

antihomosexual argument based on the claim that it is unnatural.

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### ALBANIA

Until recent decades, remoteness and a distinctive language permitted this Balkan country to retain, more than its neighbors, cultural traits from the past. Travelers in the nineteenth and early twentieth century noted that Albanian men showed a particular passion for handsome youths, so much so that they would even kill one another in disputes over them. Albanians would also contract male-male pacts which were blessed by priests of the Orthodox church; these, it was claimed, were Platonic. Yet this assertion of purity seems to be contradicted by a common term for the pederast, *būthar*, literally "butt man." Among the Muslim Sufis some held a belief in reincarnation; having lived a previous life as women, they believed, it would be natural for some men to be attracted to male sex objects. It is tempting to regard these customs as a provincial relic of Greek institutionalized pederasty, or even (following Bernard Sergent) of some primordial "Indo-European" homosexuality. Sometimes the Albanians attributed the custom to a Gypsy origin. Yet Turkish Islamic influence is a more likely source, supplemented by the Byzantine custom of brotherhood pacts. Of further interest is the fact that many Janissaries and Mamluks were recruited among the Albanians.

Since 1945 Albania has been ruled by a puritanical and repressive Marxist regime. Although homosexuality is not mentioned in the Penal Code, elementary prudence requires that relations between "friends" be conducted with the utmost discretion. Foreign tourists report sexual contacts—but only with other tourists.

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### ALBERTINE COMPLEX

In *Remembrance of Things Past*, Marcel Proust's female character Albertine contains elements taken from the personality of the novelist's chauffeur Agostinelli, with whom Proust was in love. Accordingly, it has been suggested that the habit of gay and lesbian novelists—once a necessity—of "heterosexualizing" relationships by changing the sex of the characters be called the "Albertine complex." In W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* (1915) the waitress with whom the main character is in love is surely a man in disguise. A different device appears in Willa Cather's *My Ántonia* (1918), where the choice of male authorial persona, Jim, allows the writer to express interest in various female characters.

It must be granted that this critical procedure can be reductive if it simply seeks to "restore the true sex" to a character that is a composite product of the literary imagination. It may also falsely imply that gay and lesbian novelists are incapable of creating convincing characters of the opposite sex. Nonetheless, E. M. Forster gave eloquent testimony of his dissatisfaction with the procedure by abandoning writing novels in mid-career. After writing five published books simulating heterosexual relationships (and one, *Maurice*, on a homosexual's quest for love, which Forster believed was unpublishable), he declined to play the game any longer.

A related, though different phenomenon appears in the disguise dramas of the Renaissance. *La Calandria* (1513), by Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena, concerns two twins, one male, one female. The twins appear on stage four times, once both dressed as women, once both dressed as men, once in reverse attire, and once (at the end) in the appropriate dress. These