

**BURNS, JOHN HORNE
(1916-1953)**

American novelist. Born into an Irish Catholic family in Andover, Massachusetts, Burns was educated at Harvard University. He taught English at the Loomis School from 1937 to 1942. During World War II Burns served in the Army in North Africa and Italy. There he gathered the material for his book *The Gallery* (1947), a series of brilliant episodes unified by the passage of the characters through the Galleria Umberto in Naples. Many readers have regarded the section entitled "Momma" as the most vivid account of the special atmosphere of a classic gay bar that has ever been written. The characters, several of whom are campy queens, are sharply delineated, and the author showed a remarkable ear for argot and the rhythms of gay speech. Other parts of the novel contain gay allusions, but these are generally too subtle to be picked up by most readers. The overarching presence in the novel is the freedom and sensuality of Italy, and the book is thus another document in the attraction of the northerner for fabled Mediterranean lands, though in this instance refracted in the turmoil of war.

Sensing a change in the American literary climate signaled by critical attacks on writers who allegedly belonged to the "fairy Freudian" school, Burns sought to direct his talent into more conventional paths. Although the main character of *Lucifer with a Book* (1949) is heterosexual, the novel contains a number of minor gay characters. Its main purpose was to indict the hypocrisy of American secondary education, which Burns knew well. *A Cry of Children* (1952) also has a heterosexual hero, a pianist named David Murray. Although homosexuality enters into this book as well, it is much more negatively presented. This shift reflects not only the hostile climate of the Cold War years, but Burns' own confusions stemming from his growing alcoholism. The writer died of sunstroke during a visit to Leghorn, Italy.

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**BURTON, RICHARD
FRANCIS, SIR
(1821-1890)**

British explorer, geographer, adventurer, writer, anthropologist, translator, and sexologist. Although married unhappily to the beautiful but obtuse Isabelle Burton, by whom he had no children, he led a life that was eccentric and scandalous. In his youth, he visited boy-brothels in Karachi, which led him to have a life-long interest in homosexuality, although this interest bore fruit only toward the end of his life. Burton was famous for his explorations in Arabia and Africa, and he traveled to every part of the globe, often being the first white man to visit the regions which he explored. He wrote a long series of thick volumes on Africa and other places, and translated several books.

The later part of Burton's life was devoted to translation of the *The Thousand and One Nights* and other works of oriental eroticism, which created a stir at a time when such writings were considered to be outrageously pornographic and unspeakable. He added insult to injury by appending a notorious "Terminal Essay" to the *Nights* which included a long article on pederasty, one of the first (and the first published in English) extended discussions of this taboo theme in modern times. Burton believed that there was a so-called **Sotadic Zone** in the equatorial regions of the world in which pederasty was widespread and tolerated, while the northern and southern regions tended to outlaw pederasty and limit it to a minority. He said that the hot weather was the factor which determined all of this, a theory which now appears unlikely but which was taken seriously in the early days of sexology. It now appears that this division

into two zones has some validity, but is due to folkways, morality, and economic factors rather than the weather. This essay has sometimes been mistaken for a "gay lib" apology ahead of its time, but a close reading reveals that Burton looked upon sodomy as a lurid vice suitable for shocking Mrs. Grundy when Burton was in a mischievous mood. There is no proof that he ever had sexual relations with any woman (including his wife) or boy, although the visit to the brothels of Karachi has naturally led to suspicions that he did more than just look at the catamites.

The final years of Burton's life were spent in Trieste, working on a massive erotic masterpiece which supposedly included much information on homosexuality, information supplied to him by Symonds, Ulrichs, Henry Spencer Ashbee, and Guy de Maupassant. However, the manuscript was destroyed after Burton's death by his widow as part of her sanctification plans for her husband's memory. This work was supposedly an annotated translation of the *Perfumed Garden* of the Sheikh Nefzawi (or Nafzawi), but the French translation had no references to pederasty. *The Glory of the Perfumed Garden* is a recent work claiming to be the "missing" half of this work, with chapters on pederasty and lesbianism, but this may be a fraud.

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Stephen W. Foster

BUTCH-FEM (LESBIAN) RELATIONSHIPS

Butch-fem(me) relationships are a style of lesbian loving and self-presentation which can in America be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century; historical counterparts can be found even earlier. Butches and fems have separate

sexual, emotional and social identities, outside of the relationship. Some butches believe they were born different from other women; others view their identity as socially constructed.

While no exact date has yet been established for the start of the usage of the terms "butch" and "fem," oral histories do show their prevalence from the 1930s on. The butch-fem couple was particularly dominant in the United States, in both black and white lesbian communities, from the 1920s through the fifties and early sixties.

Basic Features. Because the complementarity of butch and fem is perceived differently by different women, no simple definition can be offered. When seen through outsiders' eyes, the butch appears simplistically "masculine," and the fem, "feminine," paralleling heterosexual categories. But butches and fems transformed heterosexual elements such as gender attitude and dress into a unique lesbian language of sexuality and emotional bonding. Butch-fem relationships are based on an intense erotic attraction with its own rituals of courtship, seduction and offers of mutual protection. While the erotic connection is the basis for the relationship, and while butches often see themselves as the more aggressive partner, butch-fem relationships, when they work well, develop a nurturing balance between two different kinds of women, each encouraging the other's sexual-emotional identity. Couples often settle into domestic long-term relationships or engage in serial monogamy, a practice Kennedy and Davis trace back to the thirties, and one they view as a major Lesbian contribution to an alternative for heterosexual marriage. In the streets in the fifties, butch-fem couples were a symbol of women's erotic autonomy, a visual statement of a sexual and emotional accomplishment that did not include men.

Butch-fem relationships are complex erotic and social statements, filled with a language of stance, dress, gesture,