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Published by

Fellows, Will.
A Passion to Preserve: Gay Men as Keepers of Culture.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/8516.

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Notes

Preface

3. For the phrase “keepers of culture” I credit Clyde Hall, a gay American Indian who uses those words to describe the role that he and other males like him have always played in the life of his tribe. Mark Thompson, Gay Soul: Finding the Heart of Gay Spirit and Nature (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 125.

Charlotte and Me

5. Von Mahlsdorf, 22.
6. Ibid., 59.
7. Ibid., 116.
8. Lemke, 77.
10. Ibid., 23, 142, 148.

In Search of Gay Preservationists

1. My thanks to Mike, a gay man with whom I spoke in the garden of a gay-operated, antiques-furnished B and B in Missoula, Montana, for telling me about the Noël Coward version of “Let’s Do It” and sending me a recording of it. A Montana native in his late forties living in San Francisco, Mike told me with good-natured perplexity that his new boyfriend is a nice guy but, like so many other gay men he’s met, “an antiques queen.” Mike wondered if I could enlighten him as to why this was so.
2. “Surely gay culture is more than cocks,” writes Larry Kramer. “Who are we? What does it mean to be gay? What is the gay sensibility?” (“Sex and Sensibility,” The Advocate, May 27, 1997, 59, 64–65, 67–69). Rictor Norton’s The Myth of the Modern Homosexual (London: Cassell, 1997) has been greatly illuminating. “Queer historians need to widen the definition of ‘homosexuality’ so as to encompass queer culture rather than just queer sex and the laws against it,” Norton writes, “and then to engage in the task of verifying the
authentic features of queer culture. . . . Queer history is essentially the history of queer culture. It is not the history of specific sexual acts, nor should it be a history of social attitudes towards homosexuality. Queer history is still too much a part of the ‘history of sexuality’ and needs to be resituated within the history of non-sexual culture and ethnic customs. Similarly, although it is important to recognize the (often hostile) environment in which queers fashion their culture, a history of heterosexual prejudice is not central to a history of homosexuality” (132). “The proper business of queer history should be to emphasize the generally unrecognized features that are integral to the subculture itself and not a result of oppression” (241).


4. The linkage of male homosexuality and femininity is supported by more than anecdotal evidence. In The Man Who Would Be Queen: The Science of Gender-Bending and Transsexualism (Washington, D.C.: Joseph Henry, 2003) psychologist J. Michael Bailey states that “the link between childhood gender nonconformity and adult homosexuality is one of the largest and best established associations regarding sexual orientation” (59). Based on a review of more than thirty studies in which gay and straight men completed questionnaires, Bailey estimates that the typical gay man is more feminine than about 90 percent of straight men (62). Gay men comprise a mixture of male-typical and female-typical characteristics, Bailey says, and “this mixture explains much of what is unique in gay men’s culture and lives” (60).

5. Norton’s The Myth of the Modern Homosexual is helpful here: “What I want to suggest is that the queer historian should not despair when confronted by the charge that we really do not have the ‘genital evidence’ to prove incontrovertibly that someone was queer, for we often have abundant evidence of suppression which in itself is sufficient confirmation of the likelihood of a queer interpretation. Queer historians should never apologize for basing queer history on context rather than text, on ethnic culture rather than sexual behaviour, on ‘queer’ paradigms rather than ‘homosexual’ ones” (178–79).


8. “Wearing a little finger ring, especially on the left hand, is a common way of indicating Gayness to other members of the secret or semisecret Gay underground in America” (Judy Grahn, Another Mother Tongue: Gay Words, Gay Worlds [Boston: Beacon, 1990], 14).


10. Ibid., 34–36, 902.

11. Samuel Gaillard Stoney, This Is Charleston: A Survey of the Architectural
Heritage of a Unique American City (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, 1976), vii.


13. Personal communication, April 1999, with a gay employee of the National Park Service who requested anonymity.


What These Gay Men’s Lives Reveal


2. In response to the cliché about “little old ladies in tennis shoes” being the pioneers in preservation, founding “hysterical” societies in their communities, I’ve heard remarks from gay men suggesting that it’s really “little old ladies in tennis shoes and gay men in 501s,” or “little old ladies of both sexes.”


4. This individual requested anonymity.


6. Personally I have to acknowledge my love of space-enclosing objects much smaller than houses: boxes, mugs, tankards, teapots, bowls, but especially boxes, beginning with a black lacquered Victorian jewelry box with floral decoration and purple fabric interior, which I bought at an auction as a child. It captivated me with its dark, rich beauty and unknowable associations. My great-grandmother gave me a small wooden trinket box. At auctions and antique shops I acquired a small pine chest, a maple treenware thread holder, snuffboxes of pewter and wood. A gay couple I got to know in England one summer gave me an oval lidded box of bone china decorated with flowers and the words “Absent Friends, Not Forgotten.” Perhaps no one else noticed my thing for boxes (not even I, at the time), but Aunt Mary did. One Christmas, tucked inside a small handcrafted wooden box, was her note to me: “This elephant never forgets that you liked boxes fifteen years ago, so now you’re fated to receive them on a regular basis.”
In the film *Ma Vie en Rose*, Ludovic, an unabashedly effeminate and cross-dressing six-year-old, is enchanted by his grandmother’s gaily painted jewelry box, from which music and a dancing figure emerge when the lid is opened. Toward the end of the movie Ludovic’s grandmother gives the box to him. There is great meaning in all of this: the special bond between gay boy and grandmother; the allure of her jewelry box, a beautiful enclosure for lovely things; and the particular appeal of the box because of its animated, musical qualities and its association with grandmother.

What sort of enclosed space could be more compelling than a beautiful box? A beautiful box that gives off music, life. There seem to be so many gays with strong attractions to old music boxes, phonographs, and automatic musical instruments—even to old, stylish radios and televisions, a collecting passion of gay Hollywood preservationist Kent Warner: “Old televisions were high Deco to Kent,” says a friend. “Here was a box with so much going on inside” (Rhys Thomas, *The Ruby Slippers of Oz* [Los Angeles: Tale Weaver, 1989], 94).

10. August Derleth, *Atmosphere of Houses* (Muscatine, Iowa: Prairie Press, 1939), 9, 22, 43. By the age of twenty Derleth was planning the ambitious life work he had begun to envision in his writerly youth: dozens of volumes—historical and biographical novels, short stories, and poetry—that would explore the life of his native Wisconsin community and region. The saga would span more than a hundred years, from first settlement to the present. The creation of each of those volumes, from the 1930s through the 1960s, helped to satisfy Derleth’s great need for a feeling of connection to place and to forebears, a sense of identity and continuity.
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22. John Loughery says that in the course of doing research for *The Other Side of Silence*, he was struck by gay men’s meticulously kept scrapbooks and photo albums: “It did seem to me, in meeting older gay men for my own study, that the number who kept albums or scrapbooks . . . was greater than that of the straight people I know” (personal communication, letter, October 1998).
24. Women authored twelve of the thirteen ghost stories about old-house living published in *Old-House Journal* (Sept./Oct. 2002, 65–71). This suggests that females are more disposed than males to feel a spiritual connection with an old house’s previous occupants.

**Saving Old New England**

9. A fellow Walpole Society member advised Appleton in 1913 that the Colonial Dames were in the lead in working on old houses in Connecticut. Though he was sometimes at odds with women’s often romantic and sentimental ideas about how to treat an old house, Appleton worked closely with many female preservationists, including two women who staffed the SPNEA office for many years.
15. Ibid., 55.

**Design-Minded in the Mid-Atlantic States**

**To the Rescue in the Atlantic South**
2. Ibid., 12.
5. Ibid., 179.
6. Ibid., 43.
9. Ibid., 20.
11. Ibid., 251, 204.

**Domophiles Out West**

**California Conservative**
8. Ibid., 17.
10. Ibid., 320–21.
14. Ibid., 95.
15. Ibid., 157.

**Generations of Gentlemen Keep Cooksville, Wisconsin**

10. Ibid.
11. From “A Message from the House Next Door,” a brochure distributed in 1940 by friends of Ralph Warner as part of an effort to raise funds to help preserve the House Next Door in the face of Warner’s debility. Cooksville, Wisconsin, village history archive.
Singular Preservationists in the Midwest

8. *Fennimore (Wis.) Times*, Dec. 18, 1935, 12.
12. Ibid.
18. Ibid., 142.
19. Ibid., 174, 135.
20. Ibid., 212.
21. Ibid., 232.

Cherishing Old New Orleans and Louisiana

12. In 1937 Thomas Wolfe captured Lyle Saxon’s character concisely after meeting him during a visit to New Orleans. In his pocket notebook Wolfe wrote Saxon’s name and noted, “An old lady—not a phony” (Harvey, *Life and Selected Letters of Lyle Saxon*, 182).
14. Ibid., 43.
16. Ibid., 257–58.
22. Ibid.

**Toward a Larger View of Gay Men**

3. Many of the men who collaborated with William Sumner Appleton in founding the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities were ministers or had ministerial schooling. Wallace Nutting became a minister, then dedicated himself full-time to antiquarianism after suffering a nervous breakdown. It was an Episcopal minister, William Goodwin, who instigated America's preeminent restoration project in Williamsburg, Virginia, in the 1920s.


5. Rictor Norton, *The Myth of the Modern Homosexual*, 278. Norton also reports that “in Venice, in 1488, the porch of Santa Maria Mater Domini was sealed off by the authorities to stop it from being used by sodomites as a gathering place” (250).

6. Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization* (New York: Doubleday, 1995). There are queer fingerprints all over the preservation endeavor that is at the heart of this story: After the Roman Empire disintegrated, the survival of Greek and Latin literature was unlikely. Ireland’s monasteries took up the work of gathering in, caring for, and copying as much of it as they could get their hands on. This work was done, Cahill says, by strange men who lived in little beehive huts on rocky outcrops, dined on seabirds, grew food in seaweed-fertilized gardens, shaved half their heads, and tortured themselves with fasts and chills and nettle baths. Cahill says that these scribal scholars, though occasionally waspish, were generally delighted by the work they were fated to do. In beautiful handwriting one fastidious scribe comments snippily at the margin of a page done by a careless fellow scribe, “It is easy to spot Gabrial’s work here.” A more warm-hearted scribe jots a lyric in the margin of a manuscript: “He is a heart, an acorn from the oakwood: He is young. Kiss him!” (161).

    The great Continental libraries were gone and largely forgotten. But the Irish monks did not stop at rescuing and diligently copying the Bible and the literatures of Greece and Rome. An impulse to restore followed their earnest preservation. Eventually it was time to reconnect barbarized Europe with its traditions of Christian literacy that had been trashed in earlier centuries. White-robed Irish monks dispersed across the continent, founding monasteries and bringing with them works of literature that had not been seen in Europe for centuries. Thanks largely to Ireland’s queer men, an embattled Europe regained its heritage.


17. Finbar Maxwell says, “I find in quilts, especially the more contemporary and unpredictable designs, a beautiful metaphor for bringing the fragmented parts of our selves, our lives, our world together into a cohesive, harmonious whole.” His metaphor is echoed by a young gay man who, upon hearing about my preservation research, recognized a related phenomenon in his own life: During his high school years, he told me, he had gathered the shattered remains of old dishes, liquor bottles, and other objects that had been used as shotgun targets by his father and brother, then used the shards to create mosaic-like artworks. This was, for him, a way of achieving some psychic rehabilitation, transforming the broken objects and the alcoholism-scarred family life they represented into compositions of cohesiveness and beauty.

18. Stuart Timmons, The Trouble with Harry Hay: Founder of the Modern Gay Movement (Boston: Alyson, 1990), 43, 148. An early gay gathering place in New York City was the Artistic Club (Paula Martinac, The Queerest Places: A Guide to Gay and Lesbian Historic Sites [New York: Henry Holt, 1997], 118). Apparently the term “religious” has not been similarly used, though I’ve heard one gay man refer to another as “a member of the church,” and gay men are a major presence not only in the clergy but also in the religious music arena.


20. Paglia, Vamps and Tramps, 75, 86.

21. Thompson, Gay Soul, 67.

22. Ibid., 219.


27. Paglia, Vamps and Tramps, 77.


29. Ibid., 215.
32. Anomaly [pseud.], *The Invert and His Social Adjustment*, 276. Among the papers of Robert Neal, a gay preservationist born in 1906, I found a sentimental poem given to him by Frank Riley, another preservation-minded gay man (born 1875), who had heard the poem read on a radio station in 1942 and requested a copy of it, then had it typeset and duplicated. The poem, “Little Woodland God” by one Judy Van der Veer, depicts a mothering god who watches over hunted forest creatures, loving the dying, the orphaned, the frightened, weeping for the dead, covering them softly with leaves. The gentleman who was so captivated by this poem is just one of many gay men with whom I’ve become acquainted in the course of this research who manifest a pronounced nurturing, mothering, care-giving sensibility in relation to creatures human and nonhuman. This has ranged from the casual taking in of stray animals to full-fledged wildlife rehabilitation; from engaging in amateur “social work” to being formally trained and employed in such capacities.
35. Ibid., 45, 113, 190.
42. A primary focus of Russell Bush’s collecting has been photographs of men in affectionate poses. A portion of this collection was used to illustrate his book, *Affectionate Men: A Photographic History of a Century of Male Couples (1850s to 1950s)* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1998).
44. Murray and Roscoe, *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands*, 93.
47. Ibid., 163–65.
50. Ibid., 271.
54. Willa Cather, *One of Ours* (New York: Knopf, 1922), 406. Cather expressed in her writing a historical sensibility more characteristic of gay men than of lesbians. There is also much in Cather’s writings to engage those with an “odour of the clerical” about them. Andrew Harvey includes Cather in *The Essential Gay Mystics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), stating that all her work “is informed by a subtle and profoundly religious vision of human dignity and potential” (229).
56. Rowse, *Homosexuals in History*, 82.
57. It seems that the Arts and Crafts movement, a secular “religious” movement, had special appeal for gay men. These included the English architect Charles R. Ashbee, a disciple of Carpenter and Morris and a member of the governing council of Great Britain’s National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or National Beauty. An idealistic activist from a wealthy family, Ashbee dedicated himself to social welfare work. The decorative arts were central to his redemptive vision: In 1878 he founded the Guild and School of Handicraft in Whitechapel, one of London’s most depressed areas. Ashbee’s lectures on Ruskin inspired local workingmen and boys to study design and learn various handicrafts (Fiona MacCarthy, *The Simple Life: C. R. Ashbee in the Cotswolds* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981], 21).
61. Edward Carpenter, *Civilisation, Its Cause and Cure* (1889; Boston: Tao Books, 1971). Edward Carpenter’s vision of human lives returned to wholeness has much in common with the lifestyles of the Amish, which may account for the singular appeal of this sect for some gay men. “I happen to be close friends with some Old Order Amish folks,” an urban gay man told me. “I lived with an Amish family in Pennsylvania for three months once and have remained in close touch with them. (They are the only people in the entire world with whom I’m not openly gay.) Of course, I’m a bit horrified by the oppressive aspects of their culture, but I’m also deeply in love with it. It may take my whole life to figure out why, but it definitely has a lot to do with my gayness. Of the three other ‘English’ people (as the Amish call us secular folk) I know of who have had the privilege of living with Amish families, one is a woman and the other two are gay men.” The appeal of tidy and conservative Amish culture for this gay man impresses
me as a blend of several elements of the gay/preservation pattern: connection- and continuity-mindedness, aestheticism, and not a little romanticism.

**Conclusion**

10. Conner uses the term “effemiphobic” to describe the antagonism directed at gender-atypical males (Randy P. Conner, *Blossom of Bone: Reclaiming the Connections between Homoeroticism and the Sacred* [New York: HarperCollins, 1993], 96). Bailey uses the term “femiphobia” to describe the ambivalence that gay men have about effeminate behavior among gays (Michael Bailey, “Gender Identity,” in *The Lives of Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals* [New York: Harcourt Brace, 1995], 71–93). Bergling’s use of the term “sissyphobia” is largely synonymous with “femiphobia” (Tim Bergling, *Sissyphobia: Gay Men and Effeminate Behavior* [Binghamton, N.Y.: Harrington Park Press, 2001], 56). I prefer the seemingly more etymologically correct “effeminiphobia” (a term used by one of Bergling’s respondents), by which I mean any reaction of fear, dislike, or aversion to males who possess qualities or characteristics typically associated with females.
11. For a telling glimpse of this quaint tradition, see Clark Henley, *The Butch Manual: The Current Drag and How to Do It* (New York: Sea Horse Press, 1982).
16. A little humor book published recently exemplifies the way in which many gays tend to handle their queer-genderedness: It’s good for a laugh. “You know you’re absolutely gonna be gay when . . . the first thing you build with your Érector set is a doll house.” “You know you’re absolutely gonna be gay when . . . your third-grade teacher asks you for decorating tips.” “You know you’re gay when . . . you simply have to have yet another Russel Wright gravy
boat for your china collection.” “You know you’re gay when . . . your impeccable taste becomes a pain in the ass” (Joseph Cohen, You Know You’re Gay When . . . : Those Unforgettable Moments That Make Us Who We Are [New York: Contemporary Books, 1995], 1, 28, 41, 61).

17. The gay/transgender connection is illustrated by the hijras, members of a society of bawdy ritual performers who have been a part of the cultures of Pakistan and north India for several thousand years. The hijras’ main religious role is to confer fertility blessings on newlyweds and male infants. Hijras generally wear women’s clothing but consider themselves to be neither women nor men. Castration has long been part of the hijra tradition, though some forgo it. Insisting that her kind is not unique to India, a contemporary hijra declared to her American interviewer that “there are hijras in America!”—apparently referring to gay men and male-to-female transgenders. “From childhood, you can tell what the child’s bent is,” another hijra says. “If he is a boy, he acts like one. But if he has a feminine bent, he will play among the girls. Parents feel the pulse of the boy through his character. Isn’t it like that in America?” Many gays would deny any likeness to the quirky and sometimes emasculated hijra, but the similarity is evident: Hijras are said to have a tremendous sense of organization, to be highly disciplined, fastidious, and punctual. Hijras are said to be excellent cooks (they often supervised royal kitchens), to have a great love of music, and to “have their peculiar way of overdoing everything.” Though people consider the hijras to be “unclean,” their homes are maintained with great care, strikingly clean and neat, everything arranged just so. “Everything that is nice and clean is good . . . for humanity,” a hijra says. See Zia Jaffrey, The Invisibles: A Tale of the Eunuchs of India (New York: Vintage, 1996), 116, 160, 261, 268–69.


