

ing emperor. However, his plans were forestalled by the governor of Canton in 1810 when the latter offered pardons and rewards to all pirates who would surrender, and this pulled out the rug from under Chang Pao, who eventually settled for a colonelcy in the Chinese army.

Dian Murray's study of the Chinese pirates describes them as moving "easily and freely" between men, women, and boys as sexual partners. Unlike their West Indies counterparts, the top pirates usually carried women on board, with one captain noted for having five or six wives living on the ship with him. Murray suggests that forcible sodomy may have been used as a rite of initiation into the pirate crew. Certainly, to judge from Chang Pao's story, it was not considered a dishonor or a bar to future leadership, in marked contrast to the contempt accorded by ancient Romans or modern prisoners to any male who has been sexually penetrated.

If the data on Chinese and Caribbean pirates are both scanty and tantalizing, there is even less information on other periods of great pirate activity, such as occurred in the late Roman republic or the sixteenth-century heyday of the Spanish Main. If any conclusion can be drawn from what is recorded, it is that the study of pirate lifestyles confirms earlier knowledge that patterns of homosexuality differ extraordinarily from one culture to another and resist easy generalization.

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**PLATEN-HALLERMÜND,  
AUGUST VON  
(1796-1835)**

German Romantic poet. Born in Ansbach of one of the oldest aristocratic families of the city, he was by rank a count.

His outward life was uneventful, consisting mainly of brief military service, an extensive stay at the university, and some dozen years of residence or travel in Italy. The poet's inner life, however, was a profound psychological drama. He was attracted to the late adolescent or male in his twenties, and although he had lifelong friendships that lay outside the sphere of his homosexual tendencies, when his attraction to another man began with a note of sexual passion, it remained so to the bitter end—and often meant intense torment for him. In religion a Protestant, in character a sensitive, refined individual of idealizing temperament, Platen was virile in mind and body, yet only the male appealed to his sense of beauty.

At the close of the Napoleonic wars Platen served in a Bavarian regiment in Munich and even accompanied it onto French soil, but returned home without a baptism of fire. He then studied foreign languages, literature, political history, and philosophy at the universities of Würzburg and Erlangen, furnishing his mind with an encyclopedic knowledge of these subjects. Before his student days were over, Platen had attracted notice, even in high literary circles, by his poems and his brilliant satirical dramas, and he understood that his calling was to be a writer. The oriental poems known as the Ghazels, the profound human feeling in the Sonnets, and the passion, rhythmic sense and melody of the Odes still command admiration. His comedies are precursors of the sort of social satire that Gilbert and Sullivan later immortalized for the British stage. After 1826 the poet was increasingly alienated from his German homeland, and his contempt for most aspects of its literary life grew biting. In part because of his homosexual interests, it was Italy that beckoned him, and he spent the last decade of his life there, a life prematurely ended by an outbreak of cholera in Syracuse in 1835.

The clearest record of his homosexuality is in the diary, kept from childhood, which he wrote not just in German,

but in considerable portions in French, Italian, and Portuguese. Meant for the writer's eyes alone, the diary records not only his intellectual growth and literary studies, but also his homosexual passions. During his lifetime he allowed no one else to read it, except perhaps in a single unfortunate instance that enabled one of his best friends to detect Platen's true sexual nature—with an ensuing painful scene in a public circle of their acquaintances. After his death his literary executors were shy of publishing this revealing document, which was kept with restricted access in the Royal Library in Munich until in 1896–1900 the entire text was published in two large volumes of over 2000 pages. The entries chronicle the intense erotic friendships of his student days and later passions that tormented and thrilled him, as some of his *innamorati* were wholly unresponsive to his overtures.

Toward the close of his life Platen became embroiled in mortal enmity with Heinrich Heine, who shared many of his political views and yet was his antipode as a poet. Heine maliciously seized upon the poet's homoerotic side to attack him in *The Baths of Lucca*. Platen did in 1834 publish a poem with the code word "Vernünft'ge" [= gay] that to the initiated was a declaration of homosexual self-consciousness and solidarity ("Sollen namenlos uns länger," written January 31, 1823). He is a classic example of the homosexual in whom talent is joined with an intensity of feeling that can betray him in his private and his public life, but also with a strength of character that enables him to surmount these vicissitudes.

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Warren Johansson

## PLATO (CIRCA 429–347 B.C.)

Greek philosopher and prose writer. He was the son of Ariston and Perictione, both Athenians of distinguished lineage. His writings show the enormous influence that the philosopher Socrates had upon him by his life, his teaching, and his death. The spectacle of contemporary politics, both during the ascendancy of his own supporters and under the democracy, gradually turned him away from the career of a statesman and forced him to the paradox that there was no hope for cities until philosophers became rulers or rulers philosophers. After the trial and execution of Socrates in 399 he chose with other Socratics to leave Athens and reside for a time in Megara. In the next twelve years he traveled to many places, including Egypt. In 387 he visited Italy and Sicily, where he initiated lifelong friendships with Dion of Syracuse and the Pythagorean Archytas of Tarentum. On his return he began teaching formally and continuously at a place near the grove of Academus about a mile outside the wall of Athens. This was his chief occupation during the last forty years of his life; he departed only to make two further visits to Syracuse, where he involved himself fruitlessly in its internal politics under Dionysius II.

Plato's writings consist of some twenty-five dialogues and the *Apology* of Socrates. As a prose stylist in Attic Greek he is one of the great figures of classical literature. His style possesses infinite variety, his language is tinged with poetry and rich in metaphors, especially from music, to which he can return even when their implications seem exhausted. His sentences can range from the briefest to long, straggling periods, sometimes even more powerful than those of the orator Demosthenes, but quite different from them. His later style betrays traces of mannerism, including subtle interlacings of word order and affectations of assonance. No other author attains such sustained power and beauty in Greek prose.