

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 commemorating thousands who died of AIDS, produced a fascinating array of visual iconography. The images of the individual 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 appropriate 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 individual 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.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Hal Fischer, *Gay Semiotics: A Photographic Study of Visual Coding Among Gay Men*, San Francisco: NFS Press, 1977; Cindy Ruskin, *The Quilt: Stories from The Names Project*, New York: Pocket Books, 1988.

Wayne R. Dynes

### SENSIBILITY

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 intellect or will; acuteness of feeling," overlaying 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 homosexual or lesbian sensibility, or mode of expressing 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 sensibilities 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 individuals 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.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Jean H. Hagstrum, *Sex and Sensibility*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

### 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 circumstances 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.

The **Amazons**, figures of Greek mythology rather than historical reality, are supposed to have lived in an all-female society, rejecting men and making war upon them. Aristophanes' play *Lysistrata* (411 B.C.) shows Athenian women seceding from their city in a "sex strike," but only temporarily—until the men agree to make peace. Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935), a pioneering American socialist and feminist, wrote a novel, *Herland* (1915; reprinted 1979), depicting a utopia in Africa populated only by women. In her own life Gilman's closest bonds were with other women, and she transmitted her distillation of the women-centered aspects of the first wave of feminism to the second.

In 1971 the New York group Radicalesbians published an essay, "The Woman Identified Woman," coining an expression that was to have considerable resonance. Discarding the exclusively sexual identification of the word lesbian, the essay proposed to identify the concept with a woman who chooses to place her energies with other women.

Outsiders tend to label lesbian separatists as "women who hate men." In their defense, separatists often say that what they are opposed to are the domineering, aggressive aspects of male behavior, rather than men themselves. They wish to make a clear statement that will set them apart from the ambivalent stance of heterosexual women, even those who profess feminism. Separatists believe that such straight women enter too readily into complicity with the power structure of patriarchy; by continuing to meet the sexual and emotional needs of men, these women give aid and comfort to the enemy.

Some women choose to form communes on "women's land," setting themselves apart from all males, including male children and animals. In so doing they hold that they are creating liberated zones in which their natures can grow unhampered by the dictates of patriarchy. They also affirm their protest against the

practices of the society from which they have seceded. This solution, which never attracted large numbers of women, seemed to ebb in the late 1980s in the United States, though it has found advocates in other countries, notably West Germany.

Other women who identify as separatists have remained in physical proximity to men, while making their position known. They feel that, like members of ethnic minorities, they must be free to go anywhere, while remaining themselves. Some gay men, who assert that they are seeking to strengthen the feminine elements of their own personality, are drawn to seek association with lesbian separatists, but they are usually told that they can make their best contribution through educating other men.

Some women have entered lesbian separatism for a number of years as part of a process of personal growth, only to emerge later with a more complex position. This seems to have been the experience of a principal theorist of the movement, Charlotte Bunch, who remains a radical lesbian feminist.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.** Charlotte Bunch, *Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987; Sarah Lucia Hoagland and Julia Penelope, eds., *For Lesbians Only: A Separatist Anthology*, London: Only-women Press, 1988.

*Evelyn Gettone*

## SETTEMBRINI, LUIGI (1813–1876)

Italian patriot and writer. Born in Naples, Settembrini took an active role in the movement for Italian unity. In 1851 the Bourbon regime condemned him as a conspirator, first to death, and then to prison. In 1859 he was helped to escape by his son, who diverted to Ireland the ship that was deporting him and others to America. He became an exile in England and then in Florence, where he continued to write and work for the cause. After the 1860 proclamation of the kingdom of