

If such a book were available in Hebrew, it would greatly ease my task in my survey of ancient historiography for undergraduates with no knowledge of the ancient languages. The temptation to assign it, together with the ancient authors, would be great. But I think I would resist. For while the presentation here is clear, sensible, often illuminating, and does invite the reader to attempt the original texts themselves, it inevitably — like all books of this type — leaves an impression of authority and finality regarding the issues selected and explained. This is no criticism of Luce, who produced a good book, but of the genre. My students, after reading this book, would not read Herodotus or Thucydides in the same way, or bring the same questions and puzzlements to class. Some would choose not to read the ancient authors at all. For students, especially undergraduates — and especially in this decade — are concerned to succeed in a rapid and efficient manner, to learn what the ‘right answer’ is and move on. This problem especially annoys teachers in the Humanities, where critical reading and appreciation of ambiguity are as important as mastery of information. Ancient authors are not immediately accessible; they require effort and patience. In my experience, students’ first reaction to Herodotus and Thucydides is usually bewilderment (a good thing), and then an urgent desire to know what I want them to know. Refusing to satisfy that desire can lead them to a fresh and honest interaction with the text. Luce’s book, with all its virtues, will be an excellent companion and guide to the first-time reader who lacks any other real teacher of Greek historiography but understands that neither this book nor any other contains unimpeachable ‘right answers’.

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Janice J. Gabbert, *Antigonus II Gonatas: A Political Biography*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, viii + 88 pp.

Antigonus Gonatas occupies a pivotal place in the history of ancient Macedon. The family’s dynasty took root in the era of his grandfather, Antigonus Monophthalmus, founder of a long and impressive line. But Monophthalmus, shrewdest of Alexander’s generals, consumed the later part of his career in ambitious eastern conquests, which evaporated at the battle of Ipsus in 301 BCE. His mercurial son, Demetrius Poliorcetes, lit up the skies of the diadoch era for two decades. He claimed the Macedonian throne — and occasionally held it. But he too came to an ignominious end in the East. Gonatas, more plodding and less spectacular than his dynamic predecessors, represents stability and endurance. He reigned and ruled in Macedon, exercised a continuous hegemony in Greece, and secured a regime that his family would control for more than a century thereafter.

Hence, it seems, a worthy subject for biography. But grave obstacles stand in the way. The evidence is sparse, late, woefully inadequate, and frequently unreliable. That did not deter the distinguished Hellenistic historian W.W. Tarn from devoting a hefty tome to Antigonus Gonatas more than three quarters of a century ago. Tarn’s contribution was stimulating and speculative, insightful and imaginative, but filled with flights of fancy. Janice Gabbert’s new endeavor offers a sharp contrast, in every way. She produced a slender volume, more in keeping with the paucity of the evidence. The text is spare, sober, and restrained, careful in exposition, cautious in conjecture. Gabbert provides a reasonable analysis of the evidence and a fair summary of Gonatas’ career. She traces his

apprenticeship in the years of Demetrius, the contests with Pyrrhus, the establishment of a hold in Macedon, the network of control among Greek cities, the clash with Ptolemy II that culminated in the Chremonidean war, the vicissitudes in mainland Greece, the setbacks and disappointments in Gonatas' last years, and the character of his rule. All of this is serviceable and competent, a welcome addition to the growing shelf of Routledge biographies of Hellenistic kings that include Seleucus I, Ptolemy I, and Lysimachus.

But the gaps are large. The skimpy testimony prohibits anything resembling a coherent narrative. Gabbert fills in where she can. The text supplies, for instance, a treatment of the complex and nearly impenetrable ups and downs in Athenian political history of the 290s and 280s that shed little direct light on the doings of Antigonos (pp. 10-8, 23-4), and a proposed reconstruction of the Chremonidean War pieced together from scraps and fragments (pp. 45-53). But the detection of any developing policy or an elucidation of the king's character and objectives are barely possible in view of the available texts.

Gabbert offers sensible and moderate opinions on some matters often over-interpreted. She gives the evidence on Gonatas' association with various philosophers but rightly warns against the notion that he became a follower of Zeno or an adherent of Stoicism (pp. 4-5). She also properly observes that Gonatas' backing for tyrants in Greek cities came on pragmatic, not ideological, grounds (pp. 41-3). Nevertheless, very few concrete or tangible conclusions can be drawn on the basis of what survives.

But Gabbert is perhaps too austere. Other avenues could have been pursued to flesh out the picture. In the absence of particulars on Gonatas, the background and broader context might provide some illumination. Gabbert trains her focus too exclusively on Macedon and Greece. Antigonos Gonatas belonged to the generation after Alexander's immediate successors. The soaring ambition of a Demetrius Poliorcetes, a Lysimachus, or a Seleucus Nicator was largely a feature of the past. None could reach any longer for the mantle of Alexander the Great. Pyrrhus perhaps was an exception; but his quixotic career marked him as something of an anachronism. Gonatas lived in the era of Ptolemy II, Antiochus I, and Eumenes of Pergamum, an age when the heirs of Alexander's marshals turned to nation building rather than aspirations for universal dominion. That context gives some insight into the limitations and expectations that the Macedonian monarch confronted.

By the same token, Gabbert holds back from pursuing paths or even contemplating questions when the testimony gives no firm foothold. This perhaps takes caution to excess. On the personality and perceptions of Antigonos, one might have expected some comments on certain noteworthy matters: e.g. Demetrius' according of greater responsibility to Pyrrhus than to his own son (p. 7); or Antigonos' sharp treatment of his son in turn (p. 31). Gabbert offers none. The victory over the Gauls at Lysimacheia was a critical — perhaps the critical — turning point in the establishment of Antigonid authority in Macedon. The episode is passed over much too briefly and its implications go unexplored (p. 27). Gabbert quite appropriately dwells on Gonatas' system of garrisons, alliances, and connections in Greece that undergirded his authority. But the nature of and reasons for Greek allegiance to the king are nowhere analyzed (see, e.g., pp. 33, 44, 63). And this makes it all the more difficult to comprehend how and why rebellions occurred — especially when fomented by Gonatas' own relatives, like his nephew Alexander at Corinth (pp. 35, 55). Gabbert supplies the facts but does not venture explanations. Similarly, she declines to suggest a basis for the enduring hostility between Antigonids and Ptolemies that plagued Gonatas' years (p. 46). She candidly observes that Antigonos had admirably

clever strategic vision — but not quite clear enough in the Chremonidean War or in the loss of Corinth (p. 70). But what are we to infer from this about the man or his policies? In the end, Gabbert may well be right that a stable and enduring monarchy was Antigonos' prime accomplishment (p. 71), but she provides little clue as to *how* it was accomplished.

Caution and restraint notwithstanding, the book contains a number of dubious statements. Gabbert's claim that the Antigonid line was unique in loyalty and mutual dedication (p. 3) ignores the Attalids who enjoyed high repute on this score — not to mention the fatal friction between Perseus and Demetrius, the sons of Philip V. Her remark that Sparta was the only probable source of hostility in the Peloponnese (p. 41) is plainly an oversight, since she is otherwise well aware of the Achaean League. And her assertion that Ptolemy II's incompetence in military matters is axiomatic in scholarly literature (p. 51) fails to hold up even on the evidence of her own footnotes (pp. 77-8, n. 49). Gabbert further minimizes the significance of the loss of Corinth (p. 36) and the impact of the Chremonidean War on relations between Macedon and Athens (p. 40).

Gabbert does not often indulge in the unsupported assertion. But there is an occasional — and important — lapse. She gives no reason for the suggestion that Antigonos was more welcome in Athens than Demetrius (p. 15). Nor for the conclusion that geography and population were more important to him than form of government (p. 42). Nor indeed for the overall assessment that Antigonos' power was largely personal (p. 62). She may be right in each case. But these are affirmations, not arguments.

In general, the work is well-researched, sensible, and intelligent. Historians of the Hellenistic world will consult it with profit. But, despite Gabbert's best efforts, this monograph demonstrates once again what we have long known: that no real biography of Antigonos Gonatas can be written.

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Julian Bennett, *Trajan, Optimus Princeps. A Life and Times*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, xviii + 317 pp., ISBN 0-415-165245.

Eine Biographie Traians zu schreiben, wird immer unmöglich sein; die uns erhaltenen Quellen werden dies nie erlauben. Seine imponierende Gestalt im Rahmen seiner Zeit zu erfassen, ist aber nicht ausgeschlossen. Dieser Versuch wurde von Julian Bennett, der sich bisher vor allem mit der Archäologie der Nordprovinzen im 2. Jh. n. Chr. befaßt hatte, unternommen.

Ausgehend von dem überragenden Ansehen, das Traian als paganer Kaiser selbst in der christlich-mittelalterlichen Welt genoß, will er 'the substance of his glorious reputation' (S. XVII) untersuchen. Da die biographischen Quellen nicht sehr zahlreich sind, werden Traians Familie, seine senatorische Laufbahn und ebenso seine Politik als Kaiser jeweils in die strukturellen Zusammenhänge eingeordnet, um damit die möglichen Besonderheiten für Traian selbst zu erfassen. Dabei geht der Verf. oft weit zurück, so daß nicht selten längere Exkurse wie etwa zur Stellung Italicas in der Baetica, zur augusteischen Politik gegenüber dem Senat oder über die Anfänge und die Bedeutung von Gladiatorenspielen der historischen Darstellung Kolorit verleihen. Auch das archäologische Material wird intensiv verwendet, etwa bei der Eingliederung Arabiens in