

The 2019 Paul Oskar Kristeller Lifetime Achievement Award: Erika Rummel

The RSA website says that the Paul Oskar Kristeller Lifetime Achievement Award “honors a lifetime of uncompromising devotion to the highest standard of scholarship accompanied by exceptional achievement in Renaissance studies. It is intended for a scholar whose accomplishments call to mind the example of Paul Oskar Kristeller.”

My friend and colleague Erika Rummel fulfills all these requirements. She has spent her entire academic life (and now also her retirement) carrying out research at the highest level of scholarship; she has authored, edited, or translated more than two dozen books published by some of the most eminent presses in our field (Harvard, Oxford, and the University of Toronto Press, to mention just three), and an innumerable number of articles, also in some of the most prestigious journals in our field (*Renaissance Quarterly*, *Renaissance and Reformation*, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance*, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, etc.). She has mentored quite a number of junior scholars – not only her own students from Wilfrid Laurier University, but also students from other universities who found in her a learned and caring advisor, but also a friend prepared to help out. Erika Rummel has been a long-standing member of the Renaissance Society of America, an active participant at our annual congresses, and a member of the RSA Board of Directors (where she served, most notably, as a two-terms Chair of Publications).

Erika was born and raised in Vienna. She received her BA from the University of Vienna (1965) and then moved to Canada where she received first her M.A. (1969) and then her Ph.D. (1976) from the University of Toronto. Right after her doctoral graduation she was snapped up by the University of Toronto Press to be the Executive Assistant for their recently founded venture, the Collected Works of Erasmus in English project; she spent sixteen very productive years with the project (1976-1992) before moving to Wilfrid Laurier University to take up a professorial position in their Department of History, soon rising through the ranks to become Full Professor. No sooner did she retire from Wilfrid Laurier than she was appointed Adjunct Professor in the Department of History at the University of Toronto where she has been a mentor to many of our students and an esteemed colleague for many of us on the faculty. In that position as Adjunct Professor at the University of Toronto she was joined by another recipient of the Paul Oskar Kristeller award, Natalie Zemon Davis, who received the Kristeller award five years ago (2014).

Erika’s profound knowledge of the works of sixteenth-century humanists and of classical authors, as well as her excellent knowledge of Latin and Greek, soon led the directors of the Collected Works of Erasmus project to assign three volumes in the series to her to translate and annotate: and so she translated and annotated: Erasmus’s *Paraphrases on Mark* (which came out in 1988 as volume 49 in the CWE series), volume 7 of Erasmus’s *Literary and Educational Writings* (which came out in 1989 as CWE 29), and Erasmus’s *Controversies with Edward Lee* (which came out in 2005 as CWE 72).

Aside from her translated and edited volumes for the Collected Works of Erasmus series, Erika is also the author of important monograph studies that have had a profound influence on scholarship on Erasmus, on Christian humanism, and on the Reformation. As an aside, I might point out that she is the most published living scholar on Erasmus. Her monographs and articles

probe Erasmus's intellect and views, his mastery of the classical legacy, they chronicle his growth (and his limitations) as a scholar. Her first monograph was *Erasmus as a Translator of the Classics* (UoT Press, 1985), a book that was the first full-length study of Erasmus's translations of classical Greek literature into Latin. In that book, Rummel examined the chronology of Erasmus's interest in the classic from his youth to his old age, his approach to translation, and his role as a transmitter of the Greek classics to his contemporary Latin readers. In her review of the book, Elaine Fantham made it a point to note that: "No one is better qualified than Erika Rummel to evaluate [Erasmus's] motives, principles, and methods in translation. Rummel is not just a fine philologist: she sees the wider picture, portraying Erasmus's career as a translator through 'the three phases of his attitude to Greek studies, perhaps paralleling the stages in a man's life ... motivated successively by pleasure, usefulness and necessity.'" (*UoT Quarterly*, 1986, p. 15). In his review of the book for *Renaissance Quarterly* J.K. Sowards calls Rummel "a first-rate classicist" who is not afraid of chiding Erasmus for "his tendency towards expansive translations [...] and for occasional downright errors in translation" (*RQ* 1986, 296). With these comments Sowards really caught Rummel's spirit: like Kristeller, she is a solid philologist who knows her stuff and does not suffer errors, even in Erasmus.

This first book was quickly followed, a year later, by a second monograph, *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament: From Philologist to Theologian* (UoT Press, 1986) and then, three years later, by her third monograph, a two-volume tome entitled *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics* (De Graaf, 1989). Erika's interest in the controversies Erasmus found himself embroiled in (always against his will, according to him) led to her fourth monograph, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation* (Harvard University Press, 1995), a book that was named Choice Outstanding Book of the Year. In looking at the controversies between humanists and scholastic theologians and Erasmus's place in these controversies, Rummel advances a completely new way of seeing and understanding both the prince of humanists and the intellectual/theological confrontations of those crucial two centuries of European history.

In her fifth monograph *The Confessionalization of Humanism* (Oxford UP 2000) Rummel followed up on her previous work on the controversies by demonstrating how Renaissance humanism shaped the intellectual world of their time and was, in turn, co-opted by both Protestants and Catholics to advance their arguments and agendas.

One of these humanists/theologians shaped by Renaissance humanism was the Strasbourg reformer Wolfgang Capito. In the three volume edition of *The Correspondence of Wolfgang Capito* (UoT Press, 2005-2015), which she translated and edited together with Milton Kooistra, Rummel brought to our attention the letters of this second-rank but influential humanist and Protestant, many of which letters had previously laid unknown in archives and libraries throughout Europe. In her sixth monograph *The Case Against Johann Reuchlin* (UoT Press 2002) Rummel analyzed an attempt to destroy Hebrew books and Reuchlin's steadfast defence of such books.

Aside from all these monographs, translations, and editions, Erika has also published several collections of texts for class-room use, in particular a very successful *Erasmus Reader* (University of Toronto Press, 1990; 2nd printing 1995) and then the collection *Erasmus on*

Women (University of Toronto Press, 1996). I, for one, am particularly enchanted by her beautifully titled *Scheming Papists and Lutheran Fools: Five Reformation Satires*, a collection she edited and translated for Fordham University Press (1993).

To put it briefly, since the 1980s Erika has been at the forefront of a generation of scholars working on Northern Humanism in general and on Erasmus and his critics in particular. In so doing, she has transformed our understanding of Northern Humanism. Her scholarship has been recognized by a Killam Fellowship, the highest fellowship that Canada has to offer; by a Getty Scholarship, by several research grants from Germany, and by election to the American Philosophical Society.

For her cutting edge scholarship, her solidly grounded philology, for her long-term impact on our discipline, for her mentoring of so many younger scholars, and for her generous service to the RSA, Erika Rummel is truly a scholar cut in the mold of Paul Oskar Kristeller, and thus a worthy recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award named in his honour.

Please join me in welcoming Professor Erika Rummel to the stage to receive the 2019 Paul Oskar Kristeller Lifetime Achievement Award.

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