**Greek Hearts and Diadems**

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The Making of a King: Antigonus Gonatas of Macedon and the Greeks
by Robin Waterfield
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‘no part of greek history should come home to us like the third century bc,’ William Tarn wrote in 1913. ‘It is the only period that we can in the least compare with our own.’ And yet the third century – standing midway between the classical age and the coming of Rome, undocumented by any intact surviving source – gets little attention even from specialists, despite the many intriguing figures who helped shape it. Among the most intriguing was Antigonus, nicknamed Gonatas, a member of the tiny cadre of self-appointed rulers we know today as the Hellenistic kings.

His grandfather, Antigonus the One-Eyed, had been one of the Diadochi (‘successors’), the generals who served under Alexander the Great and fought to control his empire after his death in 323. They gravitated to separate quadrants and entered into a near constant state of war, jostling for territory and competing to dominate the Greek city states. After two decades of struggle each took to wearing a royal diadem and minting coins that proclaimed him a basileus, ‘king’, though it was often unclear just what that meant. Gonatas inherited the title but little else. By the time his father, Demetrius the Besieger, abdicated in 284 bc, the once great Antigonid empire had shrunk to a pitiful set of harbours and ports. Its rivals to the south and east, the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucids in Asia, were far more firmly established and no doubt entertained hopes of finishing off their weaker, poorer rival and gobbling up his domain. Yet Antigonus went on to survive, and often thrive, for 45 years, and bequeathed a royal seat to his son, Demetrius II.