

At a meeting of the FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES on May 18, 2004, the following tribute to the life and service of the late Emily Vermeule was spread upon the permanent records of the Faculty.

EMILY VERMEULE

BORN: August 11, 1928

DIED: February 6, 2001

Emily Dickinson Townsend Vermeule, scholar of classical Greek literature and Aegean art and archaeology, was the Samuel Zemurray Jr. and Doris Zemurray-Stone Radcliffe Professor at Harvard from 1970 until her retirement in the spring of 1994, at which time she received Harvard's Phi Beta Kappa Teaching Prize in the Humanities. She was born in New York City on the 11th of August, 1928, attended the Brearley School in that city, and graduated *summa cum laude* from Bryn Mawr College in 1950 with a degree in Greek and philosophy. She then spent a year at Oxford University, and went on to graduate degrees from Radcliffe College and Bryn Mawr, receiving the Ph.D. in Classics in 1956 with a dissertation on the poet Bacchylides. Emily was the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1964-5, and of honorary degrees from a dozen institutions of higher learning, including Smith College, Princeton, Tufts, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Harvard. She was also elected a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy and the German Archaeological Institute. Of nimble wit and rapier sharp tongue, few could rival Emily in speed or depth of comprehension. To watch her scan a text, pencil tracing lines almost faster than one could follow, was a lesson in humility.

Jointly appointed at Harvard in the Department of the Classics and in Fine Arts, now History of Art and Architecture, Emily's pedagogical range was great. She taught classes on Greek lyric poetry, on the Aegean Bronze Age, on Classical Greek vase painting; she also taught the first half of the legendary Fine Arts 13, the art survey that began with the Paleolithic and went on to the early Renaissance. She was passionately committed to all aspects of ancient studies, and it was her splendid rhetoric in this very room that effectively argued to establish the Standing Committee on Archaeology at Harvard in 1988.

From the time of her stint as a Fulbright Scholar in Greece in 1950-51, Emily maintained close ties with the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, serving on its Managing Committee and encouraging students to spend formative years there as well. She was as rigorous in field archaeology as in her studies of Greek language and literature, and her excavations in Greece, Libya, Turkey, and particularly at the site of Toumba tou Skourou in

Cyprus late in her career contributed significantly to our knowledge of the art and society of the classical world. Although her own special interest was the Aegean of the second millennium BCE, her range of interests and the impact of her work on other periods is reflected in the plural title: The Ages of Homer, given to the substantial Festschrift published in her honor in 1995.

Emily was an able synthesist. Her first book, Greece in the Bronze Age, written in 1964, has gone through numerous printings, and remains a basic text today. The Semple Lectures, delivered at the University of Cincinnati in 1973, were published in 1975 as The Art of the Shaft Graves of Mycenae. The lectures she gave as Sather Professor of Classical Literature at Berkeley in 1975 appeared in 1979 as Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry. This book remains one of the most insightful and erudite studies of the ancient world, successfully weaving archaeological evidence and textual reference into whole cloth unsurpassed in the field; it received the Charles J. Goodwin Award of Merit of the American Philological Association in 1980. In 1982, Emily was named by the National Endowment for the Humanities as the Jefferson Lecturer, the principal recognition in this country for intellectual achievement in the humanities. She also served as Vice President of the American Philosophical Society, and was for many years on the Governing Board of the National Geographic Society.

Unusual among the female classicists and archaeologists of her generation, Emily married and raised a family while pursuing her career. In 1957, she wed fellow archaeologist and art historian – but of the Roman period! – Cornelius Clarkson Vermeule III, whose career at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston paralleled her own at Wellesley, Boston University and then at Harvard. Indeed, throughout these years, Emily maintained a presence in the Department of Classical Art at the MFA as well. Her daughter, Emily Dickinson Blake Vermeule, known as Blakey, is presently a professor of English literature at Northwestern University; her son, Adrian, who attended Harvard College and the Harvard Law School, is currently on the Law Faculty of the University of Chicago. Their house was open to students and colleagues, as long as one could navigate around the dalmatians. She was an inspiring teacher, *if* one could take the heat and keep up the pace. Emily's legacy to the field is in no small part measured by the outstanding scholars in whose formation she played a key role, and who are now associated with institutions such as Berkeley, Dartmouth, UCLA, the University of Chicago, UT Austin, the University of Toronto and Tulane.

Emily Vermeule fought against heart disease for many years; and in the end, died of related problems in her Cambridge home at age 72. An avid mystery reader and baseball fan, she transferred allegiance from the Yankees to the Red Sox on arrival in Cambridge, and agonized through the Sox's many close encounters. She served Harvard no less on the athletics committee than in her departmental affiliations, and was a fixture at Commencement, narrating the ceremony for a radio audience from her perch in a tree opposite the steps of Memorial Church, more befitting a baseball announcer than a Classics

professor. At the same time, she contributed with distinction to the intellectual fabric of the University, taking her place on the faculty with dignity at a time when there were far fewer women than today. Not of an age or a disposition to be an outspoken feminist, she none-the-less celebrated the demographic changes marking the Faculty through the 90s. The legacy she leaves is as complex as her person; her like will not be found again.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Kondoleon

Gregory Nagy

Zeph Stewart

Calvert Watkins

Irene Winter, Chair