



Cultural Historian Theodore Roszak Dies at 77

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By Monique Beeler

Acclaimed for writing popular books analyzing complex social trends — from youthful anti-establishment dissent to perils posed by the computer age — Cal State East Bay historian Professor Emeritus Theodore Roszak has died at 77.

"He was a nationally known public intellectual," said Professor Emeritus Henry "Hank" Reichman. "The eclecticism of his interests was dazzling."

Rozzak, a Guggenheim fellow and two-time National Book Award nominee, was born Nov. 15, 1933. He passed away July 5 at his Berkeley home following an extended illness, according to a family member.

Rozzak, who first joined the CSUEB faculty in 1963 and gained tenure in 1968, coined the term counter culture with publication of "The Making of a Counter Culture," a National Book Award finalist in 1970 in the philosophy and religion category. "Where the Wasteland Ends," also by Rozzak, was nominated in 1973.

He went on to author additional non-fiction titles, including "Person/Planet: The Creative Disintegration of Industrial Society," "The Voice of the Earth: An Exploration of Ecopsychology," "World Beware! American Triumphalism in an Age of Terror" and "The Making of an Elder Culture: Reflections on the Future of America's Most Audacious Generation." He also penned six novels, ranging from psychological thrillers to social satire, including "Flicker" and "The Devil and Daniel Silverman."

His writing also appeared in The Atlantic and Harper's magazines. He was a regular contributor to the New York Times opinion pages.

Once described by a reviewer as "a most articulate, wise and humane historian," colleagues knew him as a prolific writer who also brought zeal to teaching even introductory history courses.

"Despite this tremendous commitment to writing and scholarship, Ted cared about his students," said Reichman, who served as chair of the Department of History toward the end of Rozzak's CSUEB career. "Ted was willing and eager to teach lower division survey courses in U.S. history and was well liked by his students."

"Students particularly appreciated his abilities as an eloquent lecturer and as an incisive critic of our society," said Alan Smith, dean emeritus of what was then known as the School of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences.

"He was, I believe, very important in establishing a high intellectual level for the social and political debates that took place on our campus during the 1960s and '70s," Smith added.

In the 1970s, when history departments nationwide began reconsidering the types of courses they offered, Rozzak, who originally taught Tudor-Stuart England history at Cal State East Bay, designed classes focusing on historic figures, such as Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, and on a literary classic that appealed to students.

"He would do these interesting courses, like his Frankenstein course," said Reichman, noting that Rozzak wrote a novel based on a retelling of the story from a different point of view. "The course used the myth created by Mary Shelley, looking at how human beings react to technology."

In 1970-71, he became the second faculty member honored as George and Miriam Phillips Outstanding Professor. Rozzak retired from Cal State East Bay and entered the Faculty Early Retirement Program in 1998 after approximately 35 years on faculty.

"Ted was a unique person," Reichman said. "He was a tremendous credit to the university."

Rozzak is survived by his wife of 55 years, Betty, of Berkeley; daughter Kathryn; and a granddaughter, Lucy.

Memorial service plans are pending.