

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

permutations allowed the dramatist to explore for comic effect the confused emotions induced in other characters who are attracted to them. In less complete form the device spread into Spanish and Elizabethan drama, including Shakespeare's familiar *As You Like It*. At the end of these plays the sexual ambiguities are resolved, to the relief of the audience—or at least of the censor. Thus the effect of such dramas contrasts with that of the later novelistic Albertine complex where the device is not meant to be detected. In both cases, however, preservation—or apparent preservation—of normality is the aim.

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ALCIBIADE FANCIULLO A SCOLA, L'

According to the notation on the title page, this spirited dialogue in defense of pederasty ("Alcibiades the Schoolboy") was published anonymously at "Genevra [Geneva], 1652"—though it was probably actually printed in Venice. In 1862 a new limited edition of 250 copies appeared in Paris; it is almost as rare as the original. However, an Italian critical edition appeared in 1988 (Rome: Salerno).

The identity of the author long remained mysterious. The title page of the first edition bears the initials "D.P.A," which has been interpreted as "Divini Petri Aretini"—an unlikely attribution to Aretino. In 1850 Antonio Basseggio gave it, on stylistic grounds, to Ferrante Palavicino (1616-1644), a freethinker who was a member of the Accademia degli Incogniti in Venice. Finally, an article of 1888 by Achille Neri solved the puzzle. Neri included the text of a letter by Giovan Battista Loredan, founder of the Accademia degli Incogniti, which revealed that the author was Antonio Rocco (1586-1652), a "libertine" priest, Aristotelian philoso-

pher, and a member of the Academy. The initials on the title page could be resolved as "Di Padre Antonio." It is likely that Loredan, a noble Venetian, had a hand in the printing of the little volume.

While the obscenity of the story is quite explicit, it must be understood in the context of similar texts of the trend of **libertinism**, using the term in its original sense of a sceptical philosophical tendency. The colloquy is conventionally set in ancient Athens and the teacher is modeled on **Socrates**, as suggested also by the derivation of the literary form from the Platonic dialogue. Having conceived a unquenchable passion for his pupil, the instructor resolves to overcome his charge's every objection to consummation of the relationship. Through astute marshalling of argument, as well as rhetorical skill, the preceptor is successful, thus demonstrating also the value of education. The persuader uses examples from Greek mythology and culture, which had become familiar to many Italians through the **Renaissance** revival of classical antiquity. He rebuts counterarguments of later provenance, such as the **Sodom** and Gomorrah story. Anticipating the eighteenth century, he appropriates the argument from naturalness for his own ends, saying that **Nature** gave us our sexual organs for our pleasure; it is an insult to her to refuse to employ them for this evident purpose.

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Giovanni Dall'Orto

ALCIBIADES (CA. 450-404 B.C.)

Athenian general and statesman. Reared in the household of his guardian and uncle Pericles, he became the *erom-*