

Maria Helena da Rocha-Pereira: the Suitable *Kairos* Back Again

[= D.F. Leão, “Maria Helena da Rocha-Pereira: the suitable *kairos* back again”, in Rui Morais, *Greek Art. From Oxford to Portugal and Back Again. Tribute to M. H. da Rocha-Pereira* (Oxford, Archaeopress, 2017), v-vi]

It has recently become popular to celebrate major works from the past, whose real impact on society and among scholars has been particularly significant, not in terms of the strict *impact factor* popularised by bibliometrics, but rather because they have inspired and stimulated in-depth analysis and given momentous contributions to science in specific areas of expertise. If we were to choose, among Classicists in Portugal, the scholar who most perfectly corresponds to this special degree of excellence, the first choice would fall naturally upon Maria Helena da Rocha-Pereira.

This choice, while undoubtedly unanimous, does raise some challenges. It would be no simple task to select the most distinctive work of Rocha-Pereira’s career, precisely because she has been, for almost seven decades of intensive work, such a special and coherent example of fruitful production.

In these perilous circumstances, a *kairos* may be particularly helpful and provide a natural candidate for a reference work: it was 55 years ago that the volume *Greek Vases in Portugal* (Coimbra: 1962) was published for the first time. This work represented, first and foremost, a clear intellectual product of Rocha-Pereira’s intense connections with Oxford. In fact, she herself makes this very clear in the opening preface of the work, which is worth remembering at this moment (pp. v-vi):

In 1950-1951, during my first sojourn as a recognized student in the University of Oxford, I was lucky enough to attend Prof. Sir John Beazley’s lectures on Greek Vases. Anybody who has been granted this privileged knows how stimulating contact with this most famous scholar can be. I will, therefore, only state a few facts which may be of interest to readers of this book: when I went to Oxford again, in the Michaelmas Term, 1954, I had already collected most of the material for my first paper on the subject (afterwards published in Humanitas vii-viii); then in March and April 1959, after I had gained access to other collections, I worked under Prof. Beazley’s supervision. This part of my studies appeared soon afterwards in Humanitas xi-xii and Archivo Español de Arqueología xxxi. A few months later I encountered new material, which I discussed in a paper included in Conimbriga i. I then resolved to collect all the papers in a single volume which would contain a study of the vases in chronological order, and not, as formerly, according to their whereabouts. This is, therefore, what the reader will find here, together with two further vases and a fragment, which are now published for the first time.

It is my pleasant task to acknowledge help of various kinds towards the completion of this book. Nobody who reads it will need to be told how much the author owes to Prof. Beazley's generous advice, though any blemishes that may have been left are certainly not his. I am also indebted to Prof. A. D. Trendall, of Canberra University, Australia, for some valuable suggestions; to Prof. B. Ashmole, of Oxford University, for a photograph; to Dr. Dietrich von Bothmer, of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, for indicating a reference; and to Mr. J. M. Bairrão Oleiro, of Coimbra University, for some bibliographical references and for introducing me to new material.

This book is also a decisive turning point in one of the areas she cherished most during her life, as can be clearly perceived in the volume of her collected papers on ancient art, which has just been published by the Coimbra University Press and Calouste Gubenkian Foundation: *Arte Antiga* (Coimbra and Lisbon: 2017). *Greek Vases in Portugal* was, ultimately, the seminal work responsible for introducing, in scientific terms, Greek art studies to the Portuguese speaking countries and the first to make the works meanwhile produced truly international.

If we were to select a second work, Rocha-Pereira herself would probably suggest the three-volume edition of Pausanias, *Graeciae Descriptio* (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana, Leipzig: 1973, 1977, and 1981). To a very high degree, this other major work ends by expressing her same devotion to ancient art, as well as to religious questions. As a closing note, it may be worth mentioning a small story that she often liked to tell colleagues and students. At a time when the Internet and digital computing were simply labile and distant concepts, two renowned scholars told Rocha-Pereira how particularly useful they had found the indexes she had prepared for her edition of Pausanias and how often they used them: one was Walter Burkert; the other was precisely Sir John Boardman.

It is now time to return to them again.

Delfim Leão

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