay on Criticism, 280) and others before and after him. This is a useful book.

Paul McKechnie


A convention arose among the ancient historians of pausing in the narrative, whenever it reached the death of some notable personage, to evaluate briefly his life and character. One thinks of Thucydides' judgements on Themistocles (i. 138) and Pericles (ii. 65) or Tacitus' assessments of the imperial careers of Tiberius (Ann. vi. 51) or Galba (Hist. i. 49). This book by Arthur Pomeroy of Victoria University traces the development of these 'death notices' through Greek and Roman historiography, examining how various topoi recur and how individual writers employ them either functionally, as in the cases of the major

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