back pocket to indicate their fondness for
gentle personalized sex as distinct from
what they perceived as the mechanical,
unloving, sometimes brutal encounters of
the time.

In the late 1980s the immense
quilt sponsored by the Names Project and
carried out by scores of local projects, all
conmemorating thousands who died of
AIDS, produced a fascinating array of vis-
ual iconography. The images of the indi-
vidual panels were chosen and sewn by
surviving friends and relatives. Some
panels show emblems of favorite places
where the person memorialized had lived;
another shows an image—of Moscow—
that the deceased had wished to visit; still
others carry the insignia of the schools
from which the deceased had received
degrees. Passionate avocations, such as
music and dance, are represented by appro-
priate symbols, such as a clef, a piano
keyboard, or the outline of a tapdancer.
The use of sequins and bright, glittering
colors reflects characteristic aspects of the
gay image. Some have quotations alluding
to the interests or the character of the in-
dividual commemorated. In terms of the
world history of funerary iconography, the
symbols are usually "retrospective"—
referring to joys and accomplishments
during life—rather than "prospective"—
directed toward a future life.

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SEMIOTICS, GAY

In eighteenth-century English, under the stimulus of the proto-Romantic
trend, the word "sensibility" acquired the meaning of "sensitive or ready capacity for
emotional response, as distinct from intel-
lect or will; acuteness of feeling," overlay-
ing the earlier sense of "physical response
to stimuli." More recently, the word has
served to designate dimensions of feeling
that are conceived as flourishing in certain
groups, such as "feminine sensibility," "artistic sensibility." Although the possibility
has often been canvassed, it seems
unlikely that there is any single homosex-
ual or lesbian sensibility, or mode of ex-
pressing the group's way of looking at the
world [which is scarcely unitary among
the members of these groups]. What may
exist, however, are more restricted sensi-
bilities cultivated by certain groups or
schools of homosexual writers and artists,
as in Bloomsbury or lesbian Paris in the
1920s.

This problem is related to the
question of whether homosexual individu-
als are endowed with a greater creative
potential than other people. It might be
thought that over the centuries the very
stigmatizing of homosexuals and lesbians
has fostered the development of inventive
ways of dealing with the world. Thus far,
however, such a phenomenon seems to
have been shown only for certain types of
wit, and then for limited periods of time (as
in camp). It has not been possible to glean
any empirical data supporting the folk
belief in special homosexual creativity.

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SEPARATISM, LESBIAN

In its strongest form, lesbian
separatism means social, cultural, and
physical separation from all who are not
lesbians. As society is now constituted
this option is possible only for a very few.
Many lesbians who regard themselves as
separatists seek to live and work in cir-
cumstances that are as far as possible
"women's space," without insisting on
the absolute exclusion of men. The term
"lesbian separatist" is also sometimes used
within the gay/lesbian movement for those
who do not wish to work with gay men.