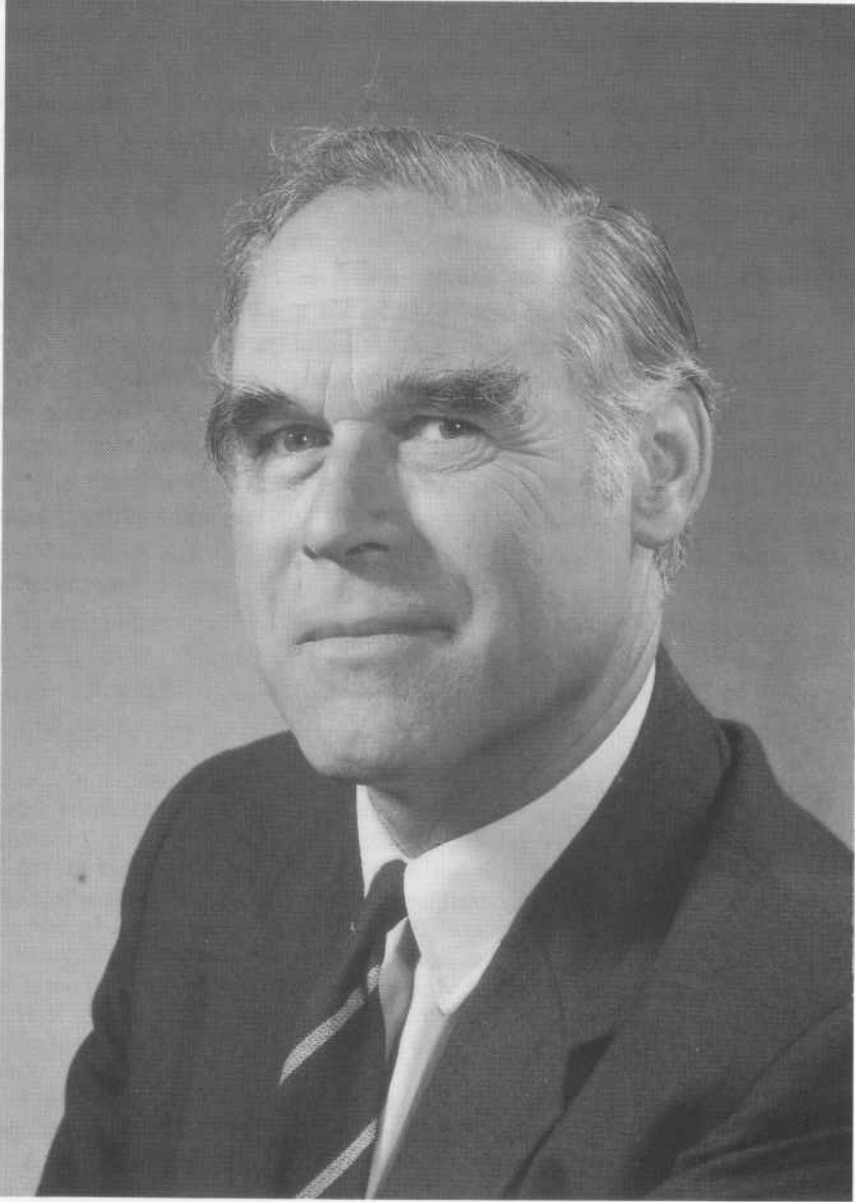


...dressing gown, pyjamas and slippers, and having a few cups of tea and



REYNOLD HIGGINS

E. Dawson Strange

Reynold Alleyne Higgins 1916–1993

I

AS ONE OF THE FOREMOST CLASSICAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS OF OUR DAY, Reynold Higgins achieved the rare distinction of becoming a leading expert in three quite disparate fields: Greek terracotta figurines, Greek and Roman jewellery, and the Aegean Bronze Age. On all three topics he gave us superbly authoritative handbooks, beautifully written, a pleasure to read, and much admired throughout the world. Never resting on his laurels and always striving to keep up to date with new discoveries, he saw the books on jewellery and on the Bronze Age into second editions. In these three fields he had built up his expertise largely from his long service to our national collection in the British Museum, where for thirty years he was a member of the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities. Never, though, did he make the British Museum his ivory tower. He always enjoyed meeting people: unpredictable people who came to consult him in the Museum; people in universities, where on countless occasions he fired the interest of students and colleagues with his current ideas on Greek gold jewellery, or Greek terracottas, or the Minoan and Mycenaean world. He also reached out to thousands of people embarked on numerous Swan Hellenic cruises, people whom he inspired and entertained with his wonderful gift of evoking the ancient Greek world. While reaching his wider audiences, however, he was also continually advancing knowledge, as a specialist, within his three chosen fields.

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II

Reynold Alleyne Higgins was born at Weybridge in Surrey on 26 November 1916. Both Reynold and Alleyne are names traditional to a family whose origins lay in the villages of East Pennard and Dicheat in Somerset. His father, Charles Alleyne Higgins, though trained as a barrister, devoted his professional career to the Solicitors' Office of the Treasury, and after retirement became engrossed in genealogical studies. His mother, Margaret Edith (née Taylor), was a talented singer.

In 1930 Reynold won a scholarship to Sherborne School, where he distinguished himself by winning the Marson prize in Greek in both 1934 and 1935, followed by a Huist Exhibition to Pembroke College, Cambridge. In the severe literary discipline of the Classical Tripos Part I he gained First Class Honours in 1937, being commended for proficiency in Latin Verse composition, and distinction in composing Greek verse. In Part II of the Tripos he welcomed the opportunity of taking options in Greek art and archaeology. His interest in the visual aspects of Classical antiquity had, no doubt, been stimulated by two eminent archaeologists in his own College: Professor A. J. B. Wace, excavator of Mycenae, and A. W. Lawrence (younger brother of T. E. L. 'of Arabia') who later became one of Wace's successors in the Laurence Chair of Classical Archaeology. In spring 1938 Reynold Higgins paid his first visit to Greece, during the Metaxas regime, and travelled from Athens to Delphi and round the Peloponnese in the company of three undergraduate friends. In his final Part II examination that summer he again achieved a First Class result, with 'special merit' in his archaeological papers. During the ensuing Long Vacation Wace had hoped to excavate at Mycenae and, in that event, had invited Reynold to be one of his assistants; but, as it turned out, the excavation had to be postponed until the following year.

After his double First in Classics, Reynold Higgins might well have embarked on postgraduate research; but it was the wish of his father, a forceful character who did not easily brook disagreement, that he should at once seek paid employment. Accordingly he found a post in the Coal Commission: but, as the threat of war began to loom large, he also enlisted as a territorial volunteer in Queen Victoria's Rifles, the King's Royal Rifle Corps. His battalion's call to action was sudden and dramatic. Two weeks after the German army's thrust into the Low Countries and France in May 1940, the order came by night to cross

the Channel. Having no time to doff his pyjamas (a fortunate oversight, as it turned out), he donned his battle-dress and sailed to the defence of Calais. There his battalion fought desperately for five days against overwhelming odds, helping to cover the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force through Dunkirk: but from Calais there was never any prospect of withdrawal by sea. Many of his comrades were killed or wounded, and on 27 May those who survived, including Reynold Higgins, were taken captive.

For the next five years he endured the traumatic experience of being a prisoner of war, denied proper sustenance, denied any privacy, shunted from camp to camp either on foot or in cattle trucks, and even—for one year—being put in shackles. In such dire conditions, those with less resilience might have succumbed to deep depression; but Higgins, from the first, was determined to keep his spirits up. A wartime friend recalled how ‘his very presence and cheerful countenance made the day seem brighter’. In the letters which he was allowed to write home, he assured his family that the fetters were really quite comfortable, having chains between them; moreover, few other captive officers possessed the luxury of pyjamas. Somehow he acquired a gramophone for which his mother sent records, and he organised concerts in the camp. He also kept his mind busy. Now promoted to Captain, he learned modern Greek from a fellow prisoner, a Cypriot officer. In response to a letter to his Cambridge professor Alan Wace, then in GHQ Cairo, he received not only food parcels, but also a consignment of books on classical topics. In his first camp, Oflag C/H at Laufen in Bavaria, the prisoners’ chaplain, the Rev. Capt. Herd (later to be Dean of Peterhouse, Cambridge) set up a camp ‘university’, recruiting those with any special expertise and encouraging them to share it by giving lectures to their fellow captives. Higgins’s talks on Greek history and civilisation were said to be the most popular in the entire camp. From Laufen in 1942 he was moved to Oflag VI B at Warburg near Kassel, now well-known as the egress for the celebrated Wooden Horse escape. There, too, was a flourishing camp ‘university’, with courses ranging from Reynold Higgins’s well-prepared lectures on ancient history to instruction in pig-farming. Many of his comrades there were RAF officers of whom one, Flight Lt. Derek Roberts, remembers Reynold’s generosity with supplies from his food parcels, and recalls how morale ‘was gradually restored by the more buoyant and energetic characters of whom Reynold was certainly a splendid example. He was determined not to waste valuable time—particularly as one could not forecast the

date of liberation. He therefore kept up his spirits by working hard to a daily schedule, and without doubt this attitude encouraged others.'

It was in these harsh circumstances, then, that Reynold Higgins first developed and exercised his gift for speaking with verve, wit and clarity to general audiences, a gift which he applied later while addressing countless 'captive' audiences of a different kind on Swan Hellenic cruises. What is more, his years of captivity, though hard to bear, gave him a sense of direction for his future life, after his release. He made two resolutions: first, to find a wife and start a family; second, to exchange his pre-war civilian employment for more congenial work, connected with ancient Greece.

Liberation came at last in spring 1945, with the advance of the American army into south-west Germany. On his return to England, Higgins served his final months in the army as a Resettlement Officer, himself much in need of resettlement. The Coal Commission, meanwhile, had been paying him a salary throughout the war; and so, when the time came for his demobilisation in 1946, he felt bound, for the time being, to return to his former employers, now renamed the Coal Board. Quite soon, however, both of his dearest wishes were to be realised. When a vacancy occurred in the staff of the British Museum in May 1947, he applied, and was appointed to an Assistant Keepership in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, under the leadership of Bernard Ashmole. During the same month, at a Ball held in St Thomas' Hospital in London, he first met Patricia Williams, recently qualified as a physiotherapist. After a brief courtship they were married in August, and set up house at Cobham in Surrey. Thereafter, Reynold and Pat Higgins were to enjoy nearly forty-seven years of happy married life, raising a family of five children in whom they took great pride.

The British Museum, in the early years of Higgins's career there, was a badly damaged building. The upper storey had been badly hit by air raids, so that the approach to the Greek and Roman offices on the upper floor was across what had virtually become a roof. Ashmole, with his three young assistants, Denys Haynes, Martin Robertson and Reynold Higgins, faced two major tasks. Much of the collection, including the Parthenon sculptures, had to be recovered from the secure wartime shelter on an unused platform of the Aldwych Tube station; and, pending the final restoration of the building, the Trustees required that temporary exhibitions should be mounted in those parts of the building that had escaped unscathed. At the same time, the scholarly work of the Department had to continue apace. Higgins, from the first,

took a hand in the temporary displays; but, for his major task, Ashmole attracted his attention to the need for an up-to-date catalogue of the Museum's huge holding of miniature Greek sculptures in clay. They had previously been published by H. B. Walters in 1903; but, in Classical archaeology, no museum catalogue could possibly remain serviceable as long as half a century.

Higgins's masterly treatment of the terracottas, in the first two volumes of his British Museum catalogue (1954, 1959), soon won him a place among the foremost international experts in this field and, eventually, a Doctorate of Letters at Cambridge (1964). The 1950s also witnessed his deep involvement in what were to be his other two main fields of research. The excitement generated by Ventris's decipherment of the Linear B texts as Mycenaean Greek, combined with the rigorous experience of an excavation season with Professor Wace at Mycenae (1955) had the effect of stimulating his interest afresh in the Aegean Bronze Age; and the mystery of the Museum's Aegina treasure led him on to a general wish to explore the ancient jeweller's craft in goldwork. I vividly remember (as a junior and temporary Assistant Keeper in 1956–7 when Haynes had succeeded Ashmole as Keeper) how Reynold was then working at white heat, as one clue after another fell into place while he came to realise the Minoan origin of the Aegina treasure. I also remember with gratitude his infinite kindness to me, helping a newcomer to feel at home in a vast building. And, while working with him on a temporary Bronze Age display in the King Edward VII gallery, and drafting labels for Minoan and Mycenaean pots for his scrutiny, how much I learned from him! With his generosity in sharing his knowledge, his infinite patience with those who came to consult him, and his flair for communicating his enthusiasms with ease and humour, he would have made an ideal university teacher.

During the 1960s he transferred his main energies as a scholar from the particular to the general. Within one decade he had produced succinct handbooks on all three of his special fields of expertise, all of which have stood the test of time: *Greek and Roman Jewellery* (1961), *Greek Terracottas* (1967) and, in the same year, *Minoan and Mycenaean Art*. His impressive accumulation of published work, both particular and general, won him the Fellowship of the British Academy in 1972. In the British Museum, now promoted to Deputy Keeper (1965), he was active in exhibiting to the public the themes of his three handbooks. Many will remember his dazzling and instructive

display of gold jewellery on the balcony overlooking the new gallery of Greek and Roman life, before it was dispersed among the chronologically organised rooms of the main exhibition on the ground floor. More permanent have proved his arrangement of the terracottas upstairs, and—perhaps his most personal monument—the reconstruction from the Elgin fragments of the portal of the Treasury of Atreus at Mycenae, through which the visitor passes to see the Aegean Bronze Age collection downstairs.

With Haynes's retirement in 1976, Higgins became the Department's Acting Keeper. Then it was that the Museum had negotiated a loan exhibition of Thracian gold from Bulgaria, to which he travelled to make the arrangements. This was possibly the first occasion when ancient gold had been allowed to travel westward across the Iron Curtain. The exhibition, accompanied by an Anglo-Bulgarian Colloquium in the Museum, proved such a success that Reynold and Pat Higgins were welcomed next year on holiday in Bulgaria with red-carpet treatment, and he received the Bulgarian order of the Madara Horseman. Another happy consequence, a few years later, was the loan of a second spectacular exhibition from Bulgaria, of the only recently discovered Rogozen Treasure.

According to precedent, promotion in the British Museum had previously come from within, by strict rotation. After his many years of distinguished service, Higgins might have expected to become the next Keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities—if only for a brief interval, since Haynes was his senior by only three years. Sadly, it was not to be. Under the current Director, Sir John Pope-Hennessy, the rules were changed, and new blood was sought. After some months of painful uncertainty, even confusion, Reynold Higgins took his retirement in 1977. His disappointment, however, was to be tempered by distractions and consolations of several kinds.

It was in 1963 that Higgins was first recruited by Sir Mortimer Wheeler as a Guest Lecturer on Swan's Hellenic Cruises, an experience that was repeated, with Pat serving as Cruise Librarian, every subsequent year of his life; in some years he lectured on two, three or even four cruises. Among the passengers there was a thirst, at least in the early years, for knowledge and understanding of ancient Classical civilisation. Jacquetta Hawkes, in her biography of Wheeler, remarks: 'these were no ordinary cruises for bronzing and drinking, with some sight-seeing thrown in. Hellenic travellers were expected "to begin a new interest or develop existing knowledge in art, history and culture"'

of the Mediterranean world'.¹ Respecting these aims, Reynold Higgins prepared his talks carefully for a lay audience, enlivened by wit and anecdote; they were much enjoyed by many thousands of passengers and he, on his part, greatly enjoyed the cruises. During the 1970s he took over from Canon Guy Pentreath the responsibility for coordinating the lecturing programme on each cruise. His talent as a lively speaker on Classical antiquity to lay audiences was further exercised in his frequent lectures, from 1974 onwards, to the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies; and his invitations to address University audiences were legion. In 1982–3 he crossed the Atlantic to give the prestigious series of Norton lectures under the auspices of the Archaeological Institute of America; of the topics that he offered there, those on Greek gold jewellery were especially in demand.

Meanwhile, his commitment to the study of ancient jewellery had earned him widespread recognition among practising goldsmiths and experts in ancient gold techniques. In 1977 he was elected the first President of the newly formed Society of Jewellery Historians. On his seventy-fifth birthday in 1991 he was invited to speak in the British Museum on Greek gold. Much to his surprise, his talk was followed by the presentation to him by the Society of a volume of papers in his honour;² this was prefaced by a moving tribute to him and his work by Dr Elizabeth Goring of the Royal Scottish Museum, whom he had helped and encouraged when she was a student.

Higgins undertook a more demanding distraction in 1975, when he agreed to become Chairman of the Managing Committee of the British School at Athens for the usual term of four years. His association with the School went back many years. His expertise had been called in by Sinclair Hood during the late 1950s to study for publication the vast number of terracotta figurines excavated from the sanctuary of Demeter at Knossos; he had served as a rotating member of the Managing Committee in 1963–6; and he had stayed at the School in Athens for two months in spring 1969 as its Visiting Fellow. The years of his Chairmanship witnessed a considerable expansion of the School's activities, under the Directorship of Dr Hector Catling. The Marc and Ismene Fitch Laboratory, founded in 1973, was beginning to get into its stride, especially prominent in the chemical analysis of ancient pottery.

¹ Jacquetta Hawkes, *Mortimer Wheeler, Adventurer in Archaeology* (London, 1984) 308.

² J. Ogden (ed.), *Classical Gold Jewellery and the Classical Tradition; Papers in Honour of R. A. Higgins. Jewellery Studies 5* (1991).

A course for school teachers in Classics, introducing them to the ancient monuments of Greece, was carefully planned and first given in spring 1979. In sympathy with the movement towards Equal Opportunities, the School's senior Studentship, though endowed originally for men, was first made available for women. In the field it was Knossos, the School's prime site, which was also the most active. For reasons that will at once become clear, the School decided to revive its former post of resident officer there ('Knossos Fellow' at first, now 'Knossos Curator'), which had been dormant since the retirement of Piet de Jong in the 1950s. To prepare for building operations in Teke village, followed by the laying of massive foundations for the Medical Faculty of the new University of Crete, the School was invited by the Ephor of Central Crete to conduct a rescue operation. The result was perhaps the largest excavation in the School's history, lasting over nine months: more than three hundred tombs were dug, from the Early Iron Age to Late Roman times, some very rich indeed. Reynold Higgins completed the study of the jewellery and terracottas from these tombs, of which the final report will appear in the near future. Apart from the School's operations in the field, his frequent visits as Chairman gave encouragement to the students, and support to the administration — especially when resolute decision was needed to cope with unexpected personal problems.

In 1982 Reynold and Pat moved deeper into the country, to a cottage built on a hill slope at Dunsfold near Godalming. With their five children they remained a close family; their three sons and two daughters had all travelled with them to Greece on the Swan cruises. By now their oldest children had grown up, and came to visit the Dunsfold cottage with their own families. Reynold became used to having his luxuriant eyebrows tweaked by his grandchildren, who knew him as 'Babar'. In their hillside garden Reynold and Pat grew numerous plants brought in from the Greek countryside. His lively and entertaining talks in the village were much appreciated; but, such was his modesty, very few villagers came to know of his great distinction as a Classical archaeologist.

In his retirement Reynold planned to complete his work on the Greek terracottas in the British Museum. His third catalogue volume was to include the Hellenistic pieces, a far larger corpus than in either of his two previous tomes. For this major work he prepared the way by writing *Tanagra and the Figurines* (1986), a charming and humane general work on the best known aspect of the Hellenistic terracottas, directed towards a wide readership; this proved to be his last published

book. From 1987 onwards he returned to the British Museum to work on his third volume, travelling up from Dunsfold once or twice a week. Dr Lucilla Burn, a young member of the Greek and Roman Department, was deputed to assist him with cataloguing the Hellenistic figurines. After a few years, with his characteristic modesty, he declared, 'I've taught her all I know!', and generously promoted her from assistant to co-author. On his last visits to Greece, between 1989 and 1992, he enjoyed the company of his eldest son Michael, now Professor of Geology at the University of Quebec at Chicoutimi. Father and son worked together on a book dealing with the geology and archaeology of Greece; this work, and the third terracotta volume, will appear as posthumous monuments to Reynold's scholarship.

In summer 1992 Reynold Higgins began to feel unwell, but it was not until three weeks before his death on 18 April 1993 that cancer was diagnosed. At his memorial service on 22 May, the village church of Dunsfold had never before received such a large congregation. Among the many tributes paid to him, one of the most moving came from his grandson Lawrence, printed in the Service sheet: 'I just hope that one day I will be known as such a wonderful, loving, generous, funny, interesting and caring person as Reynold Alleyne Higgins; otherwise known as Babar.' A wooden bench is inscribed in Reynold's memory outside the entrance to the church: a fine capacious bench, with plenty of room for a large family.

III

Throughout his career as a Classical archaeologist in the British Museum, Higgins's energies were constantly fluctuating between his three fields of expertise. To appreciate his own special contributions most clearly, let us consider each field in turn.

His interest in the Aegean Bronze Age, already kindled by the teaching of A. J. B. Wace at Cambridge, received a powerful stimulus from a truly epoch-making discovery made during his early years at the British Museum. This was Michael Ventris's decipherment in 1953 of the Linear B syllabic script on the clay tablets from Knossos and Pylos as an early form of Greek, at least half a millennium before Homer. Reynold knew Ventris quite well; the London Institute of Classical Studies exhibits a photograph which shows him guiding Ventris round the British Museum. One immediate result of the decipherment was the

establishment of the Mycenaean Seminar—at first called the Minoan Linear B Seminar—under the auspices of the University of London's recently founded Institute of Classical Studies. Before that Institute's present premises had been built in 31–4 Gordon Square, the Seminar's earliest meetings took place in University College. To begin with, most papers explored the philological consequences of the decipherment, but archaeological perspectives were also welcome. Higgins went to the early meetings, and in 1955 contributed a perceptive paper relating the descriptions of palace furniture and metal vessels in the Linear B documents with remains surviving from Mycenaean sites, supplemented by the better preserved pieces from the tomb of Tutankhamen and other Egyptian burials. This paper, which opened up an archaeological approach to the tablets, was published in the following year in the third number of the new Institute's *Bulletin*, as 'The Archaeological Background to the Furniture Tablets from Pylos'.

Next year the Mycenaean Seminar heard a second paper from Higgins, breaking new ground in a more startling way. In 1891 the British Museum had acquired a spectacular collection of gold ornaments, ostensibly from the island of Aegina. The *pièce de résistance* in this treasure was an elaborate pendant depicting a young god of nature, flanked by waterbirds, bull horns and lotus flowers. The style of these trinkets was then quite unknown. For a long time their date and origin remained a mystery to all experts, even to Sir Arthur Evans; guesses were wild, ranging from the thirteenth (the date of the Mycenaean tomb in which they were alleged to have been found) to the seventh centuries BC, and one scholar even considered the material to be Phoenician. The true nature of the Aegina treasure was not realised until 1957, when Higgins made out an unanswerable case for a Minoan origin. By comparing the style and technique with gold jewellery from the Minoan palatial site of Mallia, excavated by the French in the 1920s, he assigned the treasure to the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries BC, the early phase of the palaces in their second and grandest stage. His paper to the Mycenaean Seminar was promptly published in the fourth number of the Institute's *Bulletin*; later in the same year a fuller version appeared in the *Annual of the British School at Athens*, based on a public lecture at one of that School's meetings. Higgins's diagnosis has never been seriously challenged. It received confirmation from an unexpected quarter in 1989, when Manfred Bietak's excavations at Tell el D'aba in the Nile Delta (the ancient Avaris, capital of the intrusive Hyksos Dynasty) produced a gold pendant very similar to the Aegina

Treasure in style and technique, in association with imported Middle Minoan pottery. Concerning the find-spot of the treasure, however, Higgins had some second thoughts, based on assiduous detective work. His original impression was that Aegina had been a fictitious dealer's provenance, invented to cover the robbing of the gold from Crete when that island was still under Turkish rule; he had thought especially of Mallia, where the rich burials of the Chrysolakkos building (the 'pit of gold') had yielded a closely comparable ornament. Subsequently, after sifting circumstantial accounts of the treasure's discovery on Aegina obtained from descendants of eye-witnesses, he came round to accepting it as the work of expatriate Minoan craftsmen settled on that island, plundered in antiquity from its original context, and then re-buried as a robber's cache in a later Mycenaean tomb. Higgins's revised thoughts were first put to the Mycenaean Seminar, and then published in 1979 in a British Museum monograph, *The Aegina Treasure, an Archaeological Mystery*, which he dedicated to his grandchildren, Lucy and Lawrence. As he says in the Preface, 'it is a good story.'

His next contribution to Bronze Age studies arose from the major task of arranging the pick of the British Museum's collection in what were to become the permanent rooms of the exhibition on the ground floor. From the great tholos tomb at Mycenae, the 'Treasury of Atreus', the architectural decoration of the facade invited a restoration *in corpore*, to make a doorway at the entrance to the Greek and Roman rooms; this decoration consisted of half-columns in green *lapis laedaemonius* and, above the lintel, carved friezes mainly in *antico rosso*. Several alternative reconstructions had previously been suggested by others on paper, and Higgins's restoration differed from all of them: *quot homines, tot sententiae*. What was new was his inquiry into the source of the materials; with the collaboration of a field archaeologist and a scientist, he established that both the coloured stones had been obtained from the Kyprianon quarries, deep in the Mani peninsula.³

Higgins's achievement in the Aegean Bronze Age was splendidly summarised in his terse and lucid handbook, *Minoan and Mycenaean Art* (1967), through which many thousands of students and non-specialists have come to enjoy and appreciate the visual glories of the first great European civilisation. Understandably, many of his illustrations

³ R. A. Higgins, R. Hope Simpson and S. E. Ellis, 'The Facade of the Treasury of Atreus at Mycenae', *BSA* 63 (1968) 331–6.

are of objects in the British Museum, and his own special concerns are reflected in the emphasis that he places on the so-called 'minor' arts of jewellery and seal engraving: 'minor', indeed, in scale, but major in importance. The first edition was already well up to date, including recent finds at Zakro in Crete, and Lefkandi in Euboea. Even so, a second edition followed in 1981, to take account of the newly discovered frescoes from Thera. During the interval between the two editions, Higgins also published two shorter works for a lay readership: a British Museum booklet, *The Greek Bronze Age* (1970) and, especially for younger readers, *The Archaeology of Minoan Crete* (1973).

IV

After his lecture in 1957 to the British School at Athens on the Aegina treasure, Higgins was invited by Anthony Forster to write a book on Greek and Roman Jewellery, as a volume in Methuen's series of Handbooks on Archaeology. He at once welcomed a broader commitment to the study of ancient jewellery, not only of the style of the finished work, but also of the manifold techniques, and of the sources of the material. Until precious stones became especially prominent in Roman times, gold was always the chief medium for technical ingenuity and artistic finesse; 'in the ancient Greek world', as he would remark to many a students' Classical Society in universities, 'the girl's best friend was gold'. To search out the various decorative processes—especially the difficult techniques of granulation, filigree and enamelling—he took great pains to consult his scientific colleagues in the Museum's Research Laboratory; they, in their turn, learned much from him. When his book *Greek and Roman Jewellery* appeared in 1961, it was hailed as the first truly comprehensive work on the subject in the English language, succinctly and systematically covering the entire chronological range from the Early Bronze Age to Late Roman times, and taking in Etruscan jewellery too. The long opening chapter, on the various techniques of the ancient goldsmith, won him especial praise in that he had managed to make these intricate topics easily readable for the layman.

Several years after the launching of his handbook, Higgins had reason to pay particular attention to Greek goldwork of the Early Iron Age, in the light of new discoveries and research. It was then becoming evident that during the ninth century BC, when Greece was still supposedly enduring its 'Dark Age', the goldsmiths were already contriving

some remarkably precocious work. In 1967 John Boardman⁴ persuasively updated to this period the Teke treasure, found in a reused Minoan tholos tomb in the Knossos area. The ornaments were floridly decorated in granulation, filigree and cloisonné inlay, difficult techniques that had apparently been lost and forgotten after the demise of Mycenaean palace civilisation; Boardman therefore supposed them to be the work of an immigrant eastern goldsmith. An equally sophisticated find, made by the American Agora excavations in Athens and published in the following year by Evelyn Smithson,⁵ was a pair of massive gold earrings—again, decorated with elaborate designs in granulation and filigree, found in an aristocratic lady's grave of c. 850 on the Areopagus hill. In his masterly general survey, 'Early Greek Jewellery',⁶ Higgins reviewed the new evidence, advancing an explanation for the sudden leap forward in technology during the ninth century. The sophisticated decorative processes, he argued, could not have come to Greece without the technicians. Only through instruction from immigrant Levantine craftsmen could the Greeks have recovered the skilled techniques of granulation, filigree and inlay; the influence of these resident master-goldsmiths from the east, passing on their skills to Greek apprentices, would explain the strong orientalising element in Greek goldwork throughout most of the Geometric period. Further support for Higgins's hypothesis came later from the choice gold ornaments in the newly excavated ninth-century graves of Lefkandi in Euboea, which he studied for publication in the first volume of the site's final report.⁷ To do justice to these new developments, he prepared a second edition of *Greek and Roman Jewellery* (1980) for which he entirely rewrote the five chapters on the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages. Written with elegance and authority, it remains the standard work on the subject.

In 1994, the year after his death, the British Museum mounted an international loan exhibition of Classical Greek gold jewellery. The splendid catalogue was dedicated by the authors⁸ to the memory of

⁴ J. Boardman, 'The Khaniale Tekke Tombs, II', *BSA* 62 (1967) 57–76.

⁵ E. L. Smithson, 'The Tomb of a Rich Athenian Lady, ca. 850 BC', *Hesperia* 37 (1968) 77–116.

⁶ R. A. Higgins, 'Early Greek Jewellery', *BSA* 64 (1969) 143–53.

⁷ R. A. Higgins, in M. R. Popham and L. H. Sackett (eds), *Lefkandi I* (*BSA Suppl.* Vol. 11, 1980) 217–25.

⁸ D. Williams and J. Ogden, *Greek Gold: Jewellery of the Classical World* (British Museum, 1994).

Reynold Higgins, 'with deep gratitude for his friendship and inspiration. He was truly the father of British studies in ancient jewellery. He was excited at the prospect of this exhibition; we only wish that he had lived to see it.'

V

Greek terracotta figurines, as we have seen, provided the first field in which Reynold Higgins attained mastery, during his early years in the British Museum. Reviewing a brief German manual on this topic in 1950,⁹ he could still write that this was 'a subject that seems to invite imprecise thinking, and which has not of late been given the attention it deserves'. Razor-sharp precision and attention to minute detail are among the admirable qualities inherent in the huge first volume of the Catalogue of the British Museum's terracottas (1954), dealing with the figures down to 330 BC. Here was a true *magnum opus*, for which Higgins was praised for his thorough coverage of fabrics and techniques, his vivid characterisation of regional styles, his authoritative chronology based on evidence from well-dated sites, and his illuminating comments on the light thrown by the figurines on various aspects of Greek daily life—especially Greek dress. His intense and patient research bore further fruit in 1959 with the appearance of the second Catalogue volume, dealing with 'plastic' clay vases in the form of humans, animals, birds and monsters—a hitherto neglected topic to which he applied his already well-tryed expertise. Predictably, it was not long before he received an invitation from Methuen and Co. to write a handbook on the terracottas, in the same series as his work on jewellery. Like that volume, his *Greek Terracottas* (1967) systematically covers its subject for the first time in the English language, and is similarly organised by period (Neolithic through to Hellenistic) and region, after a general and technical introduction.

As a diversion from his Museum work, Reynold Higgins was for many years called in to prepare for publication the new finds of terracottas from the excavations of the British School at Athens, especially at Knossos. His most massive task there arose from the School's excavation, directed by Sinclair Hood, of the Greek sanctuary of Demeter on the lower slopes of Gypsades hill, overlooking the

⁹ R. A. Higgins, *JHS* 70 (1950) 96.

site of the Minoan palace. After working *in situ* through some six thousand *disiecta membra* of figurines, many of them damaged by fire, he produced a compact and highly instructive *catalogue raisonné* of 273 pieces, ranging in date from the eighth to the second century BC.¹⁰ This, the first comprehensive presentation of Greek terracottas from Knossos, has proved invaluable for the study of finds from other sanctuaries of Demeter, especially from those more recently discovered in Crete. For me it was an exciting and enjoyable experience to work with Reynold in attempting to recover the history of the Demeter cult at Knossos from the finds, the stratification and the occasional literary references.

In his retirement Reynold Higgins returned to the task of finishing his catalogue of all the British Museum terracottas. The Hellenistic figurines, thought by some to represent 'the apogee of coroplastic art', were numerous enough to fill a very large third volume. He had for many years been collecting *comparanda* for them during his visits to Greece, especially in 1969 while he was the British School's Visiting Fellow in Athens. There, ten years afterwards, he gave a public lecture about the draped figurines in the attractive Tanagra style of early Hellenistic times, much prized by amateur collectors. This paper was to form the kernel of his last completed book, *Tanagra and the Figurines* (1986) where, in his customary spirit of enquiry, he outlined the entire history of the Boeotian city which had given its name to the figurines, as well as its artistic record from Mycenaean times onwards, and the lamentable pillaging of the figurines from the graves in the 1870s. In addition to his usual thorough analysis of the figurines by style, chronology and technique, he included a cautionary and entertaining chapter on the prettified forgeries, so frequently manufactured to beguile the collector of these 'darlings of a bygone age'.

After the publication of this book, he returned to the British Museum in his last years, to work on his Hellenistic catalogue with the assistance of Lucilla Burn, who will see the volume into print. Reynold Higgins left a full lot of cards on each piece, enriched by his usual lively and terse comment.

¹⁰ R. A. Higgins, in J. N. Coldstream (ed.), *Knossos: the Sanctuary of Demeter* (BSA Suppl. Vol. 8, 1973) 56–92.

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Reynold Higgins displayed a rare combination of an intense striving after accurate scholarship with a talent for communicating his interests and enthusiasms to the wide world with wit and charm, whether by the written or by the spoken word. Few museum scholars have reached such a wide audience and readership. In the British Museum he would always take infinite pains to help those who came to consult him, always generous in sharing his knowledge with them; outside the Museum, he was an outstandingly gifted lecturer who wore his learning lightly and never failed to win an enthusiastic acclaim. To convey the warmth of sentiment that all his archaeological colleagues felt towards him, in their different generations, one can do no better than quote Lucilla Burn's opening words in her *British Museum Book of Greek and Roman Art* (1991): 'This book is dedicated with much affection and admiration to Reynold Higgins, a pioneer in the production of readable scholarship, whose energy, friendship and enthusiasm are a continuing inspiration.'

J. N. COLDSTREAM

Fellow of the Academy

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