

S. GEIST, *DER GESCHEITERTE FELDHERR (DUX FEROX): DER BESIEGTE RÖMISCHE FELDHERR ALS LITERARISCHE FIGUR BEI RÖMISCHEN NIEDERLAGEN, DARGESTELLT AN AUSGEWÄHLTEN SCHWEREN NIEDERLAGEN VON DER FRÜHEN REPUBLIK BIS ZU AUGUSTUS*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009. Pp. 229. ISBN 9783631589083. £36.00

Geist's *Der gescheiterte Feldherr (Dux Ferox)* analyses the motif of the 'failed general' in Roman literature. Using evidence from a broad spectrum of ancient sources, ranging from Polybius through to Byzantine compilers like Zonaras, G. argues convincingly that in many instances unsuccessful Roman generals were reinterpreted by later authors so that they fit a certain form or stereotype which she has labelled the *dux ferox*. One of the main features of a *dux ferox* was obviously a tendency towards making bad tactical decisions, but the figure also featured important character flaws including *superbia et avaritia gloriae, neglegentia deorum*, causing *discordia*, and a degree of *ferox et temerarius* which in this instance should be interpreted as being 'barbarous' or 'un-Roman'. Once constructed, G. argues these figures became integral pieces of the historical narrative and were used by authors throughout Roman history not only as a scapegoats to explain defeats, but also as *exempla mala* and as tropes to help illuminate social and political conflicts within the context of the period.

This volume makes a number of important contributions as it clearly demonstrates the existence of this literary motif, defined by a number of key characteristics, which links together important historical figures from a number of different military scenarios across several centuries of Roman republican history. Indeed, G. is likely to be correct that many of the similarities which exist between the narratives of the various Roman defeats which were examined in this study owe more to literary artifice than to factual reality. G. is also convincing in her argument that these failed generals, although in many ways initially self-selected through their failure in battle, were often chosen based in part on developments which occurred off the battlefield in the social and political spheres.

However, the volume is also problematic in a number of ways. Beginning with the evidence itself, G.'s choices for examples of the *dux ferox* seem slightly arbitrary with no real explanation offered for why some defeated generals were included and others, who also suffered defeats for which they were famously censured by the community, were not. For instance, T. Veturius Calvinus and Sp. Postumius Albinus, renowned for the disaster at the Caudine Forks, and P. Valerius Laevinus, who was blamed for the defeat at Heraclea in 280 B.C., were not included while the more problematic M. Minucius Rufus, who never actually lost a battle, was. Additionally, it is unfortunate that G. gives virtually no treatment whatsoever to the long history of the figure of the failed general in the Greek historical tradition, which formed the obvious precursor to the *dux ferox* and which has been explored in a number of modern works. Further, G.'s attempt to create an antithesis for the *dux ferox*, a 'Retter in der Not' (white knight), by formulating comparisons with other prominent (and successful) figures in the narrative is not particularly successful. These comparisons often feel a bit forced, as these supposed 'white knights' lack any clear markers to distinguish them in the narrative similar to those which mark the *dux ferox*, and represent the weakest aspects of the argument. Finally, although G. utilizes a wide range of ancient material to support her argument, the volume does not take full advantage of the vast amount of modern literature which is available on the authors and passages discussed. Specifically, while G. demonstrates a very sound grasp of recent work in German on the subject, the volume's use of Anglophone scholarship is minimal and misses many important works (Oakley's recent commentaries on Livy, much of Walbank's work on Polybius, etc.).

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E. SCIARRINO, *CATO THE CENSOR AND THE BEGINNINGS OF LATIN PROSE: FROM POETIC TRANSLATION TO ELITE TRANSCRIPTION*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011. Pp. xii + 239, illus. ISBN 97808142116566. €44.95.

Enrica Sciarrino's monograph is presented as an intervention in debates about early Latin literary literature, but it is ultimately much more than that. In effect S. reorients the study of