

appeared the main gay journal of Brazilian history, *O Lampião* ("The Lantern"), which had a great positive effect on the rise of the Brazilian homosexual movement. By 1980 twenty-two organized groups had been formed and two national congresses had been held. Such a promising start was succeeded by inevitable setbacks, caused mainly by the lack of political discipline of the gay activists who had founded the groups and the material and intellectual poverty of the participants. Four gay groups remain (Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, and two in São Paulo), all of them legally recognized. Among the main victories of the Brazilian gay movement is the freeing of homosexuals from the role of "sexual deviants and inverts" and the ratification of several resolutions on the part of scientific bodies protesting antigay discrimination and calling for financial support for research on homosexuality. One of the chief battles of gay activists is to denounce the repeated murders of homosexuals—about every ten days the newspapers report a homophobic crime.

Recently the transvestite Roberta Close appeared on the cover of the main national magazines, receiving the accolade of "the model of the beauty of the Brazilian woman." In the mid-1980s more than 400 Brazilian transvestites could be counted in the Bois de Boulogne in Paris; many also offer themselves in Rome. When they hear the statistics of the Kinsey Report, Brazilian gays smile, suggesting through experience and "participant observation" that in Brazil the proportion of predominantly homosexual men is as high as 30 percent.

Since 1983, with the death of the first Brazilian AIDS victim, the "epidemic of the century" has caused much concern in the homosexual community. Situated in the third place in the world, after the United States and France, Brazil was tardy in mounting a public information campaign aimed at the prevention of AIDS. Given the general bisexuality, the spread of the disease was particularly worrisome

among less prosperous youth, who constitute half of the population. Brazil, once the paradise of gays, has entered a difficult path.

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Luiz Mott

BRITAIN

See England.

BRITTEN, BENJAMIN (1913–1976)

English composer. His works, written in a variety of media, achieved both popular and specialist success, though with the passage of years they came to be labeled "traditionalist" by some. Britten shared much of his life with the tenor Peter Pears, who frequently interpreted his works. In the late 1930s he began several collaborations with the poet W. H. Auden, including incidental music to two plays, songs, and the operetta *Paul Bunyan* (1941). Words have always been an important stimulus for Britten: he has set to music poems by Michelangelo and Rimbaud, among others. In 1976 he was named a life peer (Baron Britten of Aldeburgh) by Queen Elizabeth.

In his dramatic compositions Britten worked with the idea of "parable" as a means of effecting changes in existing patterns of human relationships. The opera *Peter Grimes* (1945) is loosely based on a poem by George Crabbe. Grimes, a fisherman accused of involvement in the death of two apprentices, cannot face social pressure and commits suicide. In this choice of subject it has been argued that Britten was presenting, perhaps uncon-

sciously, a parable of his own homosexuality. The libretto of *The Turn of the Screw* (1954) derives from a famous story by Henry James, which it follows closely. Two orphaned children are placed in the care of a new governess, who must struggle for control of the boy Miles with the ghost of Quint, a former valet. Although she persuades Miles to repudiate Quint, the effort is too much and he falls lifeless beside her. In the story one could assume that the ghost is a figment of the characters' imagination—a collective delusion—but in the opera he must appear in the flesh. Hence the relationship takes on a more clearly pederastic character than it otherwise would have done.

The Turn of the Screw remains shrouded in a certain amount of ambiguity, which disappears in the case of *Death in Venice* (1976). Thomas Mann's novella, which the opera faithfully follows, concerns a Central European bourgeois, the image of respectability, who falls precipitously in love with a teenage boy. The Britten setting, which has been successfully staged in a number of major opera houses, offers an adroit, sometimes moving version of a subject that at first sight would seem difficult for audiences to accept. *Death in Venice* is not only a fitting climax to a brilliant career, but an example of the work of a homosexual artist who made creative use of the opportunities that a changing social climate provided.

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BROOKS, ROMAINE GODDARD (1874–1970)

American artist. Born in Rome to a wealthy American family, Romaine had

a childhood marred by her mother's preferring her sickly brother to her. At the age of seventeen she was sent to a girls' finishing school in Geneva, where she had crushes on several other students. She showed a talent for both art and music, and was able to transfer to Paris. She was briefly married to the homosexual pianist John Ellingham Brooks, and had a stormy relationship with the predatory Italian writer Gabriele d'Annunzio. In 1905, after study in Italy, Romaine Brooks began a serious career as an artist in Paris, capped by her successful show in 1910. Her specialty was portraiture, where she showed the influence of James McNeil Whistler, though she never studied with him. Her finest single work is probably her self-portrait, which captures a magnificent brooding figure set against a ruined landscape (Washington, DC, National Collection of Fine Arts). Many of her female portraits, including one of Una Lady Troubridge, the companion of Radclyffe Hall, have an androgynous quality.

On the eve of World War I Brooks met Natalie Barney, a wealthy lesbian expatriate. Their relationship was to last for fifty years. The two women collaborated on Barney's book *One Who Is Legion*, for which Brooks produced a series of quirky drawings of impossibly thin figures. Some have detected a humorous side in this aspect of her work, complementing the high seriousness of her portraiture.

The last thirty years of Brooks' long life were passed in obscurity, and she did not live to see the revival of interest in women artists that emerged in the 1970s (including a posthumous retrospective of her work in 1971). Brooks stood apart from modernism and abstraction, pursuing a humanistic art that gradually opened a gulf with the avant-garde. Her importance is secured, however, by her place in the constellation of creative expatriate lesbians in Paris in the first half of the twentieth century, which included not only Natalie Barney, but Djuna Barnes, Gertrude Stein, and Alice B. Toklas.