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## Review of *Sperlonga und Vergil*, by Roland Hampe

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SPERLONGA UND VERGIL, by *Roland Hampe* (Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Kommission für antike Mythologie, Schriften zur antiken Mythologie I). Pp. xv + 87, pls. 40. Philipp von Zabern, Mainz am Rhein 1972.

Sixteen years have elapsed since the exciting discovery of the Sperlonga sculptures, and much progress has been made in the reconstruction and interpretation of the single statues and groups. Yet the controversy still rages among scholars over many points of identification and chronology, and much work remains to be done in the reassembling of the extant fragments. Under these circumstances it is understandable that the author should state (p. 5) that any opinion on the Sperlonga material must of necessity have a temporary character, pending the results of the restoration in progress. What is less understandable, therefore, is the reason for the book itself, which seems particularly premature since in September 1971, when Hampe finished his manuscript (p. 5), Conticello, the Director of the Sperlonga Museum, had just given, or was about to give, to *Antike Plastik* a fundamental article on the very same subject.

As Hampe states it (p. 4), his purpose was to collect and order the most significant opinions which have so far appeared in print, often in rather inaccessible periodicals and journals, and to bring into sharper focus the meaning and dating of the Sperlonga sculptures and inscriptions. A second, but important, aim was to provide good illustrations of the monuments themselves. But have these goals been fulfilled? The photographs, though well reproduced, bring nothing new, nor are they significantly more plentiful than in previous publications. As for Hampe's personal contributions, they might have found more effective expression in an article, where one expects perhaps a slightly polemic tone. In a book, this point-by-point refutation of other scholars' opinions and the faintly ironical, at times even condescending, tone are somewhat disturbing. Finally, the primary and laudable purpose seems badly frustrated by Hampe's way of citing other authors, selecting sentences out of context and twisting their original meaning, while at the same time retaining an appearance of great objectivity in carefully annotating each direct quotation.

Could Hampe possibly, in each instance, have misunderstood? Take the case of Odysseus' companion holding the empty wineskin (*der Weinschlauchträger*). Hampe says (p. 9): "Unter Berufung auf das Catania-Relief, das die ursprüngliche Gruppe getreuer wiedergibt, sucht Blanckenhagen (1969, 268, Anm. 31) gerade diese Gestalt aus der Sperlongagruppe zu eliminieren. Denn er meint: 'in keiner Drehung und Wendung lässt sie sich wirklich überzeugend in die Gruppe einordnen, weder thematisch noch formal. So wirkt auch die von Andreae gegebene Rekonstruktionsskizze (Taf. 12, 1) in dieser Einzelheit nicht glaubhaft.' Warum der leere Weinschlauch hier thematisch nicht überzeugen sollte, ist nicht einzusehen." However the entire note,

as written by von Blanckenhagen in *AA* 1969, sets the question in a much larger context, of adaptation vs. original composition, and a more comprehensive quotation of the same passage reads: "Könnte dieses (the Catania relief) etwa die originale Gruppe getreuer wiedergeben? Ist etwa das kolossale Mass des Sperlonga-Polyphem eine ad hoc geschaffene Variante? . . . Könnte der Weinschlauchträger in Sperlonga eine ad hoc adaptierte Figur sein, die ursprünglich gar nicht zur Gruppe gehörte, sondern in einem anderen Zusammenhang stand, etwa in dem einer Kriegergruppe, eine Möglichkeit, auf die mich A. Herrmann aufmerksam machte. Denn in keiner Drehung und Wendung . . .," and the passage continues as cited in Hampe's book. This is not an isolated example: Andreae, Gross, Sichtermann are equally misrepresented and quoted out of context, so that this compendium of Sperlonga literature, rather than a useful tool, becomes a double-edged weapon in the hands of the unwary reader.

Such polemical overtones mar even Hampe's positive contributions, his very detailed discussion of the Sperlonga inscriptions, for instance, or of the historical circumstances which fit best with the available evidence and give us a date between A.D. 79 and 91 for the installation of the major sculptural groups in the grotto, a span to be perhaps further narrowed down to 90-91 (p. 63). Hampe believes that the famous head of Odysseus with the pilos, now generally attributed to the Blinding of Polyphemus, should instead go with the Rape of the Palladion and, as originally restored by Jacopi, in conjunction with the nervous hand holding the archaizing statue of Athena. (He seems, however, to disregard the scale of that hand, which appears too big for the Odysseus head.) He also supports placing the Blinding of Polyphemus at the entrance to the small left-hand grotto (B), though the minimum dimensions of the group would virtually block all access to the rear room (C). Finally, Hampe's major point consists in identifying the man on the stern of the marble ship as Palinurus. The *puppis fracta* of Faustinus' epigram would then refer not to a wreck of the total ship, but to the rudder which Aeneas' pilot took with him in his headlong fall. This interpretation thus provides the clue to connecting the whole sculptural program in the grotto with Vergil rather than with Homer, and helps establish a Flavian date for both the Sperlonga sculpture and the Laocoon.

Despite all efforts, the Sperlonga/Laocoon question is still too complex to allow thorough discussion of controversial points within the narrow compass of a book review. Suffice it here to say that I am thoroughly convinced by von Blanckenhagen's theories on the Laocoon, which should be read in the original text and not in Hampe's biased version. As for the Sperlonga marbles, the next issue of *Antike Plastik* will probably cut many Gordian knots.

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