

Rose [née Stone], Gillian Rosemary

(1947–1995)

Howard Caygill

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/60360>

Published in print: 23 September 2004

Published online: 23 September 2004

Rose [née Stone], Gillian Rosemary (1947–1995), philosopher, was born on 20 September 1947 at the Avenue Road Clinic, Hampstead, London. She was the eldest child of Leslie David Stone, doctor of medicine, and his wife, Evelyn (Lynn) Preveser. Her parents, who were Jewish, divorced, and at sixteen she took the surname of her stepfather, Irving Rose. She was educated at Ealing grammar school, and was admitted to St Hilda's College, Oxford, to read philosophy, politics, and economics in 1966. After taking an upper second-class honours degree she studied in New York and West Berlin before returning to St Antony's College, Oxford, for a DPhil under the supervision of Professor Leszek Kolakowski. Her thesis on the concept of reification in the thought of Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno was a pioneering study in the philosophical foundations of Western Marxism and was published in 1978 as *The Melancholy Science*. Her commitment to interdisciplinary study was already evident in this work, which explores the relationship between philosophy, aesthetics, and social theory.

In 1974 Rose was appointed lecturer in sociology in the school of European studies in the University of Sussex. She valued the opportunity to teach interdisciplinary courses and the presence of senior colleagues at the University of Sussex, many of whom were *émigrés* from National Socialist Germany and eastern Europe. While at Sussex she wrote probably her finest work, *Hegel contra Sociology*, published in 1981. This work revolutionized the study of Hegel, providing a comprehensive account of his speculative philosophy that overcame the distinction between religious ('right Hegelian') and political ('left Hegelian') interpretations that had prevailed since the death of the philosopher in 1832.

Rose's interpretation of Hegel not only marked the reintroduction of religious themes into the dogmatically secular culture of Western Marxism but also aimed to defend the relevance of Hegelian thought in the face of its dismissal by post-structuralist and post-modernist thought. This was made clear in her next book, *Dialectic of Nihilism: Post-Structuralism and Law* (1984), in which she developed a sustained critique of recent French thought that was and remains unique in its refusal to confine itself to exegesis and its uncompromising defence of Hegelianism. In the late 1980s Rose gave two important series of lectures for the University of Sussex interdisciplinary course 'Modern European mind' that formed the core of her subsequent two books, the Kierkegaardian *The Broken Middle: Out of our Ancient Society* (1992) and *Judaism and Modernity: Philosophical Essays* (1993). In these books Rose deepened her exploration of political theology begun in *Hegel contra Sociology* and began to relate her work to public debates in religion, ethics, and architecture.

In 1989 Rose left the University of Sussex for a chair in social and political thought at the University of Warwick. In 1993 she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer and began the battle with her disease that she recounted in her philosophical and autobiographical meditation *Love's Work* (1995). This work and the

posthumously published books *Mourning Becomes the Law* (1996) and *Paradiso* (1999) are characterized by their fusion of intensely personal meditation with religious and political reflections on suffering and injustice.

Rose died of cancer in Walsgrave Hospital, Coventry, on the evening of 9 December 1995, the same day as a conference at the University of Warwick on the theme of God and the city, attended by many of her close colleagues and students; hours before her death she was baptized into the Church of England. After a memorial ceremony at Coventry Cathedral she was buried at Hampstead cemetery on 18 December 1995. She was unmarried. Her work in the tradition of continental philosophy and her defence of Hegelian political theology has continued to provoke debate among philosophers, theologians, and social theorists, while her inspiring teaching is reflected in the number of her research students who went on to hold teaching posts in British and North American universities. Her papers are collected in an archive at the University of Warwick.

Sources

G. Rose, *Love's work* (1995)

G. Rose, *Paradiso* (1999)

The Times (14 Dec 1995)

The Independent (13 Dec 1995)

private information (2004) [Lynn Stone, mother]

b. cert.

d. cert.

CGPLA Eng. & Wales (1996)

Archives

University of Warwick

Sound

Institute of Contemporary Arts, recording of last public appearance

Likenesses

photograph, repro. in *The Times*

photograph, repro. in *The Independent*

Wealth at Death

£136,269: probate, 7 Aug 1996, *CGPLA Eng. & Wales*

External resources

National Archives <<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/c/F52820>>