

At a meeting of the FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES on March 6, 2018, the following tribute to the life and service of the late Albert M. Henrichs was spread upon the permanent records of the Faculty.

ALBERT MAXIMINUS HENRICHS

BORN: December 29, 1942

DIED: April 16, 2017

On June 14, 1969, Albert Henrichs arrived in Vienna from Cologne, carrying four lumps of ancient leather in a cigar box. An expert Austrian conservator, Anton Fackelmann, gradually unpeeled what turned out to be 192 pages of a tiny book measuring 1.4 by 1.8 inches, written in Greek and dating from the fifth century CE. By evening the following day, Henrichs had transcribed the text. It was a sensation for the history of religion: a detailed tract about Manichaeism, a rival of Christianity founded in Mesopotamia in the third century by a young mystic called Mani, whose autobiographical account of his divine revelations is quoted in the text. Henrichs was 26. His publication of this astonishing codex together with Ludwig Koenen, curator of papyri at the University of Cologne, sealed his reputation as a *Wunderkind* of classical scholarship.

As a baby, Henrichs was rescued from the carpet bombing of Cologne to spend his early years in Bad Ems, originally a settlement on the northern border of the Roman Empire. After the war, American GIs barracked in a nearby villa made the cherubic toddler their mascot, spoiling him with oranges and peanuts; Henrichs later attributed his affinity for the United States to that early memory from a war-stricken childhood. Subsequently educated at Cologne (Ph.D., 1966), he spent two years working on the papyri collection at the University of Michigan, returning to Cologne for his Habilitation and then moving to the University of California–Berkeley in 1971. He was appointed with tenure at Harvard in 1973 at the precocious age of thirty; the achievement was nearly short-lived, however, when the family car was wrecked in an accident on the journey across the continent. In 1984 Henrichs was appointed the tenth Eliot Professor of Greek Literature, the first to have been neither born in the United States nor educated at Harvard.

Henrichs's training as a papyrologist afforded him a second sensational coup: the publication of 46 fragments from a second-century papyrus codex containing excerpts from a lurid Greek novel, *Phoinikika* ("Phoenician Saga"), by an otherwise unknown Lollianios. In it, a frank account of the protagonist's loss of virginity pales into insignificance beside a subsequent episode, in which the protagonist, having joined a band of robbers in Egypt, participates in

an act of human sacrifice and cannibalism, consuming the heart of a murdered boy to seal his oath of allegiance to the gang. All this Henrichs pieced together from a most daunting jigsaw of broken pieces. Unparalleled command of ancient Greek and its literature, profound knowledge of the religions of the ancient Mediterranean world, and the papyrologist's tenacious attention to detail were hallmarks of his scholarship.

Henrichs relished the opportunities provided by the American system to explore a greater variety of interests in his teaching and research. These took him further afield from papyrology, although the roots of his later interests can be traced to his earliest work. The most central of these interests—Dionysos, ritual, and the singing and dancing of the Greek chorus—came together in a series of highly influential studies of Athenian tragedy. Here Henrichs focused on the complex relationship between the rituals represented on stage and the performance itself as ritual practice, and more generally on tragic drama as a form of mediation between the real world of the audience and the imagined world conjured by the playwright, showing, for example, that the dancing of the tragic chorus, hitherto interpreted chiefly as a vestige of the ritual origins of tragedy, is a unique element of each play, crafted by the playwright to reflect an emotional response to the unfolding of the plot.

Likewise, in Greek religion Henrichs did not abandon ritual as a hermeneutic tool, but shifted the spotlight to the essence of the Greek gods—their immortality, anthropomorphism, and power. Without ever succumbing to romanticism, he rescued the gods from reductive theories that had rendered them no more than social constructions, symptomatic of modernism rather than antiquity. Instead, he showed how to appreciate them as the ancient Greeks must have encountered them—numinous, mysterious, terrifying, unpredictable; simultaneously erotic, lethal, and holy. He was particularly fascinated by the ambiguous nature of ancient Greek sacrifice, with its osmosis between the categories of animal and liquid, Olympian and chthonic. His thought was never merely descriptive of ritual logic but showed a rare attentiveness to the existential and philosophical dimensions of the Greek religious imagination; he was a phenomenologist as well as an historian of religion.

In his latter years, with his halo of white hair and rotund form, Henrichs resembled Silenos, a prominent figure in the boisterous revelry accompanying Dionysos, his favorite god and a persistent theme in his scholarship. His scholarly publications—nearly 200 in all—always bloomed afresh, rooted in the history of scholarship, which he knew intimately, and harvesting a wide variety of evidence not limited to the textual record. The reception of Dionysos in modern culture also fascinated him, as did writers and cultural icons as varied as Goethe, Mark Twain, Yeats, Jim Morrison, and Lawrence of Arabia. His writing, whether in his native German or (flawless) English, was clear, compelling, and electric with insight. In 1990, aged 47, he delivered the Sather Lectures at UC Berkeley, the pinnacle of scholarly recognition for a Classicist. He was also elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society.

As a teacher, Albert Henrichs was unforgettable. His learning was legendary, yet in every class he approached the text with the excitement of somebody discovering it for the first time. He taught until shortly before his death, stopping only when he could no longer reach Boylston Hall. He mentored young scholars far beyond the walls of Harvard. At home, his hospitality was worthy of a devotee of Dionysos. He is mourned by generations of devoted students and colleagues the world over, and by his wife, Sarah; his children by his first marriage, Markus and Helen; their mother, Ursula; and two grandchildren, Magdalena and Julian.

Respectfully submitted,

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Portions of this Minute were previously published by Kathleen M. Coleman, "In Memoriam: Albert Henrichs," Society for Classical Studies, April 27, 2017, <https://classicalstudies.org/scs-news/memoriam-albert-henrichs?page=4>.