

partaking of the shifting struggle to present Alexander, usually concerning his relationship with Hephaestion, as some kind of ‘gay icon’. The negative reaction by the Greek state authorities, pressing legal action against the Stone film, is noted. So too is how the theme of Alexander’s putative same-sex relationships figured in the US army’s ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ debate, alongside the wider discourse on the legality of same-sex marriage. This chapter observes how the reception of Alexander has accompanied, influenced and been influenced by the sexual revolutions from the second half of the twentieth century to the present. They conclude that Alexander is not just a ‘gay hero’ but also ‘the ultimate fantasy whose kiss we continue to crave’ (p. 445). This chapter is a fitting conclusion to Stoneman’s book. It aptly illustrates how the re-imagined Macedonian Conqueror continues to influence modern society in surprising and highly relevant ways.

One could perhaps be slightly critical of the work for omitting ‘Far Eastern’ receptions, of which there are surprisingly many, and which were also not generally covered in the *Brill Companion*. We should actively recognise that they comprise important aspects of ‘World Culture’. Even so, as indicated, some East Asian receptions have been fairly well considered by Ng’s book, as Stoneman is aware. He is also aware that it would be beneficial to see more research on African, Chinese and Japanese receptions of Alexander, typically lacking in western academic writing. That gap will be for future scholars to fill. Stoneman’s book is nonetheless a most welcome addition to the ongoing endeavours of Alexander scholarship and will prove a useful tool for academics and students alike – or, in fact, for anyone interested in the far-ranging themes, receptions and legacies of Alexander the Great.

Teesside University

KEN MOORE  
[k.r.moore@tees.ac.uk](mailto:k.r.moore@tees.ac.uk)

## THE LIFE AND DEEDS OF DEMETRIUS

WHEATLEY (P.), DUNN (C.) *Demetrius the Besieger*. Pp. xx + 496, ills, maps. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Cased, £115, US\$155. ISBN: 978-0-19-883604-9.

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The book under review provides a long-overdue assessment of one of the most crucial characters in the succession wars after the death of Alexander the Great, namely, Demetrius Poliorcetes or ‘the Besieger’, the son of Antigonos Monophthalmus or ‘the One-Eyed’. Since Demetrius’ first biographer, Plutarch, paired his life with that of Mark Antony, there has been no comprehensive full-scale biography, as Wheatley and Dunn note in the introduction. This gap has been a standing outrage and reproach to scholars of the Hellenistic world. The reason why is probably that Demetrius was a colourful character, and that the source material for his career is problematic. Added to that is the mind-bending nature of the High and Low chronology impeding the study of the early Successor period (see T. Boiy, *Between High and Low* [2007]). With this book many of these issues have now been addressed. In the words of one of the authors, paraphrased from a recorded lecture to the Antigonid Network (<https://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/theantigonidnetwork/events/> [accessed 15/09/2022]), this is the kind of large-scale

reconstruction of Demetrius' life that was needed before further steps can be taken (and both authors have additional 'spin-offs' in mind).

This considerable contribution to Hellenistic studies is the result of decades of meticulous research. The two scholars have reworked not only their respective doctoral theses on Demetrius, but also a host of articles and papers published (by Wheatley) over the past 30 years. The preface shows how closely they have worked together, for Wheatley supervised the doctoral work of Dunn. Both authors admit that they were concerned whether the dyadic nature of the collaboration would interrupt the flow of the narrative, but even if in a few places the account ultimately feels like a tale of two halves, it is nevertheless excellent to have all these ideas, analyses and arguments within a single cover.

One of the most significant feats achieved by the authors is that they channelled such a wide range of evidence into a highly readable prose narrative of history that pays due attention to the varying historiographies about Demetrius. Upon reading the volume, one is struck with the effortless marshalling of source material from detailed numismatic analyses (e.g. Chapter 17, pp. 262–77) to close readings of the so-called *Ithyphallic Hymn*, with which the Athenians celebrated Demetrius' *adventus* (Chapter 22). Another significant feature is the reassessment of the chronology of Demetrius' career, outlined in Appendix 2, but underpinning the narrative of the entire book. This chronology lays a solid foundation for further study, not only of the rise of the Antigonids, but also of the earliest stages of the Successor Wars.

The concise introduction sets forth the main historiographical issues and reviews the problematic scholarly approaches of the past, which seem to have amounted to little more than homage to Plutarch or interest in Demetrius' famous father, Antigonus. The authors then seek to rehabilitate Demetrius at every turn. They take readers at breakneck speed through Demetrius' career from cradle to grave. Twenty-seven chapters may seem a lot, but the succinctness of each makes reading feel as if the pace does not slow over more than 400 pages. Most chapters discuss events, campaigns, battles, journeys, interactions, alliances, propaganda and personal relationships. Summative chapters, such as Chapter 12, offer breathing space (it discusses 'the fruits of victory' after the Battle of Salamis in 306 BCE, one of which was kingship, another the infamous courtesan Lamia).

Individual chapters consistently contain solid points of historical interpretation, especially in dismissing the hostile interpretations of the ancient moralising authors, Plutarch in particular. For instance, Wheatley and Dunn take the stories of excess at Demetrius' first visit to Athens with a pinch of salt (p. 144), offering historical parallels for other characters who are criticised for similar behaviour, such as Pericles. This method of analysis also extends to the cast around Demetrius. For example, they rightfully contrast the extreme story of Phila's suicide with that of Cleopatra in Plutarch's *Life of Antony* (pp. 388–91). The constant dismissal of negative Plutarchan episodes runs the risk of creating the impression that Wheatley and Dunn are acting as 'apologists' for Demetrius, a figure who has occupied them for so long, but balanced remarks throughout the text show that this is not the case.

In terms of interpretative frame, Wheatley and Dunn frequently refer to Alexander as a model (already from page 1). While this framework is certainly well established, more could have been made of their pairing in some ways – for example, they might have emphasised that Plutarch's portrait of Demetrius' deterioration is akin to Alexander's (cf. p. 385). Unfortunately, the framework also appears to hamper their chief aim in treating Demetrius on his own terms, as announced in the conclusion (p. 438). On the same page – in the next paragraph – the authors fall into their own trap by posing the grand claim 'in terms of producing a capable heir, this was one domain in which Demetrius really did surpass Alexander'. As D. Ogden has demonstrated (*Alexander the Great* [2011], p. 123),

Alexander sired more potential heirs than his father, Philip II; the main problem was rather that Alexander did not get the opportunity to position them or, in the case of Alexander IV, live to see them born. The Argead parallel can thus only get us so far. If one were to look at the innovations of the Antigonids, it is probably worth exploring events like the proclamation of Antigonos and Demetrius as co-rulers, which Philip and Alexander never were.

The volume, nonetheless, offers a consistently engaging reading experience. It even begins with song lyrics by Bob Dylan and ends with lyrics from Leonard Cohen. The narrative is further enhanced by instructive visual aids, such as maps of key areas from cities to battlefields. The volume has been beautifully produced with rich illustrations, figures and scholarly necessities like a robust bibliography and index. It is a pity that the authors did not include a source index, given the range of material treated. I note that the text is virtually unmarred by infelicities.

Although the present reviewer would have liked to hear more of the tantalising bits of Demetrian receptions in the introduction and Appendix 1 ('The Colossus of Rhodes'), the book stands as a major achievement of historical and historiographical biography. The authors have rendered a great service in granting present and future readers improved access to one of the most colourful characters of Hellenistic history in its earliest phases. The book should certainly generate an impact in the field of ancient history for years to come, not least as a first point of contact for anyone interested in Demetrius and his dynasty.

Aarhus University

CHRISTIAN THRU DJURSLEV

[ctd@cas.au.dk](mailto:ctd@cas.au.dk)

## THE ROLE AND PERCEPTION OF THE SELEUCIDS

ANAGNOSTOU-LAOUTIDES (E.), PFEIFFER (S.) (edd.) *Culture and Ideology under the Seleukids. Unframing a Dynasty*. Pp. xii + 360, b/w & colour ills. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022. Cased, £103.50, €113.95, US\$131.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-075557-2.

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This publication expands on the number of scholarly papers devoted to Hellenistic art and political ideology. Some of the seventeen contributions were presented at a conference, *Culture and Ideology under the Seleucids: an Interdisciplinary Approach*, held at Macquarie University in Sydney in March 2019. The collection offers a multifaceted reassessment of cultural dynamics in the Seleucid Empire. In contrast to the synthesising works aimed at the ruler cult, there is a clear departure from the traditional Hellenocentric view of royal self-presentation. The papers emphasise the cultural hybridity of the empire and the application of new methodological procedures (the analysis of cuneiform texts, the sociology of clothing, political realism), outlining starting points for further research. In the introductory chapter, 'Un-Framing Seleukid Ideology', the editors, Anagnostou-Laoutides and Pfeiffer, emphasise a holistic approach to the evaluation of archaeological, numismatic and written sources.

The formation of the Seleucid royal identity was the effort of several generations. The image of the ruler, pointing to his military abilities and personal charisma, was soon complemented by family scenes referring to the hereditary transfer of power (G.R.