

**ROCHESTER, JOHN
WILMOT, EARL OF
(1647–1680)**

English poet and intellectual.

After receiving the privileged education of a Restoration nobleman—Wadham College, Oxford, followed by the grand tour of the continent—Rochester became a member of a clique at the court of Charles II, where he was famous for his wit, skepticism, and ostensibly dissolute life. His surviving works are few: about 75 poems, an adaptation of a tragedy, and a scene from an unfinished play. Although his free use of sexual language earned him censure and bowdlerization over the centuries, his satirical bite has always guaranteed him admirers. Restoration culture underwent strong French influence, and it is from the libertine poets of that country, as well as the Latin satirists that were a common source, that Rochester seems to have derived his main impetus. As understood in the seventeenth century, libertinism meant not praise of licentious excess, but a skeptical attitude toward received values that went hand in hand with an effort to set forth a new and more rational approach to living. Thus the light-heartedness and flippancy of some of Rochester's poetry must be viewed within a larger context of serious purpose.

Contemporary testimony leaves little doubt that Rochester was personally bisexual. His account of a rake's reminiscence is probably not too far from his own attitudes: "Nor shall our love fits, Chloris, be forgot,/ When each the well-looking linkboy strove t'enjoy,/ And the best kiss was deciding lot/ Whether the boy fucked you or I the boy." ("The Maimed Debauchee," ll. 37–40). The same approach, recalling Horace's statement that a woman or a boy would suit his needs equally well, recurs in "The Platonic Lady," "Love a Woman? You're an Ass!," and "Upon His Drinking Bowl."

There has been some dispute about the canon of poems to be attributed to Rochester. It seems generally agreed,

however, that the obscene play in rhyming couplets *Sodom*, first published in 1684 and frequently reprinted under his name, is not by him.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. *Works: The Complete Poems of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, David M. Vieth, ed., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968. *Criticism:* R. M. Baine, "Rochester or Fishbourne: A Question of Authorship," *Review of English Studies*, 22 (1946), 201–6; Dustin H. Griffin, *Satires Against Man: The Poems of Rochester*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.

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ROCK AND ROLL

See **Music, Popular; Punk Rock.**

**RÖHM [ROEHM], ERNST
(1887–1934)**

German soldier and politician; leader of the Schutz-Abteilung (SA) of the Nazi Party during its rise to power in the Weimar Republic. Röhm was an organizer of right-wing paramilitary groups who, in 1919, first made Hitler aware of his own political potential, and for the following fifteen years the two were close friends. Magnus Hirschfeld remarked that the only photograph in which Hitler appeared smiling was one in which he was in Röhm's company.

From the fall of 1930 onward Röhm transformed the SA Brownshirt militia from a handful of unemployed thugs and embittered veterans of World War I into an effective fighting force some half a million strong—an instrument of Nazi terror. He had in 1928–30 lived abroad as an instructor of the—largely Amerindian—Bolivian Army and boasted in letters to his friends in Germany that he had introduced the recruits not only to Prussian discipline but also to homosexual love—which until then had supposedly been unknown there. Röhm, who made no secret of his homosexual proclivities and of his aversion to women, was well known in the gay subculture of Berlin, and had down to the end

of 1932 been the object of five different court proceedings for his "immoral" conduct. Hitler had resolved to rid himself of his chief of staff, all the more as the Social Democratic newspaper *Münchner Post* had published letters that established Röhm's homosexuality beyond doubt. Also, opponents of Röhm within the Nazi ranks and the psychiatrist Oswald Bumke had written to Hitler denouncing the SA leader and the homosexuals in his entourage as a corrupting example for the youth of Germany. One opponent went so far as to say that even intellectuals could not understand how it was that so many homosexuals occupied leadership positions in the Nazi Party. Röhm for his part proudly asserted that the homoerotic, male-bonding element within the Nazi paramilitary units had given them the crucial edge in the struggle with the Reichsbanner and the Communists.

After the accession of the National Socialists to power in March 1933, Röhm remained in Hitler's good graces, but as part of a compromise with the Reichswehr leadership, whose support he needed to become Führer. Hitler allowed Göring and Himmler to murder Röhm together with dozens of loyal SA officers on the night of June 30–July 1, 1934—the "Night of the Long Knives." It was later said, somewhat dubiously, that with Röhm the last socialist in the Nazi Party died, but so perished the quixotic hopes of homosexuals such as Hans Blüher within the right-wing, pro-Nazi groups that Hitler's rule would mean greater toleration. The regime hypocritically used Röhm's sexual life as a pretext for claiming that it was "protecting German youth from corruption" by liquidating Röhm and his clique, but a newspaper in Kassel created a scandal by publishing stories to the effect that the truth had long been known to Hitler and his chief associates.

See also *Fascist Perversion, Myth of*.

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and Row, 1972; James D. Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany*, New York: Arno Press, 1975.

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ROLE

In social science usage, the concept of role contrasts with that of self (or identity). In dramaturgical sociology, as on theatre stages, an actor plays many roles over the course of a career, or even on a single night. Some actors always play the same kind of character. Some are swallowed up in one role, while others have extensive repertoires of different types and do not live onstage roles when they are offstage. Similarly, "homosexual roles" are enacted in appropriate settings by persons who play other roles at other times or places. As important as affirming homosexuality may be to some individuals, or as recognizing homosexuals may be in some cultures, no one is onstage as "a homosexual" and nothing but "a homosexual" all the time.

Theoretical Considerations. In the basic social science introduction to the concept, Ralph Linton (1936) defined status as "a collection of rights and duties," and role as dynamic status: how rights and duties are realized in interaction. Each person in a society has more than one status, and therefore plays multiple roles. Moreover, a particular status involves, not a single role, but an array of associated roles, e.g., the "teacher role" in relation to students is not the same as the "teacher role" to administrators (or to the Parent-Teachers Association, etc.). There are overlapping simultaneous statuses so that different roles may be played even within a single setting. For instance, in a women-only bar it may not matter that one is a lesbian lawyer. Entry depends upon being a woman and of legal age. If there is a raid on the bar, the attorney role may be activated. Responding to a sexual proposition makes sexual status salient. Within this interaction, being a mother,