CHAPTER 1

The Sources

As noted in the Introduction, the surviving sources are remarkably consistent in their presentation of Eumenes' career. This is true despite the fact that none of these is contemporary and all therefore rely on earlier works. Our current known sources include the Library of Diodorus of Sicily, the most complete and detailed surviving historical narrative of the events from Alexander's death to the actions preceding the Battle of Ipsus in 301 BC, written in the second half of the first century BC (Green 2006: 4–6); biographies written by Cornelius Nepos and Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus (Plutarch) in the first century BC, and early second century AD, respectively; a severely abridged version of the Philippic History by the Augustan historian, Pompeius Trogus, epitomated, perhaps, in the early third century AD, by an otherwise unknown Marcus Junianus Justinus (Justin); a collection of military anecdotes by the second-century AD rhetorician, Polyaeus; and the briefest remains also from the second century of A History of the Successors, in ten books, covering the years from 323 to 319, by Flavius Arrianus (Arrian). With the exception of Arrian's history, which due to the nature of its survival contains only a bare outline of events, the consistency of our sources with respect to Eumenes is present not only in their overall presentations, but even in the details of his career, and in their assessment of his actions and those of his allies and opponents. In 320, it is Eumenes' skill which led to his victory in two separate battles over two of Alexander's former commanders (Diod. 18. 29. 4, 30–32. 1; Plut. Eum. 5. 4–5, 7. 5–8.1; Nepos Eum. 4. 1–3; Just. 13. 8. 3–9), but his successes were undermined by the defeat and assassination of his patron, the regent Perdiccas, in Egypt (Diod. 18. 36. 5; Plut. Eum. 8. 2–4; Nepos Eum. 5. 1; Arr. Succ. 1. 29; Just. 13. 8. 10). In 319,

1 Photius, a ninth-century author, whose work is variously called Bibliotheca or Myrobiblion, records 279 summaries of various works including that of Arrian's Successors (noted in the text as Succ. 1a). Three fragments of the original are the so-called “Vatican Palimpsest” (listed here according to the Teubner text as Arr. Succ. 24–25) which contains two brief extracts from Arrian's Book 7; a papyrus fragment, PSI 12.1284, and the Gothenburg Palimpsest (see Dreyer 2007: 251–5, for a new edition and translation), which contains excerpts from Book 10. Photius also summarized the work of Dexippus (ca. 210–273), History of the Events after Alexander the Great's Death, which in turn was heavily based on Arrian's Events After Alexander. Photius' summary of Dexippus only includes events derived from Arrian's Book 1 of the Successors, and references to Dexippus' summarized work will be designated as Succ. 1b.
due to the treasonous actions of a subordinate, Eumenes suffered defeat at the hands of Antigonus Monophthalmus (Diod. 18. 40. 5–8; Plut. Eum. 9. 3; cf. Just. 14. 2. 2), and only Eumenes’ well-executed retreat saved him from capture (Plut. Eum. 9. 3–10. 2; Nepos Eum. 5. 2–3; Diod. 18. 41. 1; cf. Just. 14. 2. 2). Finally, having fought for almost a decade to uphold the birthright of Alexander’s son, Eumenes was mercilessly surrendered to his arch foe, Antigonus, by his own troops, who were more concerned for their possessions than for their “own commander and victory” (Diod. 19. 43. 7–9; Plut. Eum. 17–18. 2; Nepos Eum. 10. 1–2; Just. 14. 3. 4–4. 17; Polyagen. 4. 6. 13). During Eumenes’ last battle, that in Gabene, Antigonus had secured possession of Eumenes’ camp along with the families and possessions of his troops. To receive these back from their captor his core infantry unit surrendered Eumenes.

The sources consistently present almost all of Eumenes’ enemies as “rapacious and faithless.” There is not only uniformity in our sources depiction of Eumenes enemies, but it is also found in their depiction of his erstwhile allies as well. His great patron after Alexander’s death, Perdiccas, is described as “bloodthirsty” and “grasping” (Diod. 18. 33. 3; Arr. Succ. 1a. 20, 28; Nepos Eum. 2. 3; Just. 13. 8. 2; cf. Suda s. v. Perdiccas). The treatment of Antigonus, his most consistent opponent, is especially telling. Indeed, Antigonus is praised as energetic, intelligent, daring, and as a skillful general (Diod. 18. 23. 3–4, 72. 5, 73. 1; 19. 30. 1; Plut. Ser. 1. 5; Polyagen. 3. 6. 1–20; Just. 14. 3. 2). These are not qualities assigned to Perdiccas. In fact, it is most often Eumenes’ erstwhile allies who come in for the greatest criticism. Alcetas and Neoptolemus are “jealous and traitorous” (Diod. 18. 41. 4–5, 47. 3, 50. 1–4, 52. 4; 19. 44. 1–3, 56. 2, 57. 2; 20. 82. 3, 75. 3, 106. 3–4), he is not portrayed hostilely. Indeed, Antigonus is praised as energetic, intelligent, daring, and as a skillful general (Diod. 18. 23. 3–4, 72. 5, 73. 1; 19. 30. 1; Plut. Ser. 1. 5; Polyagen. 3. 6. 1–20; Just. 14. 3. 2). These are not qualities assigned to Perdiccas.3 In fact, it is most often Eumenes’ erstwhile allies who come in for the greatest criticism. Alcetas and Neoptolemus are “jealous and traitorous” (Diod. 18. 29. 4; Plut. Eum. 1. 3, 5. 3–4, 8. 8; Just. 13. 8. 3); Teutamus and Antigones, “arrogant, ambitious and envious” (Diod. 18. 60. 1; Plut. Eum. 13. 4, 16. 1–2, 17. 1; Nepos Eum. 7. 1; Polyagen. 4. 8. 2); Peucestas, “contentious and cowardly” (Diod. 19. 15. 1, 17. 5, 23. 1, 38. 1–2, 42. 2, 4. 43. 5; Plut. Eum. 14. 5, 16. 9; Nepos Eum. 7. 1).4

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2 Diod. 18. 7. 4, 41. 4–5, 47. 3, 50. 5, 58. 4; 19. 19. 4, 40. 3–4; Plut. Ser. 1. 7; Eum. 3. 5; Just. 13. 8. 3; 14. 3. 11; Nepos Eum. 10. 2; 13. 1–3.

3 Polyagenus (4. 10. 1–2), in his collection of “stratagems,” describes only two incidents involving the long military career of Perdiccas and both of these exhibit his deceitfulness. By contrast, Antigonus is associated with 21 (4. 6. 1–21), with 5 covering the brief military career of Eumenes (4. 8. 1–5).

4 The charge of cowardice is interesting since Peucestas had secured his standing with Alexander through his bravery (Arr. Anab. 6. 10. 1–2, 11. 7, 28. 4; Plut. Alex. 63. 7–8; Curt. 9. 5. 14–15). However, his actions at Gabene in 315 would suggest insubordination at the least, if not outright cowardice (Diod. 19. 42. 4, 43. 2, 5; Anson 2013B: 104; contra Bosworth 2002: 154).