

# Angela Rammstedt, a Commemoration

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## ANGELA RAMMSTEDT, A COMMEMORATION

Angela Rammstedt (\*2 November 1943—† 18 June 2018). After completing studies in Romance languages and literatures and sociology, Angela Rammstedt became a staff member at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research at the University of Bielefeld. Later on, she worked at the *FernUniversität Hagen* with a focus on biography research in France and Italy. Since 1992 and until the completion in 2015 of the collected works of Georg Simmel, the *Georg Simmel Gesamtausgabe*, edited by Otthein Rammstedt, Frankfurt/Main-Berlin Suhrkamp, she was a member of the Bielefeld research group “Georg Simmel-Edition”. She was responsible for the scientific apparatus and the publication of six volumes of the 24-volume Georg Simmel Complete Edition. In this context, she conducted research on the “Women around Simmel”, with a particular focus on the life and work of Gertrud Kinel, Simmel’s wife (literary pseudonym: Marie Luise Enckendorff), Margarete Susman and Getrud Kantorowicz.

After a longer illness, Angela Rammstedt passed away in June 2018, leaving an unbridgeable gap in the Simmel-community. In the following, we gathered some personal memories of her.

*I met Angela during one of my first research stays at Bielefeld University in Germany, in the late 1990s. She often participated in the weekly doctoral colloquium led by Otthein Rammstedt. After these meetings, we would all meet up at the Turkish coffee shop of the university. There, in a more informal atmosphere, our group of doctoral students and scholars from different parts of the world would continue our discussions and talk about our research and the progress of the project for Georg Simmel’s Gesamtausgabe. I remember that not only did Angela show interest in doctoral projects, but she also generously*

shared historical and biographical data about Simmel, his cultural context and intellectual milieu. However, she was also very cautious about expressing a personal opinion on interpretations regarding Simmel's thought proposed by single researchers especially if these interpretations had a strong theoretical character. The detail and accuracy of the information she provided was always precious for anyone who had the chance to speak with her and could open new potential paths of research, especially when the topic regarded the changing conditions of German middle-class women intellectuals and artists between the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Angela contributed to retracing the personal and intellectual relationships that women artists and intellectuals such as Gertrud Kinel (then Simmel), Gertrud Kantorowicz, Margarete Susman (then von Bendemann) and Edith Kalischers (then Landmann) entertained not only with Georg Simmel, but also with other thinkers, artists and writers of the time, among others the members of Stefan George's circle. The wealth of biographical and historical data collected by Angela showed her ability to find documents through a meticulous work of archive research, which, through her publications became available for further researches. Let me mention just a few examples of her work in this field: Gertrud Kantorowicz und Herrlingen (Ulm 2016); "Gertrud Simmel/Kinel – Malerin" (Simmel Newsletter, 2(4) Winter 1994); "Wir sind des Gottes der begraben stirbt... Gertrud Kantorowicz und der nationalsozialistische Terror" (Simmel Newsletter, 2(6) Winter 1996); (ed.) Themenheft Simmel in der Literatur – (Simmel Newsletter 1(9), Summer 1999). I also remember Angela's fascinating talk on women in Simmel's entourage ("Le donne nell'entourage di Simmel"), which she gave in Salerno (Italy) on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1998 at the international conference "L'opera di Simmel tra crisi e rinnovamento dei paradigmi sociologici". I still keep some notes from that conference. Angela highlighted the common traits shared by Gertrud Kantorowicz, Gertrud Kinel and Margarete Susman such as their competence in the artistic field, or the fact that, unlike Bloch and Lukacs, they did not cut all ties with Simmel after the outbreak of World War I. According to Angela, these women did not objectivise Simmel's thought in their work, but addressed and elaborated on – each in her own way – single categories analysed by Simmel, such as love or individual law. She also shed light on the political and cultural commitment of their writings.

*When asked about her scientific work, Angela struck me as surprisingly modest, considering that her studies were not limited to her huge contribution to Georg Simmel's Gesamtausgabe, but also touched upon literature, women studies and – as I later discovered – methodological issues. In particular, she addressed the question of the biographical method in human sciences by investigating the use of life histories in different disciplines in France and Italy (see for instance Charlotte Heinritz and Angela Rammstedt, "L'approche biographique en France", Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie, Vol. 91, Juillet-Décembre 1991; "Biographic Research in Italy", Current Sociology, 43 (82/3), 1995).*

*A last personal remembrance concerns her interest in literature which was not limited to her research activity as a scholar of Romance languages and literature, as well as Sociology. Once – it must have been spring 2003 – she told me that literature had unexpectedly become a point of connection with her son Tilman Rammstedt who, by developing his artistic bent, had become a successful writer. On that occasion she also noted that, her daughter Beatrix Rammstedt had always shown a stronger affinity with her father's scientific interests, even though her focus was psychology rather than sociology. Her daughter also had a successful career. In the different life paths of her son and daughter, Angela seemed to see two different ways of achieving their own "individual law", as in the case of the strong women whose lives she retraced in her writings.*

Claudia Portioli

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*It was the end of March 2018, just few days before Easter. I arrived in Bretagne in a rainy day to visit Angela and Otthein and spend a few days with them. We had a meeting of the Simmel Gesellschaft and we discussed several projects about Simmel Studies. The last day Angela and Otthein invited me to a nice, small restaurant nearby where they used to go in particular occasions. Angela was weakened by the chemotherapy but very energetic and in a good mood: she felt blessed to have the possibility to leave in that beautiful corner of France, despite her illness. She told me that she was enjoying the little things of every day so much: walking to the beach, food shopping, and gardening. It was*

*clear to her as well as to her husband that these could be their last days together, but there was no sadness in the air. Angela drove us to the restaurant where we had a wonderful Bretagne style meal and a joyful conversation. This was the last time I saw her and I feel blessed to have such nice memory. Since I met her in Bielefeld when I was a young PhD student, I always admired her as a rigorous scientist and a competent Simmel scholar. She always had understanding, patience and great advice for every member of the Simmel research group. As far I can say, she mastered wonderfully at least four languages and she could tell funny jokes playing with different accents. However, what impressed me mostly was the beautiful relationship made of love and passion for culture Angela had with Otthein. Entering in their house you could feel they lived surrounded by the beautiful things collected during their wonderful life together: books, flowers, furniture, pieces of art. Their exemplary life as a couple it is what I mostly admired and what I will always remember.*

Vincenzo Mele

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*I encountered Angela in Bielefeld when I started to work with Otthein Rammstedt at the Georg Simmel Edition project in 1994. She was always present, but also very discreet and left her husband, who was the official editor, to work in the foreground. Yet, soon it became clear to me that her role in the edition's undertaking was crucial. She was the only one who could directly read Simmel's impossible old German handwriting, as if she were his contemporary. I often returned from a research stay in the Paris archives with some new Simmel letters. The first thing I did was go to Angela and kindly ask her to decipher the hieroglyphs that I had found. She just took the photocopies and read them out. The enterprise of the Simmel edition, and especially the publication of the final volumes, would never have been possible without the immense work that Angela and Otthein Rammstedt put into it over a twenty-five year-long complete dedication and thanks to the symbiotic relationship they had in life and work. It is a pity that Angela did not have enough time to enjoy the results of her work.*

Gregor Fitzi.