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 Bibliotheca. 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

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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 topos recur and how individual writers employ them either functionally, as in the cases of the major
historians, or merely mechanically, as in the work of less skilled practitioners.

Pomeroy begins by looking back at early Greek culture to see how the dead were commemorated and evaluated before the advent of prose historiography. Laments, eulogies, Homer’s portraits of warriors fallen in battle and funerary inscriptions are all adduced, but none of these is seen as offering a firm model for the practice of the historians. Herodotus, though the ‘father of history’, is not the originator of the convention of the death notice. He is found to place relatively little emphasis on the individual, his eye being firmly fixed on ‘the grand theme of the clash between east and west’ (pp. 22f). A precedent for the use of death notices was established by Thucydides, as remarked later by the elder Seneca (Suas. vi. 21), but his work reveals only a couple of examples and these are designed more to explain the basis of success in war and politics than to elucidate individual character. This latter concern enters the tradition with Xenophon whose death notices are more openly didactic, showing ‘morally appropriate conduct for military leaders and politicians’ (p. 42). His interest in character is ascribed in part to the influence of prose encomia and, more importantly, to that of rhetorical instruction (p. 32). From here on the death notice seems to become a standard device in the repertoire of Hellenistic historians who wish, by praise and condemnation of historical leaders, to excite their readers to ‘cheer the heroes and hiss the villains’ (p. 66). This kind of writing Pomeroy sees as dangerous in that concentration on the individual may divert attention away from more general historical trends and consequences. Chapters follow on the historians of Alexander the Great who seem to emphasize the role of Tyche or Fortuna and variously interpret his adoption of barbarian customs and acceptance of his own divinity as either fatal flaws of character or masterstrokes of policy; and on Polybius whose approach to history, being more theoretically based, places less stress on Tyche and more on the instructional value of the choices made in their courses of action by great figures of the past.

When he turns to Rome, Pomeroy again adverts to other methods of recording the actions of the dead intrinsic to the culture, such as funeral orations, tomb inscriptions and elogia attached to monuments and statues, but seems to downplay the significance of these relative to that of the direct imitation of Greek literary models. He argues, not wholly persuasively to my mind, that the elder Seneca’s reference to the funeral speech as an analogy for the death notice in Roman historical writing (quasi funebris laudatio, Suas. vi) implies no real connection between the two forms of memorial (p. 122), being no more than an attempt to devise
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a Latin translation for the Greek term *epitaphion*. The rather scanty evidence for death notices in the Republican historians is reviewed, as is the technique of Sallust, whose direct descriptions of Catiline, Sempronia, Sulla and Jugurtha, while serving to introduce these characters rather than take leave of them at the point of death, were highly influential. Livy, in keeping with his usual self-effacement as narrator, prefers to present his verdict on historical figures indirectly; for instance, by reporting the opinions and reactions of the deceased's contemporaries on the occasion of or subsequent to the funeral. After a survey of early imperial writers, something of a 'guessing game' owing to the lack of first-hand evidence, as the author acknowledges (p. 169), he comes to Tacitus, probably the greatest exponent of the short but telling obituary in classical times. Tacitus' death notices revert to Republican precedents coming 'close to the pattern of the *laudationes* and Republican funerary inscriptions' (p. 192) in their emphasis on lineage, offices held and final reputation as perceived by the Roman public. A distinction is drawn between his comments on members of the senatorial nobility and those that mark the demise of emperors. For the former, merit is assessed largely in terms of relations with emperors: great men can exist under bad emperors but, paradoxically, only if they are careful not to become too great. For the emperors themselves, Tacitus avoids laudation and reserves the death notice as 'a fearful weapon of damnation to dissuade future rulers from evil' (p. 219). In a final chapter some later imperial historians come under scrutiny. Pomeroy seems not to have a high opinion of these, accusing Dio andProcopius of contaminating the death notice with panegyric (pp. 229, 249) and Ammianus of 'moralizing overkill' (p. 245). A short conclusion recapitulates the principal findings of the study.

Pomeroy's approach, essentially chronological and consisting mainly of commentary on chosen passages of text, is not without problems. It tends to isolate the death notices from their narrative context (though an attempt is made to remedy this in a short appendix). It means that in covering some periods he must rely on extremely fragmentary and much disputed source material (for the Hellenistic historians; for the Roman Republic and the period between Livy and Tacitus), a limitation the seriousness of which he recognizes. The chronological treatment is not strictly maintained since the historians of Alexander (writing in the early Empire) are examined separately before Polybius because 'much of the material . . . mirrors earlier debates' (p. vii), with the result that Quintus Curtius Rufus, for instance, is discussed in conjunction with Arrian and Diodorus with no attempt to relate him to his predecessors writing in Latin. Biography is excluded except for the occasional
comparison. Some readers may feel the author is somewhat unsympathetic towards those historians outside the classical canon and towards those aspects of historical writing generally (the entertaining; the rhetorical) which 'detract from its most important intention of instruction' (p. 252). Pomeroy refuses to apologize for his 'methodological eclecticism', declaring himself averse to the 'straitjacket of a continuously observed rigorous theoretical model' (p. vii).

What counts as a death notice? It varies in size from no more than a couple of adjectives to a full-length digression. It is not always placed in the text immediately after the moment of death; sometimes in Roman annalistic history it is held back until the narrative reaches the end of the year. It may take the form of a catalogue of achievements or a moral portrait or both. It usually concerns a single individual but sometimes involves comparison of a pair as when Tacitus measures Marcus Servilius against Domitius Afer (ut par ingenio, ita morum diversus, Ann. xiv. 19). Death notices are often marked by the interruption of narrative by direct editorial comment on the part of the historian in his own voice (by a shift from a narrative to a quasi-judicial mode), but some historians like Livy avoid this. One can easily come up with borderline cases: is Tacitus' account of conflicting popular opinion on the career of Augustus (Ann. i. 9f) a death notice, since it is set in the narrative after his funeral and does summarize (albeit indirectly) the lasting impression he made on his contemporaries? Pomeroy, in his determination to distance himself from anything that smacks of a 'genericist' approach, steadfastly refuses to specify any defining features of the death notice, going so far as to insist that it exists only as a series of topoi capable of 'immense variation'; hence his consistent focus on the content of the notices rather than their form (pp. vi, 227). This argument is open to a number of objections, including a) that it is really an evasion of the difficult task of clarification of terms and b) that the dissolving of the obituary into a basket of topoi is itself the predictable outcome of an approach which takes an extreme position in concentrating on chronological development at the expense of the identification of formal characteristics; of favouring genetic over generic factors. This book succeeds in making the concept of the death notice more problematic.

To have these many death notices collected in a single volume and their content examined is a useful resource for other scholars and serves in itself to highlight a previously underrated element in the ancient historiographical tradition. In carefully delimiting his own enquiry, Pomeroy leaves the reader to speculate upon and subsequent researchers
perhaps to investigate most of the wider and more controversial issues. Some of these he raises but keeps at a distance: the formal attributes of the death notice; its relation to the narrative in which it occurs. Others he touches on in particular instances but chooses not to explore on a more theoretical level: what assumptions are implicit in the death notice about the role of the individual in history and how do changes in the use of death notices reflect changed perceptions about the power of the individual to control broader social and environmental forces? Yet other questions lie well beyond the scope of this book. Which historians exclude death notices and what motivates them to do so? Cato in his *Origines* (according to Nepos, *Cato*, iii. 4) declined even to give the names of historical leaders (*duces non nominavit*). How well does the death notice survive in medieval, renaissance and modern historiography? To choose but one example, why is it so prominent in Hume’s once very influential *History of England*? Finally, since the death notice imported into a narrative framework a reflective digression involving evaluation and interpretation, can it not be seen as one of the seeds of modern historiography in which interpretation and evaluation take precedence over narrative? Our most enduring historical questions, those to which scholars return again and again and on which countless students are required to exercise their ingenuity, seem directly descended from the themes of the death notice. How do we assess the achievement of Alexander the Great? What was the underlying motivation of Augustus? Was Tiberius really so disastrous an emperor as popular opinion makes out? The death notice signals the close of a life; it may also serve to initiate debate about what is and what is not the appropriate comment.

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