

**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.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. John Mitzel, *John Horne Burns: An Appreciative Biography*, Dorchester, MA: Manifest Destiny, 1976.

**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