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THE IMPLICATIONS OF 'POLIORCETES': WAS DEMETRIUS THE BESIEGER'S NICKNAME IRONIC?[1]

Abstract: According to Diodorus, Demetrius, the son of Antigonus Monophthalmus, earned his famous sobriquet, 'Poliorcetes' during his spectacular siege of Rhodes in 305–304 BC. The ancient implications of this unique epithet are unremarkable, but modern scholarship has often taken the allocation of the surname, in retrospect, to be ironic. The thinking goes that, in the context of Rhodes, Demetrius was certainly the *besieger*, but he was not the *taker* of that city. This notion probably originates with Plutarch, whose *Life* of Demetrius is built around the trope that his famous subject aspired to much, but accomplished little. However, a systematic scrutiny of Demetrius' lifelong siege enterprises demonstrates that his nickname was, in fact, well-deserved. This paper suggests that the image of Demetrius as a 'Besieger' but not a 'Taker' of cities is more a construct facilitated by Plutarch and peddled by superficial modern analyses, than a reality.

Keywords: Demetrius Poliorcetes, Hellenistic historiography, Diodorus Siculus, Plutarch, nicknames, ancient siegecraft

διόπερ τῇ πολυχειρίᾳ τάχιον τῆς προσδοκίας ἁπάντων ἐπιτελουμένων φοβερὸς ἦν ὁ Δημήτριος τοῖς Ῥοδίοις. οὐ μόνον γὰρ τὰ μεγέθη τῶν μηχανῶν καὶ τὸ πλῆθος τῆς ἠθροισμένης δυνάμεως ἐξέπληττεν αὐτούς, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ τοῦ βασιλέως βίαιον καὶ φιλότεχνον ἐν ταῖς πολιορκίαις. εὐμήχανος γὰρ ὢν καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ἐν ταῖς ἐπινοίαις καὶ πολλὰ παρὰ τὴν τῶν ἀρχιτεκτόνων τέχνην παρευρίσκων ὠνομάσθη μὲν πολιορκητής, τὴν δ' ἐν ταῖς προσβολαῖς ὑπεροχὴν καὶ βίαν τοιαύτην εἶχεν ὥστε δόξαι μηδὲν οὕτως ὀχυρὸν εἶναι τεῖχος ὃ δύναιτ' ἂν τὴν ἀπ' ἐκείνου τοῖς πολιορκουμένοις ἀσφάλειαν παρέχεσθαι.

Thanks to his large workforce, everything was completed sooner than expected. Demetrius now posed a real threat to the Rhodians. It was not only the size of his siege engines and the large number of troops he had assembled that terrified them, but also the forcefulness and ingenuity that he brought to sieges. He had an extremely good technical mind and it was because he invented many devices that went beyond the skill of the professional engineers that he was called Poliorcetes 'the besieger

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> of cities'. And when it came to assaulting a city, he had such technical superiority, and brought so much forceful energy to bear, that it seemed that no wall was strong enough to afford the besieged protection from him.[2]

Diodorus Siculus provides us with this snapshot of Demetrius, 'The Besieger of Cities' in early 304 BC as he embarks on the second stage of his famous year-long siege of Rhodes. Diodorus' sources for this tableau are difficult to ascertain, as his Rhodian chapters (20.81–8, 91–100), which provide such a vivid description of the great and grim spectacle, appear to be drawn from several authors and genres, including Hieronymus of Cardia and Zeno of Rhodes. It is even possible that Diodorus himself is responsible for some of the comments embedded in his narrative, and his historiography in Book 20 is far more complex than in other sections of his *Bibliotheke*.[3] At the precise point when Demetrius is designated 'Poliorcetes', the unfortunate Rhodians had survived (barely!) the naval attacks on their harbour in the first few months of the epic assault, but were now dismayed to see the next act looming: an all-out offensive by land. The symbol and centrepiece of this threat was taking place in full view: the construction of a gigantic *helepolis*, or 'City-Taker'.[4] This terrifying machine was to capture, if not the city of Rhodes, the imagination of the entire ancient world, and made Demetrius a legendary figure.[5] While the construction was underway, Demetrius deployed other men to fill the moat and clear a space four stades wide (782.4 m = 855.64 yards) as a path for the *helepolis* up to the walls, and set sappers to work tunnelling under the walls to undermine them. He also built eight penthouses to protect his men while at their labours, and two more enormous ones, pushed by 1,000 men, to bear gigantic battering rams,[6] displaying a prodigious energy and

[2] Diod. 20.92.1–2, trans. Waterfield. See also Amm. Marc. 23.4.10–13; 24.2.18: *Poliorcetes appellatus est*; Plut. *Demetr.* 42.10–11; cf. 20.1–9; Aul. Gell. *NA* 15.31.1; Vitr. 10.16.4; Syncellus, *Chron.* 320; Suda, s.v. 'Πολιορκῆσαι' (Π 1907 Adler).

[3] For discussion of the multi-layered source tradition for the siege of Rhodes, see Wheatley (2016) 45–9; and for an incisive new treatment of Diodorus' historiography see now Waterfield (2019) xxviii–xxxii, and 537–42.

[4] Sources for the *helepolis* at Rhodes: Diod. 20.91; Plut. *Demetr.* 21.1–3; Ath. Mech. 27.2–6; Vitr. 10.16.4; Amm. Marc. 23.4.10–13; Moschion, *FGrHist* 575 F 1 *ap.* Athen. 5.206d; Suda, s.v. 'Ελεπόλεις' (E 799 Adler). The best discussion of the machine is now Whitehead and Blyth (2004) 134–8 and 190, with Fig. 16; see also Wehrli (1968) 210–11; Marsden (1971) 84–5; Garlan (1974) 209, 229–34; Meiggs (1982) 165–8; Lendle (1983) 58–70; Schürmann (1991) 82–5; Kern (1999) 243–7; Pimouguet-Pédarros (2003) 378–9; ead. (2011) 33–5, 161–5, Fig. VIII, and *passim*; Campbell (2006) 83–7.

[5] For the technical specifications of the *helepolis*, see Wheatley (2016) 56–8.

[6] Diod. 20.95.1 (positing improbably dimensions of 120 cubits); Wehrli (1968) 209–10; Meiggs (1982) 168–9; Berthold (1984) 72–3; Pimouguet-Pédarros (2011) 166–8; Murray (2012)

determination to assault the city by all means possible. It is likely that these efforts took up much of the winter of 305/4 BC, and Diodorus states that 30,000 men were employed.

Curiously, our other main source for the period, Plutarch, sends a mixed message. While corroborating Demetrius' energy and genius at preparing and designing war machines, the biographer suggests that he was better at planning than he was at executing his enterprises. In his *Parallel Life* of the Besieger, he states:

> ἀλλὰ καὶ παρασκευάσασθαι δύναμιν ἢ χρήσασθαι βελτίων ἐδόκει στρατηγὸς εἶναι, πάντα μὲν ἐκ περιουσίας ὑπάρχειν βουλόμενος ἐπὶ τὰς χρείας, τῆς δὲ περὶ τὰς ναῦς καὶ τὰ μηχανήματα μεγαλουργίας καὶ καθ' ἡδονήν τινα τοῦ θεωρεῖν ἀπλήστως ἔχων. εὐφυὴς γὰρ ὢν καὶ θεωρητικὸς οὐκ εἰς παιδιὰς οὐδ' εἰς διαγωγὰς ἀχρήστους ἔτρεψε τὸ φιλότεχνον, ὥσπερ ἄλλοι βασιλεῖς αὐλοῦντες καὶ ζωγραφοῦντες καὶ τορεύοντες.
>
> Indeed, as a general he had the reputation of being more effective in preparing an army than in handling it. He insisted on being abundantly supplied for every eventuality, he had an insatiable ambition to embark on larger and larger projects, whether in shipbuilding or the construction of siege engines, and he took intense pleasure in watching the workings of these creations. For he had a good natural intelligence and a speculative mind and he did not apply his talents to mere pastimes or useless diversions, like some other kings, who played the flute or painted or worked in metal.[7]

This divergent historiographical characterisation has been perpetuated by modern scholarship, leaving a lingering impression that Demetrius' nickname was ironic, and that he accomplished very little, despite his dynamism and charisma. And so it has gone for 1,900 years: the allocation of the surname has often been taken, in retrospect, to be sarcastic. The thinking goes that, in the context of Rhodes, Demetrius was certainly the *besieger*, but he was not the *taker* of that city.[8] Consequently, by the twenty-first century the image of 'The

117–18. On the ram-carrying penthouses invented by Hegetor of Byzantium, see Ath. Mech. 21.2–26.5; Vitr. 10.15.2–7, with Whitehead and Blyth (2004) 120–34; Campbell (2006) 87–92. Hegetor is sometimes cited as being associated with Demetrius; see, for instance, Tarn (1930) 107 and 109–10; Winter (1971) 318–19, but this is unlikely: see the cautious and definitive discussions of Whitehead and Blyth (2004) 120; and Campbell (2006) 87–8.

[7] Plut. *Demetr.* 20.1–2, trans. Duff. The sinister undertones of the first sentence are notable.

[8] Modern scholars have regularly asserted that his nickname was derisive; see, for instance, Berthold (1984) 79; Huß (2001) 190; Campbell (2006) 81–2; Hauben (2010) 103; Murray (2012) 118; Anson (2014) 168; and especially Heckel (1984); and Gomme (1945) 17

Besieger' is somewhat tarnished, and his mana diminished. In 1945 Arnold Gomme, in the introduction to his magisterial *Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, made this remark:

> The name Poliorketes was surely first given to Demetrios in derision: he besieged towns, for months, went on besieging them, but did not take them. He was not Ἐκπολιορκητής.[9]

Forty years later Waldemar Heckel wrote:

> There is no denying that the siege of Rhodes was an impressive undertaking, and that the Rhodians themselves could be justly proud of their achievement. But, in the final analysis it rated, and was remembered, as a failure. It is, at any rate, in keeping with the enigmatic career of Demetrios that the nickname which was originally applied to him in derision became the epithet by which he was known to posterity, one so radiant that it blinds us to one curious fact about him: his fame as a besieger of cities derives from one of the major setbacks of his career. Besieger indeed![10]

In this essay I argue that Demetrius' nickname was, in fact, well-deserved. This is demonstrated by the detailed evidence, which I shall present here, of how intimidating and successful his forty-seven recorded siege operations were. I will first examine the historiographic tradition and its reception, and then explore the etymology of the epithet, before concluding that Demetrius earned his nickname fair and square. It was anything but ironic.

The Historiographical Problem

The testimonies of our two major sources regarding this notorious nickname are both enlightening, and puzzling. On the one hand in Diodorus we have the description of a warlord in his full potency, and the alarm which he instils in his opponents; on the other we have in Plutarch the admonition that with

n. 1 (below). For a more balanced view: Wheatley (2001) 141; Lo Presti (2010) 311–12, 318; Pimouguet-Pédarros (2011) 307–10; Rose (2015) 232 and (2019) 173; and for the cultic implications: O'Sullivan (2014) 84–5.

[9] Gomme (1945) 17 n. 1, offering, for the nuance, a compound variation of the verb: ἐκπολιορκέω, 'to conquer, cause to capitulate', e.g., Thuc. 1.94.2, 117.3, 131.1, 134.2; Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.3; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 19.3.

[10] Heckel (1984) 440.

great power comes great culpability, and that those who wield it should do so with moral insight and restraint:

> *ἀλλὰ Δημήτριος ἔχαιρε τῷ βασιλεῖ τῶν θεῶν ἀνομοιοτάτην ἐπιγραφόμενος προσωνυμίαν· ὁ μὲν γὰρ Πολιεὺς καὶ Πολιοῦχος, ὁ δὲ Πολιορκητὴς ἐπίκλησιν ἔσχεν. οὕτως ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ χώραν τὸ αἰσχρὸν ὑπὸ δυνάμεως ἀμαθοῦς ἐπελθὸν συνῳκείωσε τῇ δόξῃ τὴν ἀδικίαν.*
>
> Demetrius, on the other hand, took pleasure in being given a nickname which is the opposite of the one bestowed on the king of the gods, for Zeus is known as the 'Protector' or 'Defender' of cities, but Demetrius as 'the Besieger'. It is through such an attitude that naked power, if it lacks wisdom, allows evil actions to usurp the place of good, and glorious achievements to be associated with injustice, and so it happened with Demetrius.[11]

For Diodorus, Demetrius is irresistible. For Plutarch, Demetrius has failed the important test. The negative implication of futility and failed ambition follow readily, especially in the light of Demetrius' less than glorious end (he eventually died in captivity years later in Syria). Thus, what can hardly have been an insulting epithet in 304 BC has been turned during historiographic transmission into a mockery. This fact is astonishing, given that our main literary sources state that he was dazzling, magnificent:

> *ἦν δὲ καὶ κατὰ τὸ μέγεθος τοῦ σώματος καὶ κατὰ τὸ κάλλος ἡρωικὸν ἀποφαίνων ἀξίωμα, ὥστε καὶ τοὺς ἀφικνουμένους τῶν ξένων θεωροῦντας εὐπρέπειαν κεκοσμημένην ὑπεροχῇ βασιλικῇ θαυμάζειν καὶ παρακολουθεῖν ἐν ταῖς ἐξόδοις ἕνεκεν τῆς θέας. ἐπὶ δὲ τούτοις ὑπῆρχε καὶ τῇ ψυχῇ μετέωρος καὶ μεγαλοπρεπὴς καὶ καταφρονῶν οὐ τῶν πολλῶν μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἐν ταῖς δυναστείαις ὄντων, καὶ τὸ πάντων ἰδιώτατον.*
>
> Both in stature and in beauty he displayed the dignity of a hero, so that even those strangers who had come from a distance, when they beheld his comeliness arrayed in royal splendour, marvelled at him and followed him as he went abroad in order to gaze at him. Furthermore, he was haughty in spirit and proud and looked down not only upon common men but also on those of royal estate.[12]

[11] Plut. *Demetr.* 42.10–11, trans. Duff; cf. *Demetr.* 1.7; *Arist.* 6.2.

[12] Diod. 20.92.3–4, trans. Geer; cf. Plut. *Demetr.* 2.2–3; 20.2; Diod. 19.81.4; Aelian, *VH* 12.14 (= 14.46c). Curiously, the compiler of the Suda Lexicon (s.v. '**Δημήτριος, Φανοστράτου, Φαληρεύς**' (Δ 429 Adler)) has reproduced Diodorus' description of Demetrius just before

Arguably, the trend of understating Demetrius' achievements begins with Plutarch, who surely had access to some of Diodorus' sources, including Hieronymus, but has a devious authorial agenda.[13] Although he gives no hint that 'Poliorcetes' was meant ironically, his *Life* of Demetrius is built around the trope that his famous subject aspired to much, but accomplished little. He was at best a showman, at worst a charlatan. This construct serves Plutarch's *modus operandi* well, as he presents Demetrius in tandem with Marc Antony as a pair of negative examples in his exploration of virtue and vice.[14] The biographer builds Demetrius' brilliance and genius up (*Demetr.* 17.1; 20.1–2, 5–9), but the true tale is told in his sinister asides: 'he returned [from the Nile] without accomplishing anything' (19.4); 'although [at Rhodes] he was accomplishing nothing worthy of mention' (22.1); and 'since he could accomplish nothing [in a war against Athens]'.[15] Plutarch therefore presents for his Roman readers a perfect subject to yoke together with the much-reviled Antony, and in the process mangles the historical narrative by transmitting a Demetrius whose greatest accolade is a mockery. And because, as luck would have it, Plutarch's biography is the only complete treatment of Demetrius' life to survive from the wreck of Hellenistic historiography, modern scholars have followed his cue.

the battle of Gaza in late 312 almost verbatim (19.81.3–4), but has inserted it in the entry for his namesake, Demetrius of Phalerum. See also Billows (1990) 7; Hornblower (1981) 227–32.

[13] On Plutarch and his sources see, succinctly, Duff (2012) xxiii–xxv. Plutarch's appetite for research is amply demonstrated by *Alex.* 46, and his authorial agendas are laid out at the beginning of the *Nicias*, and the *Alexander*. It is also likely that he had access to Diodorus himself, an interesting largely unexplored possibility.

[14] Plut. *Demetr.* 1.5–8; cf. *Alex.* 1.2, with Andrei and Scuderi (1989) 39–40; Duff (1999) 45–9 and 278–81. It is notable that Antony's father, M. Antonius Creticus, bore a *cognomen* that may have been regarded as ironic, given his abject performance against the Cretan pirates: see Flor. 1.42.7; App. *Sic.* 6; cf. Plut. *Ant.* 1; Diod. 40.1, with de Souza (1999) 145–8. Perhaps Plutarch represents him generously to resonate with Demetrius' ideal family upbringing; cf. Pelling (1988) 22, 117; Rose (2015) 22.

[15] Plut. *Demetr.* 19.4: *ἐπανῆλθεν ἄπρακτος*; cf. 22.1: *οὐδὲν ἄξιον λόγου πράττων*; 33.3: *ὡς δ' οὐδὲν ἐπέραινε*; and *Ant.* 34.7: *πράττων μὲν οὐδέν*, for a parallel comment on Antony's performance at the siege of Samosata in 38 BC (I thank Graham Gwozdecky at Trinity College, Dublin, for drawing my attention to this reference on my visit in 2017). One is put in mind of the famous 'damning asides' of Plutarch's near-contemporary, Tacitus, on Tiberius, e.g., *Ann.* 1.1, 62, 72; 2.42; cf. *Hist.* 1.49.4 on Galba. It may be that Plutarch is as sententious as Tacitus.

The Etymology of Demetrius' Nickname

To gain some insight as to why Diodorus coined 'Poliorcetes' for Demetrius, it may also be useful to review the etymology of the epithet. The epsilon-contracted verb πολιορκέω is formed from πόλις + ἔρκος,[16] and carries several nuances in meaning, but is mainly translated as 'to besiege, blockade, tighten a siege'.[17] Figuratively the word may be rendered 'to press closely, oppress, harass' (*BDAG*). In the passive voice the meanings may expand: 'to be besieged, in the grip of a siege, in a state of siege, blockaded (of a fleet), dammed (of a river, in particular the Scamander: Pl. *Prt.* 340a)'; and figuratively 'to be tormented, clenched, oppressed' (*BDAG*); also 'to be blocked' (medical), and 'to be pestered' (*LSJ*).[18] Related is the compound adjective πτολίπορθος, formed from πτόλις + πέρθω, 'sacking cities', and 'destroyer of cities', an epic epithet, most examples of which are found in Homer, Hesiod, and Pindar.[19] But the first declension masculine noun πολιορκητής is unique in that it appears to have only ever been applied as a nickname to Demetrius, the son of Antigonus Monophthalmus.[20]

What can be made of this singular, and very loaded, adaptation of an epithet applied to gods and heroes, and first recorded in the context of the most epic siege undertaken since Troy? The events of 305–304 captured the imagination of the Greek world, and left resonances, usually connected to specific details or cameos from the siege narrative, throughout the Graeco-

[16] πόλις -εως, 'citadel, city, city-state, community'; third declension, from Proto-Hellenic πτόλις, derived from Proto-Indo-European **tpolH-*. The early form πτόλις shows metathesis tp > pt because Ancient Greek stop clusters always end in a coronal. Cognate with Sanskrit (*pūr*, 'city') and Lithuanian *pilìs*. ἔρκος -εος or -ους, 'fence, enclosure, wall for defence, barrier, hedge'; third declension, ultimately from Proto-Indo-European **serk-*, like Latin *sarciō -īre*, 'mend, restore, twine', from Hittite *šar-nin-k*, 'restore damage, make amends' (Beekes (2009) II.1219).

[17] *LSJ*; *BDAG* s.v. πολιορκέω, e.g., Hdt. 1.17, 154; Ar. *Lys.* 281; *Vesp.* 685; Alciphr. 3.26.2; 4.16.1; Plut. *Mar.* 18.1; *Brut.* 30.6, etc.

[18] Plut. *Sull.* 25.2. The latter meaning is ironic considering Demetrius' legendary womanising; see Ogden (1999) 173–7.

[19] πτολίπορθος -ον: third declension adjective with πέρθω, 'to sack, ravage', e.g., an epithet of Ares: Hom. *Il.* 20.152; Hes. *Theog.* 936; of Odysseus: Hom. *Il.* 2.278; cf. Plut. *Mor.* 987c; of Oileus: Hom. *Il.* 2.728; of Achilles: Hom. *Il.* 15.77; cf. also Diod. 11.14.4; Pind. *Ol.* 8.35; Aesch. *Ag.* 472, 783 (*BDAG*; *LSJ*).

[20] πολιορκητής -οῦ: formed on the model of ναύτης, στρατιώτης, etc. Ancient Greek names were commonly formed from two ordinary Greek roots in this way.

Roman source tradition, from the Parian Marble down to the *Suda*.[21] Demetrius towered like a Homeric hero above Rhodes, and Hellenistic culture, and his beloved *hetaera*, Lamia, was even likened by an unknown comic poet to his *helepolis*, and thus to another 'city-taker': Helen.[22]

To further counter the case that the nickname was derisory, it is clear that Demetrius himself revelled in his *epiklesis*. As we have seen, Plutarch explicitly states this (*Demetr.* 42.10), and further evidence is provided by an anecdote from Phylarchus, preserved by both the biographer and Athenaeus, which relates the famous satirical toasts pledged at Demetrius' symposia to himself and his father as the only true kings. The other dynasts were dismissed with apparently insulting epithets: Ptolemy as 'Fleet-Commander', Seleucus as 'Elephant-Master', Lysimachus as 'Guardian of the Treasury' (= eunuch!), and Agathocles as 'Lord of the Isles'.[23] Although Plutarch is disapproving, the fact remains that Demetrius enjoyed having the surname 'Poliorcetes'. Perhaps he 'owned' it after weathering some initial negative connotations, but it seems that he regarded the only really worthwhile title to be *Basileus*, and that he and his father were the only true holders of that rank. Notably, *Basileus* is the only title that appears on inscriptions and Antigonid coins, whereas Poliorcetes is a strictly literary epithet. The distinction is important. A nickname, surname (*epiklesis*), or sobriquet is generally attributed by popular acclaim or notoriety, and is preserved in the literature, but officially sanctioned epithets were imposed, most often for propaganda reasons, and appear on coinage and epigraphy.[24] For Demetrius, *poliorcetics* was the route to *basileia*. One was the method, the other the goal; neither were reprehensible.

[21] Narrative of the siege: Diod. 20.81–8, 91–100; cf. *P. Berol.* 11632 (= *FGrHist* 533 F 2 = *BNJ* 533 F 2 (S. Ueno)). Other ancient sources for aspects of the siege: Plut. *Demetr.* 21–2; *Mor.* 183A–B; Paus. 1.6.6–7; Polyaen. 4.6.16; Trogus, *Prol.* 15; App. *B. Civ.* 4.9.66–7; Aul. Gell. *NA* 15.31; Vitr. 10.16.4–8; Amm. Marc. 23.4.10–13; Parian Marble, *FGrHist* 239 F B23 = *BNJ* 239 F B23 (J. P. Sickinger); Athen. 5.206d; Ath. Mech. 27.2–6; Plin. *HN* 7.38.126; 35.36.102–6; Str. 14.2.5, C652; Suda, s.v. 'Πρωτογένης' (Π 2963 Adler); s.v. ''Ελεπόλεις' (Ε 799 Adler); Cic. *Ver.* 2.4.60.135; *Orat.* 2.5; Fronto, *Ep.* 1.10.4; Frontin. *Str.* 1.7.3–4; Ael. *VH* 12.41; *Chron. Lind.* D 95–115 (*Epiph.* 3).

[22] Plut. *Demetr.* 27.4; cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 689; Ogden (1999) 249–50. On Lamia, see Wheatley (2003).

[23] Plut. *Demetr.* 25; *Mor.* 823C–D; Athen. 6.261b = Phylarchus, *FGrHist* 81 F 31, with Hauben (1974a); Gruen (1985); Bosworth (2002) 272–4; Rose (2015) 236–7; *BNJ* 81 F 31 (F. Landucci Gattinoni); cf. F 12. The date of the anecdote must be 302 BC, *before* Seleucus deployed his elephants with such devastating effect at Ipsus.

[24] For discussion of these names, their origins, and definitions, see van Nuffelen (2009); de Callataÿ and Lorber (2011); Muccioli (2013) 11–33, and esp. 68–81 on Antigonus and Demetrius.

The Evidence

One way to assess whether the appellation 'Poliorcetes' had negative connotations in Demetrius' lifetime is to survey the execution of his poliorcetic enterprises: it is arguable that the numbers cannot lie, and I present here a catalogue of the Besieger's sieges.

(1) Petra or Es-Sela, Nabataea, 311 BC

In July 311, Demetrius led a force of more than 8,000 selected soldiers, half foot and half cavalry, into the desert to exact revenge on the Arabs for the defeat of the Antigonid general, Athenaeus, some months earlier. Diodorus does not record the starting point of this expedition, nor the specific route, but, as the absence of roads is observed, they appear to have marched cross-country for three full days.[25] Scouts sighted Demetrius quickly, and by means of fire signals already in place (further evidence that the Arabs had no faith in Antigonus' promises), warned the main body of Nabataeans, who sent their property to an unspecified fortified 'rock' and scattered into the desert as was their wont.[26] Thus ensued Demetrius Poliorcetes' first independent siege. Arriving at the stronghold, and finding no unsecured booty, he made several fruitless assaults, but retired by the first evening (Diod. 19.97.1–2). Clearly, he had underestimated the strength of the position, perhaps misled by the ease with which Athenaeus had executed his own siege (Diod. 19.95.2–3). Furthermore, there is little doubt Demetrius' army was debilitated by the arduous desert crossing, and lacked heavy machinery for siege work. There were few options for supplying his men with food or water, as the Nabataeans pointed out on the following day,[27] and the risk of being attacked and cut off by a large Arab force, as had befallen Athenaeus, was probably in his mind. Militarily, his situation was vulnerable: the success of the enterprise depended solely on

[25] Diod. 19.96.4–97.1; Plut. *Demetr.* 7.1. The distances in Diodorus' account are confused. Athenaeus' march from Idumaea to Petra supposedly covered 2,200 stades (*c.* 430 km: Diod. 19.95.2; Hornblower (1981) 148; Bosworth (2002) 199–200), but the number must be corrupt.

[26] This 'rock' is usually assumed to be Petra, and identified with the stronghold that fell to Athenaeus, but Bosworth (2002) 202–3 doubts this on account of the restricted access described by Diodorus 19.97.1, and proposes that the site was Es-Sela, another ancient Edomite fastness (whose name also means 'rock') some 50 km north of Petra, near modern Bouseirah (ancient Bosra). This theory is supported by Diodorus' observation (19.98.1) that Demetrius only needed to travel 300 stades (*c.* 58 km) to the Dead Sea on his return (Petra is *c.* 104 km away).

[27] Diod. 19.97.5. It must also be noted that this was July, one of the hottest times of the year.

the element of surprise, and without it the task was impossible. The combination of these factors caused Demetrius to negotiate with the defenders on the second day, and a treaty was made, sweetened by gifts, hostages, and a safe passage back through the desert. Plutarch diverges somewhat, stating that: 'by his cool and resolute leadership he so overawed the barbarians that he captured from them 700 camels and great quantities of booty, and returned in safety'.[28] Thus Demetrius' first independent siege ended in negotiation, and although the objective was not achieved, the outcome was positive, and the diplomatic ties appear to have endured: much later in 306 the Antigonids received considerable logistic support from the Arabs for their invasion of Egypt (Diod. 20.73.3). His father, however, roundly rebuked him when he returned, for sustaining what he evidently considered a diplomatic and strategic defeat (Diod. 19.100.1).

(2) Babylon, 311 or 310 BC

Demetrius' next poliorcetic commission has proved both chronographically and historiographically controversial. Antigonus ordered his son to mount a lightning expedition to Babylonia to recover that satrapy, which had fallen to Seleucus during the summer of 311. He was specifically ordered to execute his mission swiftly and return to the coast with all possible speed.[29] If it is accepted that the campaign took place during the winter of 311/10, rather than from mid 310 into 309, and is not recorded by the Babylonian Chronicle, a feasible reconstruction can be made. At some time in late November or early December, Demetrius left Damascus at the head of a large army comprising 5,000 Macedonian and 10,000 mercenary foot, and 4,000 horse. He found that Seleucus was long gone, and Babylon evacuated, with only the two citadels (or palaces) defended. He promptly captured, plundered, and garrisoned one of them, but after trying for several days, realised that the second could not be reduced by his deadline. Demetrius encountered no other concerted opposition in the largely deserted satrapy, but was covertly monitored by the Seleucid general Patrocles, who supplied his master with detailed intelligence regarding enemy activities. Finally, Plutarch asserts, with the deadline for his

[28] Plut. *Demetr.* 7.1, with Abel (1937) 390; Wehrli (1968) 144–5; Lens Tuero (1994) 119–20; Bosworth (1996) 147 and (2002) 204–8; Rose (2015) 143–5.

[29] Diod. 19.100.4–7; Plut. *Demetr.* 7.3–4; cf. *Diadochi Chronicle* 10 (BM 34660 and 36313), the famous Babylonian *Chronicle of the Successors*, now accessible through the online project on the Livius site, *BCHP* 3: https://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/bchp-3-diadochi-chronicle/, with description, text, and commentary by Robartus van der Spek and Irving Finkel. The actual year of the invasion is a matter of enormous controversy: see, for various theories, Billows (1990) 141–2; Geller (1990) 7; van der Spek (2014) 331–4. Boiy (2007) 124–9, however, in a meticulous reconstruction and analysis of all the chronological schemes (125), maintains November 311 (129 and 146–7).

return approaching, Demetrius began a systematic devastation of the city and countryside, carrying off much booty, and returned to his father, leaving a large force of 6,000 (Diodorus) or 7,000 (Plutarch) under his friend Archelaus to continue the siege and hold the city. Plutarch provides an insightful evaluation of Demetrius' campaign: he inflicted a great deal of damage on his own cause, and, if anything, cemented Seleucus' tenure in the region. Demetrius' destructive behaviour remains a conundrum, and was clearly seen, even by the ancient writers, to be counter-productive to the re-establishment of Antigonid rule. His brutality may have been meant as a warning to the hapless refugees of the region that they were regarded as rebels against their legitimate ruler;[30] but equally he may have been driven by the need to feed a large army in a denuded land. Alternatively, it was possibly a miscalculation on the part of the young man in an attempt to maintain his popularity with the troops and console himself for his inability to take both citadels within the time limit. Thus, though the Besieger's second attempt at poliorcetics was only a partial success, he was embarked on an ambiguous path that was to define him for posterity. Moreover, it is worth noting that Alexander himself, though highly successful in siegecraft, was never required to assail Babylon, and this action may have been one of the triggers in the development of Demetrius' unique reputation in the Hellenistic milieu.

(3) Halicarnassus, 309 or 308 BC

Diodorus next has Demetrius expelling the forces of Ptolemy from the cities of Cilicia Trachea, a task he swiftly executed (Diod. 20.19.5). With Ptolemy commencing full-scale operations in the region, it is most likely Demetrius remained in Asia Minor to guard against further incursions on Antigonid territory, probably basing himself back in Celaenae, the old Phrygian capital where he had spent his childhood. One small and enigmatic entry in Plutarch supports this reconstruction:

> However, [Demetrius] was able to relieve Halicarnassus, which Ptolemy was besieging, by coming swiftly to its rescue.[31]

[30] Similar drastic punitive action against 'rebels' was taken by Alexander in India: see Bosworth (1996), esp. ch. 5.

[31] Plut. *Demetr.* 7.3: Πτολεμαίου μέντοι πολιορκοῦντος Ἁλικαρνασὸν ὀξέως βοηθήσας ἐξήρπασε τὴν πόλιν (trans. Duff). This excerpt should be placed in 309; see Seibert (1969) 186, 'Jahr 309 oder 308'; Hauben (2014) 247–9, 'its chronology remains uncertain'; Worthington (2016) 148–9; but Bosworth (2000) 216 'undated'.

This excerpt is abnormal, in that it is tacked on to the brief account of Demetrius' Babylonian adventure, and represents a hugely compressed bridging passage in the biography.[32] Plutarch has essentially condensed four years of history into one brief sentence, imposing an artificial and erroneous chronological proximity on two events. This has considerably perplexed succeeding scholars, some of whom have attempted to conjoin the relief of Halicarnassus with Demetrius' return from Babylonia.[33] From the historical context, however, it is clear that the events are at least eighteen months apart, if not more. Patently, Plutarch's biographical method had little regard for chronography, and the entry under scrutiny must be regarded as a unique pointer confirming Demetrius' presence in Anatolia to neutralise Ptolemy's incursions at this time. Although these events were not, strictly speaking, siege operations, they represent a related category of siege relief, which is also of some interest in the context of the present investigation.

(4) Athens, Munychia, and Megara, 307 BC

In early 307 at Ephesus, Antigonus commissioned Demetrius to free all the cities of Greece, beginning with, and paying special attention to, Athens (Diod. 20.45.1). He was suitably equipped with a fleet of 250 ships, fully manned, and significantly, an enormous treasury of 5,000 talents, as well as a competent staff of senior advisers. Polyaenus supplies details of the tactics used to lull the unsuspecting city: the bulk of the fleet was hove-to off Cape Sunium, while Demetrius with twenty ships sailed swiftly up the coast as if enroute to Salamis. At the last minute they darted into the unchained Piraeus.[34] Demetrius was initially received as a liberator as the Athenians dismantled the pro-Cassander regime of Demetrius of Phalerum, but the garrison commander, Dionysius, withdrew to hold the fort of Munychia. At this point the secondary sources come into direct opposition: Diodorus records an immediate assault on the fort; Plutarch, that Demetrius isolated the fort and sailed against Megara.[35] While political uncertainty reigned in Athens and the vacuum left by the

[32] For discussion and examples of Plutarch's technique of chronological compression, see Pelling (1980) 127–8. The present excerpt, although not mentioned by Pelling, is a classic example of this device; cf. Bosworth (2002) 204–6, 224; Rose (2015) 149–50.

[33] E.g., Billows (1990) 142; van der Spek (2014) 333–4.

[34] Polyaen. 4.7.6 supplies most of the details, supplemented by Plut. *Demetr.* 8.5–7; see Ferguson (1911) 63–5. Modern treatments of the coup and its aftermath abound: Billows (1990) 147–51; Habicht (1997) 65–74; Mikalson (1998) 75–9; Paschidis (2008) 62–3, 78–83; Oliver (2007) 52–3, 116; O'Sullivan (2009) 276–8; Bayliss (2011) 159–67; Murray (2012) 101–5; Anson (2014) 153–5; Rose (2018) 265–70. It is possible that Demetrius initially penetrated only the outer harbour.

[35] Diod. 20.45.5–7; Plut. *Demetr.* 9.2; cf. D. Hal. *Din.* 2, 3; Parian Marble, *FGrHist* 239 = *BNJ* 239 F B20–1; Suda, s.v. '*Δημήτριος*' (Δ 431 Adler).

Phalerean was being filled, he evidently decided to leave the strongly defended fort under a close siege intended to sap the morale of the garrison, until the political outcome of the diplomatic manoeuvring became known. In the meantime, he decided to strike quickly at a nearby, softer target. Demetrius took about a month to reduce Megara, which was evidently stoutly defended by Cassander's garrison. Few details remain, but despite the intercession of the Athenians, the city was at least partially plundered by the 'liberating' forces.[36] On his return to Athens, Demetrius' first action was to assault Munychia in earnest. This siege was prosecuted with brutal efficiency, the details being supplied by Diodorus. In the face of stern resistance, a round-the-clock attack was mounted by both land and sea, with all available engines of war, and Demetrius' troops fighting in relays. After two days the walls were stripped of defenders by the incessant catapult barrage and breached, and the garrison surrendered. Dionysius, the *phrourarch*, was taken alive, and, according to the *Suda*, executed.[37] In the space of a month Demetrius had successfully prosecuted two significant siege actions; he had well and truly embarked on the road to earning his famous sobriquet. Munychia was demolished, its walls razed, and the site given back to the Athenian government, a visible signal that an Antigonid garrison would not be substituted. In his implementation of these matters, Demetrius showed great political acumen. The siege was a public exhibition of his military power and skill, the execution of Dionysius a warning against resistance, and the destruction of the fort a token of good faith to the *demos* that a new era had indeed dawned.

(5) Cyprus: Carpasia, Urania, Salamis, 306 BC

Demetrius' next siege operations were undertaken a little under a year later during the Cypriot campaign, when he successfully stormed Carpasia and Urania, and then invested the city of Salamis.[38] The blockade must have been carried out by both land and sea, but was not effected quickly enough to prevent Menelaus, Ptolemy's brother and governor of the island, sending messengers out for help, and Diodorus goes on to describe the first of Demetrius' truly great siege initiatives. His earlier efforts at Petra, Babylon, Megara, and Munychia clearly paled in comparison with the siege of Salamis, which itself was only a precursor to the famous siege of Rhodes a year later.

[36] Siege of Megara: Diod. 20.46.3; Diog. Laert. 2.115; Plut. *Demetr.* 9.8–10; *Mor.* 5F, 475C; Philochorus *ap.* D. Hal. *Din.* 3 (= *FGrHist* 328 F 66); Sen. *Constant.* 2.5.6; *Ep.* 9.18–19.

[37] Siege of Munychia: Diod. 20.45.5–7 (detailed); Suda, s.v. 'Δημήτριος' (Δ 431 Adler) (fate of Dionysius); Plut. *Demetr.* 10.1 (abbreviated); D. Hal. *Din.* 2 and 3 (chronological pointers). See further Marsden (1969) 105, and Billows (1990) 149.

[38] Diod. 20.47.1–2 (Carpasia and Urania); 20.48 (Salamis), with Marsden (1969) 105. Plutarch ignores the sieges and proceeds directly from the initial land engagement to the main event: the *naumachia.*

As with Munychia, Demetrius had a large store of catapults, stone-throwers, and all types of siege machinery, and he also sent to the mainland for technicians to construct the first of his legendary specialised siege towers: a *helepolis*, and two penthoused battering rams. The procedures were not new. Alexander's siege of Halicarnassus in 334, and the seven-month siege of the supposedly impregnable island of Tyre in 332, had hitherto been benchmarks for innovation in siege technology, and had featured the use of siege towers. Antigonus himself had successfully besieged Tyre for fifteen months in 315/14, an event at which Demetrius was probably present.[39] Demetrius equipped and prosecuted the assault meticulously, with his nine-story *helepolis* being the centrepiece of the onslaught.[40] His preparations must have taken more than a month, but in the initial engagement the Salaminians put up stout resistance. The *helepolis* and the rams proved decisive, however, clearing the battlements and shattering the defences. At nightfall, after some days, the assault reached a climax with the fall of the city being imminent. During that night Menelaus attempted a sortie, and succeeded in setting the *helepolis* and other machinery alight. Despite Demetrius' efforts, his main siege engines were destroyed, and he was forced to persevere without them. A stalemate had been reached. At this point the siege was broken off, as news had arrived that Ptolemy was approaching Cyprus with an armada. This campaign was to be decided at sea, and after Demetrius' stunning victory, Menelaus surrendered Salamis and was sent back to Egypt.[41]

(6) Rhodes, 305–304 BC

Rhodes was the pinnacle of Demetrius' siege operations. It is described in the greatest and most profuse detail by the sources, and, as we have seen, was evidently the genesis of his famous surname. The epic struggle lasted a whole year, and though the city was severely battered, Demetrius still remained outside the walls by July 304, but was making plans to continue. After all, he had not suffered great losses, still had vast resources, and must have wondered just how long the Rhodians could sustain their desperate efforts. However, he

[39] On the siege of Halicarnassus, see Bosworth (1988) 48–9; and on the siege of Tyre, 65–7. For Antigonus' Tyrian siege, Diod. 19.61.5: it would seem that on this occasion the city had been starved into surrender by the naval blockade, rather than taken by direct action. On the development of siege techniques with a survey of specific siege actions, see Marsden (1971) ch. 4.

[40] On the *helepolis*, which may have been the largest of its type to date, and which Diodorus describes in some detail, see Marsden (1969) 105. For the construction of *helepoleis* in general, see Biton, *Mech.* 52–6, conveniently consulted in Marsden (1971) 66–103; Schürmann (1991) 82–5 (also on their weaknesses). The *helepolis* constructed at Rhodes just over eighteen months later was only slightly larger.

[41] Plut. *Demetr.* 16.7; *Comp.* 2.3 (= *Ant.* 89.3); Just. 15.2.7–9.

received instructions to reach a settlement from Antigonus, who was becoming alarmed at the propaganda fallout from the protracted engagement, and realised that the other dynasts were capitalising on the respite afforded them while Demetrius was embroiled at Rhodes. At this point, Demetrius realised the game was up, and cast around for a pretext to end the campaign while saving as much face as possible.[42] Meanwhile, the Rhodians received a letter from Ptolemy promising them grain and 3,000 more troops, but also advising them to settle with Antigonus if they could in any way get reasonable terms. At this critical juncture, another set of envoys arrived, this time from the Aetolian League,[43] urging a cessation of hostilities. In due course terms were agreed by which the Rhodians retained political and economic autonomy, and limited freedom in foreign policy, guaranteed by the provision of one hundred citizen hostages.[44]

Thus the antagonists achieved *desenrascanço*. Demetrius gained the hostages he had demanded over a year earlier, and a conditional alliance, but little else. In the final analysis, his naval arm had failed him. The island and city were never effectively blockaded, nor was the seamanship or command structure of Demetrius' fleet ever a match for the Rhodian navy. Local knowledge of the seasons, weather, and navigation hazards, and luck also played a part. Possibly the affinity between Demetrius and his navy had eroded in the years since Salamis, and was compromised further during the initial assaults on the harbours.[45] Moreover, Diodorus (20.91.8) relates that thousands of crewmen were drafted into performing the heavy labour necessary to ease the path of the siege machinery, and this is likely to have left the fleet demoralised and undermanned.

[42] Diod. 20.99.1; Plut. *Demetr.* 22.8. Diodorus provides more details of the inner workings of the Antigonid deliberations, whereas Plutarch simply states that Demetrius wanted a pretext for abandoning the siege. Both use the same term: *πρόφασις*, probably from Hieronymus of Cardia. Antigonus also summarily curtailed Demetrius' campaign in Thessaly two years later: Diod. 20.111.1–2.

[43] Diod. 20.99.3. Plutarch (*Demetr.* 22.8) thinks the peace was negotiated by a deputation of Athenians, but has likely conflated the Aetolian embassy with the combined delegation sent by the Athenians and other Greek states a month or so earlier (Diod. 20.98.2); see Mendels (1984) 178–9; Ager (1996) 60–1; Rose (2015) 215.

[44] Diod. 20.99.3; cf. 82.3; Plut. *Demetr.* 22.8. For discussion, see Seibert (1969) 230; Hauben (1977) 338–9; Berthold (1984) 77; Billows (1990) 168–9, 202–3, 207–8; Huß (2001) 189–90; Wiemer (2002) 91; (2011) 127–8; Caroli (2007) 64.

[45] Berthold (1984) 78–9; Billows (1990) 168; Murray (2012) 118.

Scholarly evaluations of the siege of Rhodes are often highly critical of Demetrius,[46] and there is no doubt that he failed to achieve his father's objective of bringing the Rhodians exclusively under the Antigonid umbrella. Nor in dispute is the fact that he failed to take the city of Rhodes; however, the standard scholarly analysis—that the siege was a resounding defeat for the Antigonids—is a step too far. It needs to be borne in mind that the Antigonids were far from defeated at Rhodes—only temporarily repelled. Demetrius withdrew in good order, and subsequently continued campaigning in Europe, until by late 302 he was poised to take all of Greece and Macedonia. Hardly a defeated power, one might observe. Meanwhile Antigonus raised massive resources to hound Lysimachus and his allies early in the campaign of Ipsus. The sources, for all their long-winded detail and later Roman resonances, do contain the fundamental information that, at the close of the siege, Demetrius had kept Rhodes in a qualified Antigonid alliance. The political status quo was preserved. Moreover, the propaganda battle was also won—the sheer scale of the siege cemented Demetrius' reputation as the besieger *par excellence*, and precipitated him to legendary status in the early Hellenistic period.

However, a more balanced perspective has emerged in some recent scholarship, and this should be heeded.[47] Jeff Champion points out trenchantly that, if Demetrius had not received new orders, the fall of the island was in reality inevitable. He was not driven out—he left voluntarily. Note that the city was wrecked, and many areas of the island devastated, as is to be expected for the side that supplies the venue for conflict. William Murray is equally insightful in observing that the siege enabled the Antigonids to showcase their military might to the whole Mediterranean world, enhancing their reputation, and rendering their later campaigns easier. Murray's analysis is especially compelling, and welcome, breaking from the easy and facile line of condemnation for Demetrius initiated by the wily Plutarch and followed into the 21st century, particularly in the Anglophone scholarship.

[46] The trend begins with Plutarch (*Demetr.* 22.1), and his choice of sources. It is taken up in modern scholarship by Manni (1951) 32: 'Anche l'impresa rodia era dunque sostanzialmente fallita. Un altro passo era compiuto verso la rovina finale dell'ambizioso Monoftalmo'; and continued by, e.g., Hauben (1977) 338–9 and (2010) 103; Berthold (1984) 79; Billows (1990) 169, 186 (calling the siege a 'debacle'); Campbell (2006) 81–2; Bresson (2010) 124; Bayliss (2011) 169–70; Hammond (1988) 172 stops short of deeming Demetrius defeated, but labels the siege 'pointless and ineffectual'; cf. Anson (2014) 168 'a wasteful interlude'; Worthington (2016) 167.

[47] See, for instance, Pimouguet-Pédarros (2011) 364; Wiemer (2011) 127–9; Murray (2012) 118–19; Champion (2014) 140–1; O'Sullivan (2014) 84–5; Rose (2019) 173.

(7) Phyle, Panactum, Cenchreae, Late 304 BC

Disentangling himself from Rhodes, and leaving the bones of his engines to finance the Colossus (Plin. *HN* 34.18.41–2), Demetrius sailed with 330 ships through the islands and landed at Aulis in Boeotia, probably by mid-August of 304, and immediately set about attacking Cassander's allies.[48] Plutarch supplies unique information on Demetrius, including detail about the first weeks of his renewed campaigns in Greece. He began by taking Chalcis in Euboea (Parian Marble, *FGrHist* 239 (= *BNJ* 239) F B24) and expelling the Boeotian garrison. Demetrius then campaigned in Boeotia, and pursued the fleeing Cassander out of Attica to Thermopylae, where an otherwise-unattested battle appears to have been fought in the vicinity of nearby Heracleia.[49] At this stage Demetrius' precise movements become difficult to reconstruct. He freed the strategic Attic border fortresses of Phyle and Panactum from Cassander's garrisons (whether by siege is not specified) and undertook to restore them to Athenian control (Plut. *Demetr.* 23.3), and Plutarch adds that at this time he also took Cenchreae, the eastern port of Corinth, placing this sally in the same context as his activities in Boeotia and Attica. However, Diodorus has a completely different sequence, placing all of the Peloponnesian activities in 303 (Diod. 20.102–3). Whether Demetrius dashed across the isthmus and attacked the port in a final initiative before entering Athens, or had sent his navy round Sunion to recapture Salamis from Cassander, and used the island as a springboard, cannot be ascertained.[50] One solution is to suppose compression in Plutarch, and accept Diodorus' version, but the possibility that Demetrius did indeed establish a bridgehead to the Peloponnese before retiring for winter in 304 should not be discounted. In fact, a random excerpt from Polyaenus in which Demetrius uses Cenchreae as a base from which to attack Sicyon may come from this period, and support Plutarch's order of events (Polyaen. 4.7.3, trans. Krentz and Wheeler):

> Wishing to make a surprise attack on Sicyon, Demetrius withdrew to Cenchreae and there spent many days devoted to pleasures and luxuries. When the Sicyonians were least suspicious, at night he ordered the mercenaries with Diodorus to attack the gates facing the city of Pellene

[48] Diod. 20.100.5; Plut. *Demetr.* 23.2.

[49] Plut. *Demetr.* 23.2, with Rose (2015) 217–18. The exact order of events in autumn of 304 is unclear, but a reasonable sequence may be hypothesised by knitting Diodorus and Plutarch (and cf. *IG* II^2.492, with Hauben (1974b)). Recent useful treatments include Gullath (1982) 179–83; Billows (1990) 169; Habicht (1997) 74–5; Oliver (2007) 116–19.

[50] Cassander controlling Salamis: Polyaen. 4.11.1; Paus. 1.35.1, with Paschidis (2008) 90. Cenchreae may have been taken by sea: so Wheatley (2004) 5; if so, could this have been from Salamis?

> and the ships to appear at the harbour, and he led the hoplites against the city. As a result, by attacking from all sides he captured the city.

Diodorus' account is unhelpful: although he records that Sicyon was captured *before* Corinth, he asserts that the latter city and its harbours (plural) were taken together.[51] But there is no compelling reason to disregard the testimony of both Plutarch and Polyaenus, and it should probably be accepted that Cenchreae fell into Demetrius' hands late in 304. Indeed, the existence of a pre-prepared base for the Peloponnesian campaign early the following year may help explain his remarkably swift progress through that region, and the anecdote demonstrates that he was open to alternatives when it came to capturing cities.

(8) The Peloponnese: Sicyon, Corinth, Sisyphium, Bura, Scyrus, Orchomenus, 303 BC

The Besieger's stunning campaign in southern Greece commenced early in 303, with his first stop being at Cenchreae. Diodorus asserts that his overall strategy was to wage total war on his brother-in-law, Cassander, and wrest Corinth, and ultimately Macedonia, from him by force (Diod. 20.102.1). However, rather than target that city immediately, he fixed on the Ptolemaic stronghold of Sicyon, about 16 km to the west on the Saronic gulf, perhaps desiring to root out the last vestiges of the Lagid's influence in Greece. On Demetrius' takeover of Sicyon, now under the command of a senior Ptolemaic general named Philip, the sources diverge profoundly. Plutarch states that the cities of Argos, Corinth, and Sicyon were taken simply by paying their garrisons one hundred talents to leave (Plut. *Demetr.* 25.1), but Diodorus, supplemented by Polyaenus, has much more. Demetrius ordered a mercenary commander (also named Diodorus) to mount a surprise night attack on the northwestern gates of Sicyon facing towards Pellene, while he co-ordinated his troops against another section and his ships against the harbour, in a mini-reprise of the Rhodian siege. The walls were quickly breached, and the garrison driven into the acropolis. He then paused, considering whether he would need to deploy his siege machinery, and perhaps at this point offered the bribe mentioned by Plutarch. Ptolemy's men, panicking, took the terms and departed hastily for Egypt.[52]

[51] Diod. 20.103.1: *ἐκράτησε τῆς πόλεως καὶ τῶν λιμένων*. Ferguson (1948) 120 accepts the early acquisition of Cenchreae; as does Billows (1990) 169–70; cf. Dixon (2005) 138, (2007) 176, and (2014) 72 n. 77; Kralli (2017) 99. Rose (2015) 218–19 and 230 is much more cautious; cf. Marasco (1983) 40. Notably, Cassander commenced his Peloponnesian campaign of 315 by taking Cenchreae: Diod. 19.63.4.

[52] Diod. 20.102.2–4; Polyaen. 4.7.3, with Skalet (1928) 81; Champion (2014) 144–5; Rose (2015) 230; Thonemann (2016) 61. On Diodorus, the mercenary commander, see Billows

Demetrius immediately turned his attention to Corinth, where his agents had been agitating on his behalf. For once, we have detailed source accounts. Both Diodorus and Polyaenus supply particulars which can readily be dovetailed, and Demetrius' reduction of Corinth emerges as an exemplary military action to reduce an impregnable stronghold. Marching back to the city with full force, he received information that his sympathisers would admit him by night, through 'a gate at the citadel'—either the Teneatic gate facing south or possibly the Phliasian gate to the west.[53] To cover the breach he ordered a diversionary assault on a gate leading to Lechaeum, the northern harbour, and before Prepelaus realised the danger, the Besieger's forces were inside the city from the southwestern side. The garrison, seeing the lower city was lost, fled towards the formidable Acrocorinth, with some making a stand at an adjacent fortified place Diodorus names Sisyphium.[54] Demetrius now brought up his siege train and, with some difficulty, stormed this strongpoint, compelling the defenders to retreat again, up to Acrocorinth proper. Whether events mirrored those at Sicyon, and Demetrius offered a bribe at this stage as Plutarch suggests, is hard to tell, but after some negotiations Prepelaus and his men surrendered and were allowed to return to Cassander in shame. Thus in short order Demetrius had taken perhaps the most unassailable citadel in Greece, adding further to his legend and reputation as the doyen of siegecraft, and Diodorus again takes the opportunity to re-emphasise Demetrius' spectacular siege operations:

> For this king was exceedingly irresistible in his assaults, being particularly skilled in the construction of siege equipment.[55]

(1990) 380; Heckel (2006) 112. On Philip, the Ptolemaic commander, see Tataki (1998) 447, no. 29.

[53] Diod. 20.103.1–4; Polyaen. 4.7.8. The details are speculative, but Polyaenus' 'Lechaeum gate' is probably the Sikyonian gate in the northwest; for sharp discussion, see Dixon (2014) 61–4 and fig. 1.1; cf. Billows (1990) 171; Rose (2015) 231–2; Kralli (2017) 100. The difficulties may be put in perspective by comparing Aratus' capture of Corinth from Gonatas some sixty years later: Plut. *Arat.* 18–23; Polyaen. 6.5; Paus. 2.8.4; 7.8.3; Trog. *Prol.* 26; Athen. 162d, with Walbank (1933) 45–9 and Dixon (2014) 98–101.

[54] Diod. 20.103.2: *τὸ καλούμενον* Σισύφιον. The exact site of Sisyphium is unknown; for the topography see Str. 8.6.21, perhaps transmitting Fragment 16 of Hieronymus (*FGrHist* 154): so Hornblower (1981) 49 and 251; cf. Paus. 2.5.1; and for analysis, Dixon (2014) 63 n. 84.

[55] Diod. 20.103.3: *σφόδρα γὰρ ἦν ἀνυπόστατος οὗτος ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐν ταῖς προσβολαῖς*. Plutarch, however, as with his account of Rhodes, minimises Demetrius' work at Corinth, though it is notable that in his biography of Aratus, that subject's capture of the city in 243 BC is described in glowing terms: Plut. *Arat.* 24.2; cf. Rose (2015) 232.

The Besieger continued his incursions into the Peloponnese, but his actual itinerary after Corinth is unclear. Diodorus (20.103.4–7) has him first advancing westward into Achaea, and observes that he made a clean sweep of all the strongpoints in the vicinity. Plutarch (*Demetr.* 25.1) supplies different details, but no clear itinerary whatsoever. He lists the submission of Acte (the eastern coastline of the Argolid), and Arcadia (except Mantineia), with the liberation of Argos, Sicyon, and Corinth all at once,[56] then jumbles this together with key events at these three cities which actually stretched from mid-303 into 302 BC. Diodorus, therefore, is in general better organised, and here his sequence should probably be preferred, as his account includes enough time for Demetrius to campaign in Achaea, possibly Elis, and Arcadia, before returning to Athens for his irregular initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries by mid-April of 303. Demetrius' first stop in Achaea was Bura, which he stormed and made autonomous;[57] he then proceeded to an obscure place named Scyrus and, within a few days, expelled its garrison.[58]

Diodorus next has Demetrius approaching Orchomenus, a heavily defended strategic hilltop fortress in northern Arcadia astride the main route north from Tegea to Sicyon. Here the *phrourarchos* Strombichus, who had been appointed by Polyperchon, not only refused to surrender the city, but also reviled the king at length from the walls.[59] The exchange evidently enraged Demetrius: he swiftly battered the walls down and performed an uncharacteristic act of cruelty by crucifying Strombichus and about eighty of the defenders, before enrolling some 2,000 mercenaries from the garrison into his

[56] But he asserts erroneously that the garrisons of these cities were paid off. On Acte, see Str. 8.8.5; Andrei (1989) 182–3 notes the historiographic problem; Billows (1990) 171–2 and Wehrli (1968) 65 and 149 tend to follow Plutarch. Ferguson (1948) 120–1 unpicks the source tangle incisively, rightly preferring Diodorus.

[57] Diod. 20.103.4. On Bura, or Boura (possibly modern Kastro), some 78 km west along the coast from Corinth, see Diod. 15.48.3; Str. 1.3.18; Hdt. 1.145; Lauffer (1989) 160.

[58] The manuscript of Diodorus has Σκύρον; Petrus Wesseling suggested Σκίρον in his 1746 edition. The Teubner editor (Fischer) concurred in 1906, and the suggestion was noted by R. M. Geer, the Loeb editor, in 1954. Wesseling based his amendment on Stephanus of Byzantium, who records a settlement of this name in Arcadia: Σκίρος, Ἀρκαδίας κατοικία, πλησίον Μαιναλείων καὶ Παρρασίων. Maenalus was an ancient city in the homonymous region immediately to the west and southwest of Mantineia (Paus. 8.3.4, 27.2–3, 36.7–8; Thuc. 5.64.3). Parrhasia was the name of the district some 30 km away, to the west of Megalopolis (Paus. 6.8.2; 8.27.2, 4; 8.38.2–3; Thuc. 5.33.1), thus Stephanus' assertion is unhelpful in pinpointing the location of Scyrus/Scirus. However, this may indicate that Demetrius campaigned further south into the Peloponnese at this time than is generally thought (there was a river Scyrus between Megalopolis and Messene: Paus. 8.35.1).

[59] Diod. 20.103.5. If truly appointed by Polyperchon, Strombichus must have been entrenched in Orchomenus (mod. Kalpaki) for some years, as it is likely that the former was long dead by now

own forces.[60] The spectacle was highly effective in demonstrating the futility of resistance. Diodorus notes that adjacent strongholds and the other cities surrendered without a fight, as the inhabitants realised that Cassander and his allies were unable or unwilling to resist the Besieger's army and resolve (Diod. 20.103.7).

(9) Argos? Epidaurus? Troezen? 303 BC

From Orchomenus Demetrius bypassed Mantineia and headed east to the Argolid, which was held by Cassander's brother, Pleistarchus, who was in Argos in spring of 303, and according to an inscription from that city, was driven out in the night by a supernatural epiphany of Apollo.[61] The inscription, from the Argive sanctuary of that god, reports that a *thiasos* (band of revellers) dedicated statues of Apollo and Artemis to Leto in gratitude, but its date is not precise. In the light of recent deductions, however, the context may be clarified. Since Demetrius was certainly at Argos in late June for the Heraia, after his initiation at Eleusis, it seems reasonable to infer that the flight of Pleistarchus and the activities of the grateful *thiasos* preceded both of these events, and that the Besieger probably visited Argos more than once during 303 BC.[62] It is not clear whether the Argives divinised Demetrius, perhaps assimilating him with Apollo, for their deliverance, or whether they attributed it to a miraculous nocturnal theophany. But Demetrius' overwhelming forces and reputation from the siege of Rhodes, augmented perhaps by Plutarch's bribe, on top of his own celebrated royal and divine presence, were looming, and it is probably historically safe to regard the nocturnal manifestation of Apollo at Argos at the very least as a euphemism for Demetrius' actual approach.[63] Further epigraphic evidence confirms that Demetrius had by this

[60] Diod. 20.103.5–6. On Strombichus, see Schoch (1931) 371; cf. Tataki (1998) 434, no. 48. Demetrius' treatment of Strombichus makes a striking contrast with Ptolemy's treatment of Andronicus under very similar circumstances at Tyre in 312: Diod. 19.86.2. Indeed, it resonates more with Alexander's treatment of the captive Tyrians in 332: Curt. 4.4.16–17.

[61] *ISE* 39.6–7: *ἐξ οὗ* Πλείσταρχον *νύκ*[*τ*]*ωρ* | *ἐξήλασε* Ἀ*πόλλων*. Perhaps this hints at a similar night attack to those mounted by Demetrius at Sicyon and Corinth; so Gregory (1995) 18–19. Again, Plutarch's assertion (*Demetr.* 25.1) that this garrison was bribed should not be excluded. Another inscription from Argos confirms the presence of a Macedonian garrison from 315–303: see Piérart (1987) 177, with *SEG* 54.433; Diod. 19.54.3. However, Athenaeus' otherwise unattested anecdote (10.415a) of a Demetrian siege of Argos where the *helepolis* proves very difficult to shift is probably unhistorical, and more likely a doublet for the second siege of Thebes in 291 BC; cf. Plut. *Demetr.* 40.2, and below, n. 78.

[62] Most scholars assume that Demetrius remained in Argos for the Heraia in late June; cf. Billows (1990) 172; Gregory (1995) 14; Champion (2014) 145; Anson (2014) 170.

[63] Tondriau (1949); Moretti (1967) 90; Gregory (1995) 18–19; Platt (2011) 146–7; cf. Kralli (2017) 100 for fresh insight.

time secured the whole region of the Argolid. The major cities of Troezen and Epidaurus on the Acte coastline were freed, and the Antigonid officers responsible were honoured.[64]

(10) Larisa Cremaste, Antrones, and Pteleum in Phthiotis, Summer 302 BC

By 302, Demetrius' main focus was Macedonia and the elimination of Cassander, so he ferried his whole army directly up the Euboean gulf from Chalcis to Thessaly by sea. En route he landed at the port of Larisa Cremaste in Phthiotis, stormed the city, restored its autonomy, and imprisoned its garrison, then took the nearby towns of Antrones and Pteleum.[65]

(11) Pherae, Thessaly 302 BC

Demetrius created a forward base at New Halos, while Cassander had reinforced the cities of Pherae and Thebes as his own bases. The people of Pherae appealed to Demetrius, and seizing this opportunity, the Besieger circumvented Cassander's army, apparently unnoticed, and sailed up the gulf to Pagasai, the port of Pherae. He marched inland and took the citadel, no doubt admitted by the sympathetic faction just as at Corinth a year earlier. Cassander's garrison at Pherae was dismissed, his supply lines cut, and Demetrius was poised to move south to Phthiotic Thebes and catch him in a pincer movement (Diod. 20.110.3–6).

(12) Ephesus (Lampsacus? Parium? Others?) Late 302 BC

On his return to Asia in autumn of 302 at the beginning of the campaign of Ipsus, Demetrius recovered Ephesus, Lampsacus, Parium, and other cities (such as Sigeum?) that had been garrisoned by Lysimachus and Prepelaus. Details of actual sieges are not specified, and it seems possible that the sight of Demetrius' vast armada and forces was enough to cause the cities of northwestern Asia Minor to capitulate.[66]

[64] *IG* IV².1.58 honours Alcaeus of Aenus as a benefactor to the Epidaurians. The Athenians also honoured Alcaeus generously: *IG* II².495 = *ISE* 6, with Osborne (1981–3) I, no. D 60; Bayliss (2011) 181. *RIG* 452 records the activities of Zenodotus of Halicarnassus in freeing Troezen; on these officers, see Billows (1990) 366 and 440. The Acte may have been freed already by Demetrius' lieutenants while he was campaigning in Achaea and Arcadia, or even earlier; cf. Ferguson (1948) 121: no specific itinerary is discernable.

[65] Diod. 20.110.2–3. For a comprehensive analysis of Demetrius' campaign in Thessaly, see Rose (2014).

[66] See Diod. 20.107 for Lysimachus' gains in Asia; Diod. 20.111.3 for Demetrius' recovery of them; cf the stratagem at Polyaen. 4.7.4, which may apply to this occasion; cf. Billows (1990) 380; Lund (1992) 227 n. 14; Rose (2015) 245–6.

(13) Samaria, 298–296 BC?

Something of a historiographic orphan, this siege is mentioned only once, by Eusebius, who lists it under Olympiad 121.1 (296/5 BC). But the accuracy of the dating is suspect, and the assault is probably better placed in the context of the peace between Demetrius and Ptolemy brokered by Seleucus in 298 on the occasion of his marriage alliance with the Besieger. The action against this well-fortified site was evidently successful, as it is embedded in all versions of the chronographic sources that the city was despoiled.[67]

(14) Soli, 298 BC?

Another historiographic orphan, this siege, mentioned once only as an anecdotal snippet, well out of historical context, by Plutarch, is probably best placed in 298 BC. Demetrius had coasted down to Syria to celebrate his marriage alliance with Seleucus, and either on the way there, or on the way back, he seized Cilicia from Cassander's brother, Pleistarchus. It is usually thought that Lysimachus attempted to support the latter, and confronted Demetrius at Soli in time to witness the intimidating spectacle of his siege operations and huge fleet in action, upon which he withdrew.[68] His prestige, based solely on military expertise, is all the more anomalous when taken in the context of his recent defeat at Ipsus and lack of a specific territorial kingdom during these years. If this incident can be believed, it provides further evidence for the evolution of Demetrius' unique reputation in the Diadoch period.

(15) Athens, 295 BC

On hearing that Athens had fallen under the tyranny of Lachares, Demetrius decided that the time was right to re-establish control, and sailed to Attica with another armada. His first attempt was derailed by shipwreck, and he diverted to the Peloponnese, but soon he returned to Attica, seized Eleusis and Rhamnous, and blockaded Athens by sea.[69] Although there is no evidence for siege

[67] Euseb. *Chron.* 2.118 (199 Karst); Sync. *Chron.* 331; cf. Plut. *Demetr.* 32.6. See Corradi (1929) 40; Ovadiah (1983) 185, 189–91; Grainger (1990) 133; Bosworth (2002) 264–5; Cohen (2006) 274; Rose (2015) 264–5.

[68] Plut. *Demetr.* 20.8 (the context is during the siege of Rhodes). For varying interpretations of the meagre evidence, see Landucci Gattinoni (1992) 166–7; Lund (1992) 89; Gregory (1995) 23–4; Bosworth (2002) 264–6; but for some balanced assessment see now Rose (2015) 201–2.

[69] Plut. *Demetr.* 33; cf. Paus. 1.25.7–8. Hammond and Walbank (1988) 211–12; Habicht (1997) 86–8; Thonemann (2005) 64–74; Oliver (2007) 120; Paschidis (2008) 125–9; Bayliss (2011) 64–5; Anson (2014) 176–7. Unlike at Rhodes, the blockade this time was effective: Demetrius' navy drove off a Ptolemaic fleet near Aegina: Plut. *Demetr.* 33.7–8.

operations against the actual city walls, it is indisputable that Athens was under siege, and the city fell in spring of 295.[70] Demetrius accepted control of Piraeus and Munychia, and also garrisoned the Museum in central Athens.[71]

(16) Aegina, Salamis, Piraeus, 296–295 BC

During the extended actions in Attica Demetrius also took Aegina and Salamis, and according to Polyaenus, besieged Piraeus after tricking the inhabitants into sending him 1,000 troops to aid against Lachares.[72]

(17) Messene, Twice? 296–295 BC

Plutarch records that, while waiting for naval reinforcements in Attica, Demetrius moved into the Peloponnese and laid siege to Messene. That this was a standard siege operation is evident in that the Besieger received a serious wound in the jaw from a catapult bolt. It would seem that, though he regained the allegiance of some other cities, he was unsuccessful at Messene on this occasion. However, he returned after capturing Athens in 295, and it seems likely that he had somehow regained Messene before attacking the Spartans.[73]

(18) Sparta, 295–294 BC

After taking a grip once again on Athens, Demetrius returned to the Peloponnese and attacked the Spartans. He fought two battles with Archidamus IV, one near Mantineia, and the second near the city itself, and was poised to breach their vestigial walls by early 294, when news of the dynastic strife in Macedonia drew him away.[74] Whether this action, against quite flimsy physical defences, can be counted as a siege at all is debateable, but in overwhelming Laconia Demetrius had ticked off another item in his poliorcetic *cursus honorum* by subjugating a city 'which had never fallen in its history' (Plut.

[70] Plut. *Demetr.* 34.1; *IG* II².644; Polyaen. 3.7.1–3; 4.7.5; Paus. 1.25.8, with Osborne (1982) II.144–53; Habicht (1997) 87; Thonemann (2005) 65; Paschidis (2008) 128. Hammond and Walbank (1988) 211–12, and Anson (2014) 177 think it fell in 294.

[71] Paus. 1.25.8; Plut. *Demetr.* 33.7; cf. 43.4, with Habicht (1997) 87–9; Rose (2015) 273–4.

[72] Polyaen. 4.7.5, with Ferguson (1929) 18–19.

[73] Plut. *Demetr.* 33.3–5; cf. *Dem.* 13.4; *SEG* 41.322; *IG* V.1.1426, with Matthaiou (1990–1). For *SEG* 51.457, a new edition of *SEG* 41.322, see Matthaiou (2001); cf. also Kralli (2017) 102–3; and now Dunn (2018), clarifying Demetrius' dealings with Messene, and concluding that this city, along with much of the Peloponnese, was under his control during the 290s.

[74] Plut. *Demetr.* 35.1–3; Polyaen. 4.7.9–10. Ferguson (1929) 21; Hammond and Walbank (1988) 212–17; Cartledge and Spawforth (2002) 30–1; Anson (2014) 177; Rose (2015) 274–6; Kralli (2017) 103. On the defences of Sparta, see Just. 14.5.6–7, with Yardley–Wheatley–Heckel (2011) 201–2.

Demetr. 35.2). The region seems to have remained under his control for some years (*Demetr.* 39.1).

(19) Thebes Twice, 293–291 BC

After becoming king of Macedonia, Demetrius moved to link his dominions by taking control of Boeotia. Initially the relationship was amicable; however, stirred up by Cleonymus of Sparta, Thebes revolted in 293, and the Besieger advanced into central Greece. Cleonymus quickly deserted, and on this occasion the Thebans, faced with Demetrius' machinery, surrendered without a fight.[75] His somewhat punitive measures, including the imposition of tribute, a garrison, and a *harmost* (no less that Hieronymus of Cardia himself), apparently incensed the Thebans, and the city rebelled again in 291. This time the repercussions were severe, and the famous *helepolis* was brought (slowly) into play again:

> He brought up his famous 'city-taker' for the assault but, because of its huge size and weight, the machine was so slowly and laboriously propelled that in the space of two months it hardly advanced two stades.[76]

From this, we have the information that the action took at least two months, and Plutarch adds that it was costly in casualties and logistics, and that Demetrius was again wounded by a catapult bolt. However, a fragment of Diodorus confirms the result:

> King Demetrius laid siege to Thebes when it revolted a second time, demolished the walls with siege engines, and took the city by storm, but put to death only the ten men who were responsible for the revolt.[77]

The Thebans—and the Hellenistic world—were left in no doubt that Demetrius was happy to negotiate with recalcitrant 'allies', but was also well able to execute a siege with extreme prejudice when provoked. Moreover, there may be clues to the historiographic evolution of the 'Poliorcetes' tradition in the approaches of our two sources for the Theban sieges. Plutarch's account resonates with a snippet from Vitruvius in the context of the Rhodian siege,

[75] Plut. *Demetr.* 39.3; cf. Polyaen. 4.7.11 for a variation on the story, asserting that the Thebans surrendered as soon as Demetrius appeared at Chaeroneia. The two sieges of Thebes are frequently conflated and confused in both the ancient and modern literature. See, for instance, Wehrli (1968) 174–6; Gullath (1982) 189–91; Hammond and Walbank (1988) 219–21; Huys (1996); Bosworth (2002) 171–3; Anson (2014) 179; Rose (2015) 285–92.

[76] Plut. *Demetr.* 40.2, trans. Duff. Rose (2015) 291 calculates that at this rate, the behemoth advanced six metres per day (one stade = 195.6 m).

[77] Diod. 21.14.1–2; Plut. *Demetr.* 39.6–40.6.

where the *helepolis* is bogged down in effluent poured from the city walls on the advice of a certain Diognetus; the story is echoed later by Athenaeus in the context of an unknown siege of Argos.[78] Now, Vitruvius was writing some 140 years before Plutarch, and one might infer that here is the germ of a negative tradition on Demetrius' poliorcetic talents, which may have supplied Plutarch with further grist to contrive a flawed Demetrius in his biography. But there is none of this in Diodorus, who describes an efficient and timely Theban siege with positive results, decanting in some form the primary Hieronymus of Cardia. Plutarch must also have had Hieronymus (or Diodorus) to draw on, but has transmitted instead a negative evaluation similar to the anecdote in Vitruvius. It may not even be a bridge too far to suggest that the negativity is residual from the hostile second century BC Rhodian source tradition, usually attributed to Zeno and Antisthenes.[79]

(20) Athens, 287–286 BC

The final high-profile siege mounted by the Besieger was, again, Athens. After losing his hold on Macedonia in autumn of 288 BC he returned to Greece where, Plutarch reports:

> The Athenians, on the other hand, revolted from him … but when they saw that Demetrius was becoming more powerful than they had expected, they sent for Pyrrhus to come down from Macedonia and protect them. This action angered Demetrius and he marched against Athens and laid the city under close siege. However, the people sent Crates the philosopher, a man of high reputation and authority, to plead with him, and Demetrius raised the siege, partly because he was persuaded by the ambassador's appeal and partly because Crates was able to suggest to him courses that were to his own advantage.[80]

For the third time in two decades Demetrius besieged Athens, but this time a resolution was negotiated. The historiography is difficult to unravel, but by some means the Besieger was persuaded to call off his operations, and embarked for Asia.

[78] Vitr. 10.16.7; cf. Athen. 10.415a, with Campbell (2006) 87.

[79] On the historiography of the siege of Rhodes, see Wheatley (2016) 45–9.

[80] Plut. *Demetr.* 46.1–2; *Pyrrh.* 12.4–5, with Hammond and Walbank (1988) 230–1; Habicht (1997) 95–7; Rose (2015) 317–21.

(21) Cities of Caria and Lydia: Sardis, Caunus? Miletus? Priene? Magnesia? Ephesus? 286–285 BC

Demetrius' last campaign is difficult to reconstruct, but various sources indicate that a number of the coastal cities of Caria and Lydia, as well as Sardis, either went over or were captured by the Besieger in what may have been a final flurry of poliorcetics:

> At Miletus, he was met by Eurydice, a sister of Phila, who brought with her Ptolemaïs, one of the daughters of Ptolemy … Demetrius now married her, and Eurydice gave the bride away. Immediately after the wedding, Demetrius set himself to win over the cities of Ionia. Many joined him of their own accord, while others were compelled to submit. He also captured Sardis, and several of Lysimachus' officers deserted to him, bringing with them both money and troops.[81]

He evidently landed at Caunus, and proceeded to Miletus, probably via Tralleis. There is evidence for his activities at Priene, which resisted, and Magnesia on the Maeander, which supported him, and also a slim possibility that he made an attempt on Ephesus.[82] Whether Sardis was captured after a siege we are not told, but it seems the city was indeed taken by Demetrius—perhaps his very last poliorcetic enterprise.

Conclusion

It is reasonable to hypothesise that the remarks of Gomme and Heckel asserting that Demetrius' nickname was derisory owe something to an emphasis in Plutarch, who, for the sake of his agenda, cannot risk transmitting a balanced 'Demetrius'. He probably mined some existing hostile source narratives himself, emanating from the complex historiography of the Rhodian siege. Hence we have a magnificent 'Besieger', but Plutarch's coverage of the great sieges (Rhodes, Babylon, Sicyon, Corinth) is abbreviated and critical, while others are peppered through the narrative with little logical context or rationale (Soli, Halicarnassus, Cenchreae), or are skipped over completely (Salamis, Samaria, Ephesus, Priene). Moreover, Plutarch's *Life*, as the only complete surviving ancient biography of Demetrius, has become canonical, and his insidious subtext has permeated modern scholarship. Some caution must be exercised with this type of analysis, however, as Plutarch was of course more focused on

[81] Plut. *Demetr.* 46.5–6, trans. Duff, with Marasco (1985) 153–5; Lund (1992) 102–3; Murray (2012) 124–5; Rose (2015) 323–4.

[82] Caunus: *I Caunus* 1; cf. Plut. *Demetr.* 49.5, with Marek (2006) 130–1. Priene and Magnesia: *I. Priene* 14, 15, with Sherwin-White (1985) 79–80. Ephesus: Polyaen. 5.19 (but possibly referring to an earlier occasion); see Lund (1992) 125–7.

Demetrius' morality and excesses than his military prowess.[83] But though the response of modern scholars such as Gomme and Heckel may be put down to a degree of exaggeration and misunderstanding, the viewpoint has gained overmuch traction, and requires an antidote.

Statistics *can* lie, but this paper presents a catalogue of forty-seven cities known to have been besieged and/or taken by Demetrius between 311 and 285 BC. True, Athens was invested three times; Thebes, and perhaps Ephesus, twice, which still leaves forty-three. Some of the circumstances and outcomes are obscure. Many cities negotiated, some were betrayed or in *stasis*, some resisted before submitting, some, like Halicarnassus, were relieved of an existing siege, but at least sixteen were actually stormed. Another five were attacked, but the sieges were called off for various reasons: Es-Sela, Salamis, Rhodes, Sparta, and Athens in 287–286. The remaining twenty-two were either taken, or submitted to Demetrius, and by implication many more unacknowledged towns must have been seized in regions where he was operating.[84] The numbers are compelling, and it is unfortunate that the Rhodian siege—in reality an outlier—captured the *zeitgeist* of the Antigonid floruit. Even though the city was shattered, acceded to Demetrius' original demands, and never troubled the Antigonids again, while Demetrius went on to accomplish outstanding feats in Greece, the fact that he never entered Rhodes and sacked it has been promoted by modern scholarship as the benchmark of failure. But no strongpoint after 304 BC successfully resisted Demetrius. Often the mere rumour of his approach, or the sight of his siege equipment, resulted in rapid negotiation or surrender.[85]

Demetrius' nickname was not intrinsically tied to either victory or defeat. It was awarded for his personal presence, meticulous preparations, and ingenuity, and was undoubtedly promoted by an extremely effective Antigonid propaganda machine. Gomme's observation is subtle, but not true; forty years later Heckel's throwaway line, 'Besieger indeed!', is not only untrue, but unhelpful. Now, a further three-and-a-half decades on, after scrutinising the *actual* evidence, I would riposte: 'Besieger indeed'? *Hell, yeah!*

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[83] Plut. *Demetr.* 1.5–8; 42.10–11; 52.3–4; *Synk.* 4.3–5; 5.4; cf. *Arist.* 6.2, with Pelling (1988) 25; Duff (2004) 278–87. Despite this, it is evident from the *Synkrisis* (3.2–3; 4.1; 5.5) that Demetrius did not let pleasure compromise business (cf. *Demetr.* 2.3; 19.10); see now Jacobs (2018) 325–45.

[84] Such as the Rhodian Peraea and the island of Rhodes itself (305–304), Cilicia (313–312, 298–297), the Acte and Arcadia (303), the Thracian Chersonese (300–299), and the Hellespont (302–301).

[85] So Rose (2019) 173.

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