The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt: A Novelistic Approach to Decoding the Layers of Meaning in the "Pieced" Social Drama.

Louis Edward Myers
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/6951

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
THE NAMES PROJECT AIDS MEMORIAL QUILT:
A NOVELISTIC APPROACH TO DECODING THE LAYERS OF MEANING
IN THE "PIECED" SOCIAL DRAMA

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Speech Communication

by
Louis Edward Myers
B.A., Carson-Newman College, 1982
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1986
May, 1999
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother Dotsie L. Lewis-- January 13, 1898 - November 8, 1989. She not only taught me a great deal about quilting she taught me a great deal about life. It is because of her wisdom, encouragement, and the occasional “push” that I am where I am today. Even now, I am inspired by her memory. Thanks “Granny.”
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the individuals whose cooperation and guidance made the completion of this project possible. First, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Ruth Laurion Bowman, for her patience, wisdom, encouragement and faith. Next, I would like to thank Dr. Mary Frances HopKins for her invaluable suggestions and insight. I would also like to thank the other members of my committee, Dr. Andrew King, Dr. Frank deCaro, and Dr. Bill Harbin for their patience and support.

Special thanks are extended to Bob Ames, Jay N. Bonner, J. Michael Click, Barbara Coyle, Dorothy Durgin, Kathy French, Bruce Garner, Tricia Grindel, Laverne M. Haight, John P. Hilgeman, Garry Hodgson, Julia Jackson, Antoinette James, “James,” Donna Kohlbach, Larry Lehman, Don MacLeish, Penny O’Connor, Richard Smith, Rosemary Spatafora, and Roger E. Warnix for their participation in the project.

I would also like to thank my parents Clarence and Audrey Myers who have provided support throughout all facets of my educational experience. And to my Aunt Louise Lewis, I say thanks. Thanks is also extended to special friends Anita Newport, Jean Jackson, Jacque Burleson, Dr. Sheridan Barker, Glenn Cragwall, and Dr. John Lee Welton.
Finally, I would like to offer special thanks to a special person, Ron Hall, for the generous support and encouragement he offered. Perhaps he made the greatest contributions and sacrifices throughout the entire process.
Table of Contents

Dedication ............................................................................................................ ii

Acknowledgments ............................................................................................. iii

Abstract ............................................................................................................... vi

Chapter
  1  Introduction to the Study ................................................................. 1
  2  The AIDS Crisis as Social Drama. ..................................................... 28
  3  The Personal Context and Function of the AIDS Memorial Quilt. ........................................... 59
  4  The Social Context and Function of the AIDS Memorial Quilt ......................................................... 92
  5  The Political Context and Function of the AIDS Memorial Quilt. ................................................... 120
  6  The AIDS Memorial Quilt as "Novel" ............................................135

Works Cited .......................................................................................................156

Appendices
  A  Questionnaire and Confidential Release Form ...................... 164
  B  Research Questionnaires ............................................................. 168

Vita ................................................................................................................ 233

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Abstract

In this study, I focus on the AIDS crisis as a social drama, and evaluate the various functions the AIDS Memorial Quilt plays within that drama. Using Victor Turner’s concept of social drama I first discuss the breach, crisis, redression, and reintegration stages. I identify two fundamental breaches in the AIDS drama—the health breach and the moral/religious breach. As regards the crisis phase of the drama, I identify specific crisis performers and performances. Although many attempts were made at redression, I conclude that most attempts were not successful as redressive acts. Rather than “solve” or “set straight” particular issues within the AIDS drama, many performances returned the conflict to the crisis stage. I also conclude that the inability to redress the issue is not necessarily a sign of failure. By keeping the crisis rhetoric alive, it is difficult if not impossible for society to dismiss an unresolved conflict as resolved. Turner’s reintegration stage was not applicable to this study.

After identifying and analyzing the personal, social, and political functions of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, I draw on Bakhtin’s concept of “novel” to further theorize how the Quilt operates in this social drama. The shift in perspective re-directs focus from the social drama context to the more specific operations of the Quilt as a social aesthetic, a novel with multiple voices or languages, that is, also, reflective and reflexive of the social drama.
I conclude the Quilt offers us alternative ways we might address social
conflicts. For instance, the Quilt teaches us that individual participation and
creativity permits those involved in a conflict to become active agents while it also
infers that they are part of the social body that generated the conflict and the social
collective that can address and redress it.
Chapter One

Introduction to the Study

As a child, I was always fascinated with my grandmother’s love of quilting. For her, the quilt provided the necessary warmth for her children and eventually acted as a means of entertainment for her grandchildren. Each bit of cloth represented a narrative directly linked to the person who had worn, outgrown, and eventually discarded the garments from which my grandmother fashioned her “masterpiece.” She often sat with a quilt, a map of family history, pointing to each scrap and sharing its story with us. For my grandmother, the quilt was not only a work of art but a metaphor of her past.

Jesse Jackson took advantage of a patchwork quilt metaphor, at the 1984 Democratic National Convention, when he suggested, “America is not like a blanket-- one piece of unbroken cloth, the same color, the same texture, the same size. America is more like a quilt-- many textures, many colors, many sizes, all woven together by a common thread” (77). Jackson reminds his audience that, “Each patch adds a special nuance of color, texture, strength and utility to the combined fabric. And the sum of all the parts is infinitely more interesting and viable than each single component would be by itself” (Reyes 24). Perhaps Jackson would agree with Beth Gutcheon’s assertion that “American patchwork quilting [represents] a craft with a soul, engaging not only our eyes but also our
imagination and our sense of history” (10). Examining the quilt in its historical context allows an explication of not only the quilt’s cultural role as a practical craft but as an expressive craft as well.

Roach and others view the quilt as a “communicative expressive form or sign” that meets a variety of functions given the historical period and the culture in which it is or was created (Roach 55). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, “a whole culture grew up around the quilting craft. For most women quilting offered not only a release from the harsh life, but a means of self expression” (Brown, E. 34). For many early quilters, individual patches represented moments in a family’s life. They also were crafted to express one’s family history, as a medium of political expression, and as an icon of mourning.

In colonial America, death was one of the harsh realities of life and women often crafted quilts as a way to memorialize the deaths of loved ones. In the nineteenth century, too, women called on sewing and quilting as agencies of comfort in time of sorrow. After the death of a loved one, women often gathered scraps of the “dearly departed’s” clothing or other memorabilia and fashioned it into a patchwork quilt that would be preserved as a “keepsake” (Hall 82). This type of quilt was known as a memory quilt, and once completed it was used throughout the home, possibly as an adornment or an actual bed-covering, until the acceptable period of mourning had passed. Afterwards, the quilt became a filial
and communal marker that reminded visitors, in general, and the immediate family, more specifically, that the person had lived. Complete with the name, birth and death dates of the deceased, the memory quilt in the home was a cultural equivalent to the tombstone in the cemetery.

In the early 1970's, a significant number of women turned to quilting either to distract them from or, in some cases, to respond directly to the Vietnam War. In her study, Beth Gutcheon observes this phenomenon and speculates,

I can't help suspecting at least one reason that this particular American craft [quilting] surfaced at this peculiar point in American history. Our country, we all know, is suffering a crisis of the spirit. We have just completed a decade in which we waded deeper and deeper into an ignoble and humiliating War, in which we shot most of our heroes and some of our children, and we've regretted it, we've been saddened by it, we've apologized [until] we're tired. (21)

Gutcheon's speculation is interesting, since it suggests that, at this time, women called on quilting to express their individual grief as well as that of their contexting society.

On another level, the socialization or publication of memorials is not uncommon in U.S. culture. One only need look at the thousands of cemeteries that dot the American landscape, or the roadside markers along the Nation's roads, or the official memorials of Washington D.C., or the impromptu memorials in cities and towns of all sizes to note the significance of memory in American culture.
Americans are constantly looking for ways to mark the lives of their loved ones. Tombstones, in and of themselves, are no longer enough. Friends and family are now committed to making statements that not only invite but almost require perfect strangers to notice their loss.

In 1985, for example, mourners placed simple crosses on Highway 11E, in Jefferson City, Tennessee, to mark the spot where loved ones had died in an automobile accident. In Long Beach, California, mourners created a makeshift memorial in honor of a school crossing guard who was shot and killed in a drive-by shooting in 1986. Mementos such as pictures, stuffed animals, and flowers were placed on the sidewalk where she had died. And, in San Francisco in 1987, mourners determined to preserve the memory of loved ones, who had died of AIDS, adopted the American patchwork quilt as their medium of expression. Their efforts led to the establishment of the AIDS Memorial Quilt. The Quilt’s national debut was October 11, 1987, in front of the United States Capitol. At its unveiling, the Quilt consisted of over nineteen-hundred 6' x 3' “grave size” panels (Fuchs 408).

At the time of the display, the nation was moving into its sixth year of the AIDS crisis. Many Americans were still skeptical of the medical community and the information they offered about AIDS. Many still believed that the disease could be spread through casual contact while others held firm to the belief that
AIDS was a gay disease that posed no real threat to the straight community. Many Americans continued to ignore the AIDS crisis as the number of AIDS casualties grew dramatically. By 1987, “some 20,000 people in the United States and many tens of thousands more worldwide had died of AIDS” (International Display 5). Fueled by daily reports from the news media, mainstream America felt the disease was contained and posed no real threat. Altman, a reporter for The New York Times, asserted that most AIDS cases “… involved homosexual men who have multiple and frequent sexual partners” (20). Newsweek reporter Keerdoja referred to AIDS as the “Homosexual Plague” (10). And, Saturday Evening Post’s writer Vinecor suggested that “Being Gay is a Health Hazard” (26).

In addition to media attention, the leadership in gay communities contributed to the stereotype. Leaders in New York avoided the AIDS issue, suggesting that the epidemic was exaggerated, while their counterparts in San Francisco openly embraced the individuals whose lives had been altered by the epidemic. While the rest of the country looked for ways to isolate people with AIDS, San Franciscans searched for ways to aid those already affected by AIDS (Shilts 277).

Since information on the disease changed daily, it was difficult if not impossible to have a complete understanding of the disease (McKeever 10+). Therefore, the early years of the AIDS crisis were best characterized as a period of
misinformation in which the disease was publicized as a gay disease. As a result, many became passive if not apathetic as they assisted in the marginalization of the perceived target of the disease. It was due to the seeming indifference, on the part of the public in general and the government more specifically, that groups sought to bring attention to AIDS and its casualties.

Until the founding of the NAMES Project Foundation, most of the strategies for increasing AIDS awareness involved aggressive "sit ins," "die ins," and National "gay pride" marches. AIDS activist Larry Kramer, "reacting to an article in the New York Native that headlined '1, 112 and counting,'" wrote in 1983, "'if this article doesn't scare the shit out of you we're in real trouble. If this article doesn't rouse you to anger, fury, rage, and action, gay men may have no future on this earth'" (quoted in Shilts 244). Kramer reiterated his message of activism when he told an audience at New York's Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center that, "'Two thirds of the people in this room could be dead within five years'" (quoted in Zonana 42).

Kramer viewed activism fueled by anger as the appropriate response to an inactive government that, in his opinion, was unwilling to treat the disease or to curtail the stigma associated with it. Kramer's call for action led to the establishment of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) in 1987. The organization focused on fighting the disease through protest. Kramer states,
"We’re not here to make friends, we’re here to raise the issues. We are an activist organization, and activism is fueled by anger, so people should not be surprised when anger erupts in ways that not everyone approves of" (Interview 135). With Larry Kramer at the helm, ACT UP became identified as the militant group involved in the AIDS struggle.

The NAMES Project Foundation, which sponsors the AIDS Memorial Quilt, also was founded in 1987. Since its inception, the Foundation’s three fold mission has been “to illustrate the enormity of the AIDS epidemic by showing the humanity behind the statistics, to provide a positive and creative means of expression for those whose lives have been touched by the epidemic, and to raise vital funds and encourage support for people with HIV/AIDS and their loved ones” (Display 3).

The fifty-three NAMES Project Chapters, representing twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia, encourage panel makers to “follow the traditions of old-fashioned sewing and quilting bees, and include friends, family and co-workers [in the creation process]” (International Display 34). Anyone may create a panel and there is no limit to the number of panels that may be dedicated to a single individual. People become involved in the NAMES Project for a variety of reasons. Some enjoy the solace of the creating process, others want to guarantee
that their loved ones are not forgotten, and still others are committed to creating or contributing to the political voice that is inherent to the Quilt.

Julia Jackson, describing the panel she created for her son Dennie Mike, writes, "My panel is simple, it says to me just how much I love and miss my son so very much. It says to others that there is a face to AIDS, a person that once loved life, and was too young to die . . . . Love people with AIDS they cannot hurt you" (2; emphasis in original). This mother, while speaking on behalf of her own son, calls for an action of compassion and understanding. Roger Warnix created panels for Jim Hull, Val Martin, and Douglas M. Cooper because "these were friends. Jim was my lover for a period of time. We were all very close and it was a tremendous healing process for me" (2). And, J. Michael Click, who created a panel for his longtime companion Kevin E. Young, writes that he created the panel to "Make a permanent record of his name in lieu of a tombstone; to release some of the grief I felt; to document our relationship; to make a ‘statement’ about love, AIDS, and loss" (2).

The NAMES Project Foundation’s choice of the patchwork quilt, as an icon of mourning, calls upon a rich tradition as it offers individuals a site for expressing their grief. "From the beginning, Cleve Jones, co-founder of the Quilt has said, ‘We very deliberately adopted a symbol and a vocabulary that would not be threatening to nongay people. . . . We mobilize heterosexuals; we mobilize the
families that have been afflicted’” (quoted in Hawkins 776). Others involved in the AIDS crisis, however, do not echo the words of Jones and others who suggest that the Quilt has a place in the struggle.

For example, Rick Rose, a free-lance writer for The Advocate argues, “Among its accomplishments the NAMES Project boasts that over $1 million has been raised and distributed because of the quilt. Countless people have seen the quilt and been moved by it. Thousands of volunteers have given valuable time to all aspects of the quilt. But I still object to its continuance” (6). Rose’s primary argument is that monies generated by the Quilt would be better spent elsewhere. He states, “While other AIDS organizations are struggling to weather the shortages of staff, resources and volunteers, it somehow seems absurd that people who are willing to volunteer their time to the AIDS epidemic are spending their time rolling and unrolling a quilt” (6).

Rose’s argument focuses on the needs of the literal victims of AIDS. Others recognize the significance of the Quilt for those who are left to mourn the victims. According to Weinberg, “some in the AIDS activist movement question the ultimate value of the quilt for the living. For them, the work involved in the making and display of the panels is passive, deflecting time and attention from direct political action” (39). Hawkins notes,
Despite its oft-noted "likability," the NAMES Project has been taken to task for not covering all the needs of AIDS. Some survivors do not join the project either because of their own alienation from its "America" or because they respect the real or imagined wishes of the dead. For others it is too sanitized to do justice to the gay reality, too male to represent the growing numbers of women and children who are not finding quilters, too tied to Castro street to appeal to other inner-city populations. (779)

Weinberg answers these critics best when he writes, "the quilt is a form of direct action and . . . there must be a place for mourning within activism" (39). Garry Hodgson, who lost his brother Sten, notes the dual function of the quilt as both locus for mourning and as a catalyst for activism:

I think that making the panel was very cathartic for all of us, and participating in the Washington exhibit was tremendously helpful in our learning to deal with this. Several of our family have become active in volunteer work, e.g. volunteering at the Rutgers display, delivering meals to AIDS patients, etc. This has been very satisfying, and helps overcome the sense of helplessness we've dealt with during the years of Sten's illness. We were unable, ultimately, to save Sten, but perhaps we can save someone else. (2)

Based on examples like these, it is apparent that the Quilt serves a necessary role for those individuals coping with the loss of a loved one to AIDS.

The San Francisco based NAMES Project Foundation has used the quilt tradition to fulfill various needs. The Quilt offers a personal experience for those individuals who want to construct a memorial for loved ones. It offers a social element that encourages groups to come together and share their grief. And, even though the Founders of the NAMES Project state that their primary focus has
never been political, theatre critic Elinor Fuchs asserts "the quilt is itself politics, a masterpiece of grass roots community organizing and a focus for further organizing wherever it appears" (408).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to present the AIDS crisis as an example of social drama and to interpret and evaluate the role of the Quilt within that drama. Within a social drama, there are four phases: breach, crisis, redression, and reintegration or recognition of irreparable schism. In this study, the fourth phase does not apply. However, through examination of the other three phases, it becomes apparent that the Quilt functions on various personal, social and political levels.

**Social Drama**

Victor Turner's concept of social drama is based on an understanding that societies are not fixed or stable entities, rather they move and change due to social conflicts. A social drama, then, represents "units of aharmonic or disharmonic social process, arising in conflict situations" (On the Edge 180). "These situations -- arguments, combats, rites of passage -- are inherently dramatic because participants not only do things, they try to show others what they are doing or have done; actions take on a 'performed for audience' aspect" (On the Edge 180). Turner uses this performance aspect of social drama of which, breach, crisis,
redression, and reintegration or legitimation of an irreparable schism are the primary components (On the Edge 180).

Breach is concerned with the violation or intentional neglect of a stated or implied social rule, law, norm, more, or belief. For Turner, then, the breach is a point of separation in which an action or circumstance distances individuals or groups from each other (On the Edge 180). As I discuss throughout the study and in light of Turner’s understanding of breach, there are at least two major breaches that impact and contribute to how the AIDS drama plays out.

The stage of crisis encompasses the time during social conflict when there is a “tendency for the breach to widen.” It is during this stage of the conflict that opposing groups and ideologies begin to emerge and make known, through performance, their views (Turner, On the Edge 180). Multiple parties emerge with multiple rhetorics that are aimed at recruiting individuals and groups to their side.

Redression represents a phase of action or reaction “ranging from personal advice and informal meditation or arbitration to formal juridical and legal machinery . . . [that] furnishes a distanced replication and critique of the events leading up to and composing the crisis (Turner, On the Edge 180). Questions of motivation rise within the redressive stage. By determining whether or not the players are acting in the indicative (the way things are) or the subjunctive (the way things ought to be), it becomes apparent if the opposing groups have realistic
views of the crisis (Turner, *Anthropology* 41). As such, the opposing parties mediate crisis and reflex on their own and each other’s rhetoric.

In this drama, crisis and redressive functions blur. Although certain acts are clearly redressive in intent, they prove to operate as crisis rhetoric. Sometimes this re-articulation of a side taken is productive insofar as the crisis rhetoric keeps alive the dialogue concerning the AIDS epidemic. Hence, the crisis rhetoric makes us aware of opposing views while it also prevents us from dismissing the drama as solved.

The final stage, in Turner’s concept of social drama, involves the “reintegration of the disturbed social group, or of the social recognition and legitimation of irreparable schism between the contesting parties” (Turner, *On the Edge* 180). In the latter case, one or some of the contesting parties are removed from society, as is the case when defendants are found guilty of a crime and are incarcerated. However, many social dramas are not solved by the redressive attempts and the drama returns to the crisis stage.

Turner’s theory of social drama is particularly useful to this study because it encourages a reading of the Quilt as something more than a passive cultural artifact or folk object. It allows a critical examination of the Quilt as a part of an active conflict. And, since Turner makes no attempt to separate aesthetic
processes from social processes, the Quilt can be viewed as a direct critique of AIDS and how we as a culture are handling it.

Individuals become involved in the quilting process for a variety of reasons. Those who wish to work through their grief personally, socially, or politically utilize the Quilt as a site of performance where individual voices and agendas are permitted.

Most individuals are drawn to the AIDS Memorial Quilt as a part of their personal grieving. The Quilt offers a medium that allows them to literally work through their grief as they fashion a symbolic representation of life. Within this context, contemporary mourners, like their ancestors, turn to needle and thread to "honor life" (Dawidoff 155). Many contributors fashion their panels in the privacy of their own homes, but the option of going public with their mourning is always possible. The grieving becomes public when the individual either turns to one of fifty-three local NAMES Project Chapters for assistance in completing the panel or submits his panel for inclusion in the larger Quilt.

An individual's choice to go public with her grief enables her to come into contact with others who share her pain. It is within this context that individuals begin to build a social unit with a unified vision. For many, remembering their loved ones is just the beginning. They want more. They want perfect strangers to know their pain, to share their loss, to simply understand. "James" created a panel
for “David,” his lover of ten years because, “He was a history buff. He is now a part of the history of ‘The Quilt.’ I did that for him, to become a powerful historical mark.” He continues, “People get it when they see it. They change in some way for the better” (James 2). If James is correct, then the perceived passive folk object has, within it, the power of remembrance and the potential to transform those who view it as well as those who contribute a panel to it.

Still others become involved in the process to enhance the Quilt’s political voice. One panel shows the extended arm of a PWA (person with AIDS) as he/she attempts to ascend the ladder toward cure only to be met by the knife wielding hand of then President Ronald Reagan. Panels like this are created in an effort to challenge those who have power within the “official culture” of our society, and in essence they strengthen the political voice of the quilt.

Over twelve million people have visited the Quilt and with each visit comes stories of dramatic transformations that are directly attributed to the quilt. Julie, “a very concerned teenager,” writes, “I’m a fourteen year old girl from a very small town in Pennsylvania. I saw the Quilt in Wilkes University in Wilkes-Barre. It changed my life” (Julie 1). Julie’s account is not an isolated one. Robert Dawidoff asserts that the true transformation comes from experiencing the Quilt with the “human community” (159). Thus, the audience becomes a part of the performance as they are impacted by and impact those who are around them.
The communication context in which the Quilt is displayed is significant in how the Quilt is read.

In summary, social drama theory offers a way to analyze the AIDS crisis as an on-going social phenomenon. The drama includes many different players who perform for many different reasons, drawing on many different rhetorical strategies. These characteristics suggest an understanding of the Quilt as a performance event that is, in Bakhtin's terms, novelistic.

Methodology

Since 1987, the AIDS Memorial Quilt has served as a significant cultural performance that has chronicled the AIDS epidemic. Within its fabric, a spectator will find narratives of the young and old, black and white, male and female, straight and gay. Much like a cemetery, the memorial has the potential to mark the lives of those claimed by the disease, but the Quilt does more than that. In order to analyze the multiple functions of the Quilt, I draw on Turner's concept of social drama, as identified above, as my primary methodology. That is to say, social drama theory is both my method and a key component of my subject. By viewing the AIDS crisis as a social drama, I understand the participants as social actors who perform in a variety of ways for a variety of reasons.

Bauman defines performance as "a mode of communication behavior and a type of communicative event [that] . . . usually suggests an aesthetically marked
and heightened mode of communication, framed in a special way, and put on
display for an audience” (41). In this study, there is clear evidence of
“heightened” modes of communication. Through the creation and display of
symbolic panels, panel makers perform their memorial to a loved one and also
express their grief for an audience. The ritual surrounding the public display of the
Quilt attempts to engage viewers in and as a part of the social drama. And, the
crisis rhetoric used by different and opposing parties shows deliberate side-taking
and allows the emergence of opposing views. Turner expands on Bauman’s
definition when he observes that performance is not

unidirectional and “positive” in the sense that the performative
genre merely “reflects” or “expresses” the social system or the
cultural configuration, or at any rate their key relationship—in
the sense that performance is often a critique, direct or veiled,
of the social life it grows out of, an evaluation (with lively
possibilities of rejection) of the way society handles history.
(Anthropology 22; emphasis in the original).

Turner’s definition, like Bauman’s, presents performance as an interactive form
that encourages if not requires response. It is through performance that people
attempt to interpret, evaluate, and even redress the circumstances that lead to and
comprise the crisis stage of the social drama.

The AIDS Memorial Quilt is a “living” memorial that chronicles the AIDS
epidemic, and is constantly in the process of “becoming.” Granted, we can mark
the beginning of the memorial but the end is nowhere in sight. This sense of
"living," a beginning without a temporal conclusion, enables the Quilt to be viewed as "novel."

M.M. Bakhtin, in *The Dialogic Imagination*, contrasts "novel" or novelistic discourse with the "epic" mode. The epic mode, he asserts, is a "finished" product that "valorizes" an "absolute past" (Bakhtin 15). The focus becomes historical in that it only considers "beginnings" and "peak times" in a "national history" (Bakhtin 13). There is no interaction and, in fact, the epic approach "separates the epic world from contemporary reality, that is, from the time in which the singer (the author and his audience) lives" (Bakhtin 13). The "novel," on the other hand, resists the "absolute past" by "reflect[ing] the tendencies of a new world still in the making" (Bakhtin 97). It is continually in process and resists "well-defined generic contours" (Bakhtin 4) because it characteristically calls upon, analyzes and critiques past, present, and future; official and unofficial; individual and social modes of discourse. In effect, the "novel" opens rather than "fixes" the temporal frame allowing "maximal contact with the present (with contemporary reality) in all its openendness" (Bakhtin 11).

To decode the Quilt in terms of its imbedded voices and discourses I also draw on M. M. Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia. Heteroglossia is most commonly defined as a "multiplicity of social voices" (Bakhtin 63) contained within a text which include "professional jargons, generic languages, languages of
generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific socio-political purposes of the day even of the hour" (Bakhtin 263). For Bakhtin, voice refers to the speaking personality, or speaking consciousness, that always has a will or desire behind it. “Bakhtin identifies infinitely shifting heteroglottal strata made up of loosely bound generic wholes, subgeneric wholes, accents, social systems, dialects and constantly fragmented layers of language working together, or at battle or at play” (Hoy 765).

In Chapter Six, I draw on Bakhtin’s concepts of novel discourse and heteroglossia to read, interpret, and analyze the Quilt as a social aesthetic that includes within it many voices or discourses. These voices may be found within individual panels, between panels, or as a part of the Quilt as a whole. The Quilt not only acts as a powerful voice, in and of itself, it also assumes and responds to the voices of opposing groups. From this stand-point, it becomes apparent that there are meta-levels of performance activity.

For example, the concept of heteroglossia is useful in reading the Quilt since there may be a dialogue, even a conflict, between the different languages and language styles the creator/author draws on to construct the panel. Additionally, the author’s voice may not only illuminate the voice of the person represented within the panel but also compete with or even contradict it. The possible
contradiction of voices is what makes some critics uncomfortable with the Quilt. Mohr, for example, suggests that "Lies of omission abound. A panel for an acquaintance of mine reported that he helped found a gay organization and that he liked Broadway musicals. This is true enough, but what he loved was to eat shit and get beaten up." Mohr continues, "Sex is bleached right out of the Quilt, although sex was what was most distinctive of so many of the dead" (Mohr 121). Although there are panels within the Quilt that feature the sexual practices of specific individuals, as Mohr asserts, most panels make no sexual statement whatsoever. The Quilt provides a forum that allows a frank discussion of sexuality but it does not require it. It permits those who may not wish to visualize the sexual practices of their loved ones (perhaps they are not even aware of them), to become involved with the AIDS Memorial Quilt. Multiple voices emerge that compliment and contradict each other, while they also conserve, subvert or question the voices and discourses of mainstream culture. A mother's voice, for example, conserves mainstream traditions, values and discourses, whereas the voice of the gay lover tends to be perceived by some as subverting those same values. It is the juxtaposition of multiple social voices that gives the Quilt its cultural dynamic and appeal.

The Quilt is a living entity that is continually in the process of inventing itself, and novel discourse and heteroglossia prove beneficial to an analysis of it.
because these concepts allow the voices of the deceased, the individual panel makers, and the collective discourses of the Quilt to emerge as significant components of the past, present, and future. Some critics make the mistake of looking for or imposing a single interpretation of the Quilt. Others attempt to rob the Quilt of its meaning altogether. Mohr, for example, asserts, “There is no social story here to read or tell. The panels do not together make a picture. Collectively, they have no meaning” (111). Understanding the Quilt as a heteroglot, however, suggests that there are in fact a myriad of voices and discourses that do have meaning individually, as Mohr claims, but also “en masse.” Separately and collectively, the panels are a story, a novel, about AIDS and how we as a culture are handling it.

**Significance of the Study**

In the twelve years since its inception, the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt has moved from a position of relative obscurity to a position of social and cultural prominence. Many and diverse people are now exposed to the Quilt as it travels into neighborhoods, towns and communities across the U.S. Through intimate displays in churches and schools, a new generation of viewers is experiencing the Quilt first hand. Many report dramatic transformations that come as a result of their participating in and/or viewing the Quilt. It is the Quilt’s ability to function on the personal, social, and political levels as well as its ability to
mobilize its viewers that make it worthy of study. To date, relatively few researchers have examined the Quilt and its social-cultural significance.

Mary Rose Williams was one of the first researchers to analyze the AIDS Memorial Quilt. In her dissertation, she presents quilts, in general, as a non-traditional example of protest rhetoric. She concludes that quilts as protest rhetoric are characterized by four major features: “depiction of the dominant system as positive; establishment of common grounds between rhetors and the system; lack of credibility of rhetors; and ambiguity” (Dissertation Abstract).

Kistenberg argues for an expanded definition of performance that moves beyond traditional or conventional theatre to include the demonstrations of ACT UP and the AIDS Memorial Quilt. Sturken does a comparative analysis of the Vietnam Memorial and the AIDS Memorial Quilt in which she focuses on the tensions that exist between personal and cultural memory and how it is handled in the media. Mindel offers a comparative analysis of the demonstrations of ACT UP and the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. She concludes that the radical nature of ACT UP allows the Quilt to be “viewed as mainstream” and therefore more “palatable” to the official culture (Dissertation Abstract). Krouse analyzes the Quilt as a “gift” that “contradicts the condemning images of gays and people with AIDS that are promoted in the dominant culture.” She also suggests that the “Quilt reweaves gays back into the fabric” (Dissertation Abstract). Finally,
Lawlor explores the behavior modification of volunteers versus visitors at displays of the AIDS Memorial Quilt. He concludes that volunteers at displays of the quilt are more motivated by "altruistic concerns" than by "egocentric concerns" (Dissertation Abstract).

Much of the research up to this point attempts to reduce the Quilt to a single type of rhetoric; to suggest that the Quilt is finished and therefore its function can be finitely determined. Others study the Quilt through comparison. Granted, the Quilt is an example of all those things studied above. But, in this study, I consider the multiple functions and rhetorics. And, in light of context, it becomes apparent that the site of performance has a profound influence on the emerging rhetorics and its functions. Secondly, I question the findings of Krouse who claims that the Quilt "weaves" gays back into the dominant culture. In light of Turner's theory of social drama, I argue that since the AIDS conflict is yet unsolved it is too early to conclude that reintegration of the many parties has occurred or will occur. Finally, I resist the impulse to define the Quilt through comparison. Current research that compares the Quilt to ACT UP, as does Mindel, and the Vietnam Memorial, as does Sturken, tends to generalize the impact of the Quilt. In these comparison based studies, the Quilt is perceived as being a soft, effeminate, or palatable form of discourse that is more mainstream than the more disruptive acts and agencies that address the AIDS crisis. These interpretations lead to false
assumptions that the Quilt is purely a passive form of discourse that is welcomed wherever it appears. I argue that, when viewed as a novelistic text or performance, the Quilt is particularly aggressive in its ability to continually reinvent itself as it reflects and reflexes on past, present, and future trends in the AIDS crisis. The understanding of the Quilt as a social drama and a novel text, as presented by Turner and Bakhtin, establish the Quilt as a significant cultural performance that deserves to be studied on its own merits.

In this study, I show how the Quilt transcends some of the commonplace or conventional ways that critical redression is usually expressed or performed in our society. Also, I establish the Quilt as both a crisis rhetoric and a site of redression where individual catharsis, social ritual, and political protest merge and interact. By using the Quilt as a medium of individual, social, and political expression, the founders redefine how social conflicts might be addressed and potentially redressed. Also, because the Quilt is an interactive site of performance it permits others to use it as well. As such, the Quilt suggests ways we might perform in response to other social conflicts.

The study is significant, then, because it uses a method of analysis that allows access to this concrete act and symbolic novel. By using theories that permit the Quilt to be an active and incomplete process with multiple voices, discourses, and performances, the Quilt claims significant social-aesthetic
response(s) to the AIDS conflict. As a result, the study offers insight into what kind of story it is we have told and are telling ourselves about ourselves, about AIDS, and about our society.

Chapter Two
"The AIDS Crisis as Social Drama"

In Chapter Two, I establish and analyze the AIDS crisis as a relevant social drama. By applying Turner's phases of breach, crisis, and redression, I isolate specific individual and group performers who play significant roles within the drama. The principle players that impact the AIDS drama include, the scientific and medical communities, the Religious Right, Presidents Reagan and Bush, the gay community, and AIDS victims and mourners. An examination of each groups' rhetorical strategies are identified and further analyzed in subsequent chapters. Lastly, I position the AIDS Memorial Quilt as a strong rhetorical agency within the drama.

Chapter Three
"The Personal Context and Function of the AIDS Memorial Quilt"

In Chapter Three, I first examine the historical tradition of quilts and quilting as it pertains to personal functions. I then discuss how the Quilt functions on a personal and individual level. To unpack this personal function, I review an ethnographic-based survey I conducted so as to collect first-hand responses from panel makers. In this chapter I review the responses and the narratives that the
panel makers “tell” in the panels they crafted. I then analyze the “experienced” social drama and its functions as reflected in the contributors responses. This process provides insight into the personal function of the Quilt.

Chapter Four
“The Social Context and Function of the AIDS Memorial Quilt”

In Chapter Four, I examine the historical tradition of quilts and quilting as it relates to social functions. Then, I discuss the NAMES Project’s understanding of its mission as both personal and social. I examine the issues that panel makers confront knowing that their panel will be publicized when incorporated into the larger Quilt and put on display. I describe and analyze the socializing function of the Quilt when it is put on public display. Lastly, I consider how the Quilt creates a social discourse that, in turn, responds to and critiques other social discourses.

Chapter Five
“The Political Context and Function of the AIDS Memorial Quilt”

In Chapter Five, I examined the historical tradition of quilts as a medium for political expression. I then discuss how the AIDS Memorial Quilt embraces the political tradition and function in various ways and in light of changing social-political contexts.
Chapter Six
The AIDS Memorial Quilt as “Novel”

In Chapter Six, I draw upon Bakhtin to establish the AIDS Memorial Quilt as a novel text. I decode the social languages that are evident within panels, between panels, and within the Quilt as a whole. I then discuss how the Quilt novelizes the discourses of funerals, of quilting, and of memorials to fulfill its own purposes. I consider the significance of the “story” or “novel” told by the Quilt, and what it tells us about how we deal with social conflicts and cultural rituals such as funerals.
Chapter Two

The AIDS Crisis as Social Drama

It was on July 3, 1981, that the disease that we now know as AIDS was first made public in and by the press. New York Times journalist Lawrence K. Altman headlined the premiere article, "Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals," and went on to report that there was "no apparent danger to nonhomosexuals from the contagion, since, according to Altman's sources, "no cases had been reported to date outside the homosexual community or in women" (A20). Altman's article, like many others that followed, identified the disease as one that had as its primary target gay men twenty-five to fifty years in age. An examination of the Reader's Guide supports that, in 1981-1982, most mainstream publications referenced "gays" or "homosexuals" in their headlines regarding the disease. According to Sills, misinformation in the press generated social apathy in the public at large because the heterosexual and female population understood the disease as isolated from themselves (133). It appeared that AIDS only attacked homosexuals and, as such, there was little incentive for those outside the targeted group to be concerned. Public apathy was apparent when, in 1983, a Gallup Poll conducted by Newsweek asked participants, "Have you worried the AIDS virus will spread to the general population?" And, sixty percent of those polled replied that they "[hadn't] thought about it" ("Gay America" 33). Misunderstanding of the disease

28
in the scientific and medical communities led to misinformation in the press which, in turn, affected perceptions of the disease. As the U.S. entered the era of the "gay plague" as it was dubbed in 1982 by New York reporter M. VerMeulen (52), most individuals felt removed from the reality of the disease and as a result were not inclined to pay much attention to it or its victims.

It was not until October 2, 1985, when Rock Hudson died of AIDS, that many U.S. citizens began to realize the scope of the disease. Kinsella asserted that "[Rock Hudson’s] illness and death are the single most significant factors affecting public awareness about the disease to date" (266). Likewise, Randy Shilts argues, "Rock Hudson riveted America’s attention upon the deadly new threat for the first time, and his diagnosis became a demarcation that would separate the history of America before AIDS from the history that came after" (xxi). Because of his celebrity as an actor, and his widespread appeal, Rock Hudson emerged as the first victim of AIDS with universal recognition (Shilts 578). Everyone (i.e., the public) now knew someone who had battled the disease and lost. However, Hudson’s death did not dispel the perception that AIDS was a gay disease. As U.S. audiences were informed of Hudson’s death they also were informed that, like other victims of AIDS, Hudson was gay.

Because it attacked gay men first in the United States, AIDS was constructed as a gay disease that posed no real threat to the straight community.
As AIDS statistics began to rise, however, it became clear that the disease was striking victims who were not gay. Hemophiliacs and IV drug users were soon identified as victims of the disease. In 1985, Dr. Bejan, of New York's Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, warned, "The data you hear on heterosexual infection is exactly what we were hearing in '81 on homosexuals. You have very few heterosexuals coming down with the disease, but in the coming years the numbers will grow. It's already happening" (quoted in McKeever 18). Dr. Bejan's predictions were substantiated when, by the end of 1985, forty percent of all new AIDS cases were identified among heterosexuals (McKeever 18).

By 1985, AIDS was no longer being publicized as a predominantly gay disease but, as with any significant epidemic, a process of scapegoating had already occurred that would carry over from the initial stages of the crisis. As increased numbers of heterosexuals contracted the disease, gays were no longer publicized as the primary targets of the disease. Rather, they were scapegoated as the group responsible for introducing AIDS into the U.S. (Sills 133+). Individuals and groups began to "take sides," or position themselves in relation to the AIDS controversy, many in an attempt to make some "other" responsible for the crisis or the handling of it. A drama began to unfold with multiple heros, villains and victims, and a final act that is yet to be written.
The purpose of this chapter is to establish and analyze the AIDS crisis as a relevant social drama and to examine the AIDS Memorial Quilt as a viable crisis rhetoric and, at certain levels, a redressive act. Victor Turner defines social drama as "units of aharmonic or disharmonic social process, arising in conflict situations. . . . These situations—arguments, combats, rites of passage—are inherently dramatic because participants not only do things, they try to show others what they are doing or have done; actions take on a ‘performed for audience’ aspect" (On the Edge 180). Turner uses this performance aspect of social conflict to develop a theory of social drama of which breach, crisis, redress, and reintegration or legitimation of an irreparable schism are the primary components (On the Edge 180).

**Breach**

Turner defines breach as the violation or intentional neglect of a stated or implied social rule, law, more, or belief. For Turner, then, the breach is a point of separation in which an action or circumstance polarizes individuals and/or groups (On the Edge 180). In the AIDS social drama, there is a two-fold breach that leads the community to crisis. The primary breach, a health breach, is the disease itself. The primary breach exposes a secondary breach, a moral breach, regarding disparate views on homosexuality.

Prior to 1981, when AIDS was discussed or at least made public, a perceived moral breach regarding the “abnormal” or “aberrant” lifestyle of
homosexuals was being played out in U.S. society and culture. The Gay Almanac traces this perception and its repercussions, in the U.S., back to 1610 when the Virginia Colony established sodomy laws. Those who violated the laws were put to death (6). For almost four centuries, the perception that homosexuality was a violation of social norms, not to mention state laws, has resulted in gays not publicizing their view or position, at least not until recently. They remained under cover, “in the closet,” so to speak. In 1969, however, a group of gays in New York City decided to fight back when police raided a popular gay night spot, The Stonewall Bar. This single event in gay history is characterized as “the birth of the modern gay and lesbian movement— that moment in time when gays recognized all at once their mistreatment and their solidarity” (Duberman xv). A myriad of journalists in publications noted that this event encouraged a degree of solidarity within the gay communities, while they also predicted that opposition to the “gay movement” would be fierce. And this prediction proved accurate. As gay groups united to ensure that their voice and view be heard as a part of U.S. society and culture, other groups became united in developing a rhetoric against them.

In 1977, Anita Bryant emerged as one of the fiercest opponents of the gay movement. At a revival meeting at Northside Baptist Church in Miami, Florida, Bryant’s pastor told her “of a law being considered by the city-county council that
would include homosexuals in the civil rights code. The preacher said he’d burn the church down before he let homosexuals teach in the church school” (Young 42). In apparent agreement with her pastor, Anita Bryant “led the crusade to repeal the Miami ordinance banning discrimination against homosexuals in housing and employment” (Young 42). Because Bryant was considered a popular entertainer at that time, she attracted and used the media to publicize her crusade against homosexuals in general, and the Miami ordinance in particular.

According to Young, “because of her credibility as an entertainer, reporters knew she was far more interesting than a boring bunch of authoritative sources” (43), and they (the press) flocked to document her crusade. Bryant’s rhetoric was carefully crafted to create fear in the minds of her listeners. Her primary message was “‘protect our children’” against homosexuals. Her argument was that “‘homosexuals can’t reproduce so they recruit’” (quoted in Young 42). “The word ‘recruit’ then became a euphemism for sexual abuse and child molestation” (Young 42). In one 1977 advertisement, Bryant stated, “‘The Los Angeles Police Department recently reported that 25,000 boys seventeen years or younger in that city alone had been recruited into a homosexual ring to provide sex for adult male customers’” (quoted in Young 46). Although Bryant’s allegations proved to be false, she never recanted them.
Many individuals and groups heeded Bryant’s warnings and initiated crusades of their own. Revitalized by her message, the Ku Klux Klan, “called for the death penalty for homosexuals” (Young 45). And, in most parts of Miami, the final vote on the ordinance showed overwhelming support for Anita Bryant’s campaign (Young 47). Her message not only operated to overturn the discrimination ordinance of Miami but also encouraged legislatures in a dozen states either to stop pending homosexual rights bills or to “enact laws that further restricted the rights of homosexuals” (Young 45).

Bryant used her celebrity, the media, and her anti-homosexual rhetoric to overturn the Miami ordinance. Her heavy reliance on the media turned a local controversy into a national debate. According to Ide, “[Bryant’s] campaign organized the social hatred of the Christian Right, fostering a campaign based on social stereotypes: ‘Homosexuals cannot reproduce so they must recruit. And, to freshen their ranks they must recruit the youth of America,’” (quoted in Ide, *Evangelical* 9). Bryant’s anti-gay rhetoric also received accolades from the 1977 delegates to the Southern Baptist Convention. Although not all religious groups were persuaded by Bryant’s Christian-based appeal (in fact, the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universalists Association came out in support of civil rights for homosexuals), her campaign gave birth to three distinct religious
organizations that, like Bryant, advanced homosexuality as a fearsome threat to the “American family” (Goss 201+).

In 1979, The Christian Voice, the Moral Majority, and The Religious Roundtable were organized. All three groups boasted anti-gay rhetoric as a part of their respective agendas. Drawing on scripture for support, the groups played upon the fears of their audiences to advance their anti-gay message. Like Bryant, these groups not only discussed homosexuality in terms of morality but also portrayed homosexuals as individuals that were actively recruiting the youth of America.

The Christian Voice, founded in early 1979, had strong alliances with smaller anti-gay, anti-pornography, and pro-family groups on the West Coast (Snowball 43). “In 1980 the Voice made headlines with its endorsements of specific candidates, its infamous Morality Report Cards on legislators, and its tactic of mailing complete campaign strategies to assorted electoral challengers” (Snowball 43). With a membership of approximately 150,000, the group attempted to blur the lines that separate church and state by actively working to manipulate political agendas. In 1979, the Christian Voice opened a Washington office and solicited endorsements for New Right legislators, such as Senators Gordon Humphrey, Roger Jepsen, and Orrin Hatch. This was the only group of the three Christian groups that actually endorsed specific political candidates.
The Moral Majority was founded in June of 1979. The aim of this group was “to mobilize a great mass of disaffected conservatives” in an effort to “educate people about issues of [spiritual] importance and to influence the legislative process by registering conservative voters and lobbying legislators” (Snowball 62). Membership estimates of the Moral Majority ranged from 250,000 to 8 million. The rhetoric of the Moral Majority was “intolerant and pragmatic,” and focused on issues of “national security, school prayer, abortion, and homosexuality” (Snowball 94). The Moral Majority used its anti-gay rhetoric to warn that homosexuality was a fundamental threat to American families. Homosexuality was viewed as “general moral decrepitude” (Snowball 99).

In September of 1979, The Religious Roundtable was established “as a way of reaching those clergymen who might be uncomfortable with the high profile of the Christian Voice and the mass orientation of the Moral Majority” (Snowball 43). This group made its agendas known by sponsoring elaborate mailings and conferences that “were designed to help [the membership] understand political issues and activism” (Snowball 43).

One of the most significant conferences sponsored by the Religious Roundtable was a “National Affairs Briefing” held in Dallas, Texas, in August of 1980 (Snowball 43). “The briefing attracted thousands of conservatives and was addressed by every major figure in the new right, including Jerry Falwell, James...
Robison, Pat Robertson, Ronald Reagan, Phyllis Schafly, Paul Weyrick, Howard Phillips, and Timothy LaHaye” (Snowball 43). It was at this conference that “then presidential candidate" Ronald Reagan admitted, “I know that you can’t endorse me but I endorse you”” (quoted in Snowball 43). This statement by Ronald Reagan foreshadowed the influence that the New Christian Right would have on the Reagan Presidency. It announced a breakage in the line that, according to the Constitution, is to separate state policies from church views and values. According to Ide, this union between Reagan and the New Christian Right not only encouraged religious intolerance but indicated a “new” political intolerance as well (Evangelical xviii).

As a result of the high profile, anti-gay campaigns, such as Anita Bryant’s, organizations such as, The Christian Voice, The Moral Majority, and The Religious Roundtable, a moral/religious breach was firmly established in U.S. society that informed what the public understood to be the breach in the AIDS social drama. The rhetoric of these groups and the individuals who represented them advanced homosexuality as abhorrent and a fundamental threat to the “American family.” As a result, when the primary breach was publicized (i.e., homosexuals are dying from a disease), the secondary breach (i.e., homosexuals violate social norms), affected how the disease was perceived and acted on. Perceived not as a disease but as a gay disease, AIDS was not only mis-reported
but mis-cast, by many, as a just affliction for "aberrant" behavior. If the primary breach unintentionally divided the public in terms of who was and was not at risk, the secondary breach was deliberately "worked on" to advance agendas that removed focus from the biological fact of the disease to moral issues regarding the lifestyles of the victims.

**Crisis**

During the crisis stage of a social drama there is a tendency for the breach to widen "because it is during this stage that opposing groups and ideologies emerge and make their positions known (Turner, *On the Edge* 180). In response to the publicized breach, Turner notes "people take sides, or rather are in the process of being induced, seduced, cajoled, nudged, or threatened to take sides by those who confront one another across the revealed breach as prime antagonists" (*Anthropology* 34). The U.S. response to the publicized breach in the AIDS social drama resulted in a misunderstanding of the disease.

According to Sills, "Dominant beliefs, cultural values, and social expectations shape the manner in which diseases are viewed over time. In this sense, diseases, like AIDS, can be said to be 'socially constructed'" (123). Fee supports Sills' claim when she asserts, "Our social, political, religious, and moral conceptions influence our perceptions of disease, just as do different scientific and medical theories" (121). Because of the process for publicizing AIDS in the U.S.
and the stigma associated with homosexuality at the time, the prime antagonists in
the crisis stage were the scientific community, the media, the Religious Right,
Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush, the gay community, and AIDS
victims, families and friends.

From its inception, AIDS was characterized as a gay disease that posed
little threat to heterosexuals. As it reported information regarding the new disease,
the scientific community was the first group to contribute to mainstream
perceptions that the new disease was a gay affliction. All early reports of the
disease assured heterosexuals that they were safe and warned homosexuals that
they were at risk. In January 1982, even the name assigned to the new disease
assured the marginalization of homosexuals within society. The disease became
officially known as Gay Related Immune Deficiency or GRID (AIDS: Images of
the Epidemic 3). As it became apparent that the disease was not a gay affliction,
as originally thought, many individuals within the medical community were
concerned by the GRID acronym. As a result of their concern, the AIDS acronym
was adopted in July 1982. Members of the medical community found this
acronym to be “sexually neutral,” but the stigma of AIDS as a gay disease
remained (Shilts 171).

Even though early messages about AIDS generated by the
scientific/medical community asserted that heterosexuals were relatively safe from
contamination, there was a contradiction in the way health care professionals treated AIDS victims. According to Sills, in the early days of the epidemic there was compelling evidence that a "substantial portion of physicians avoid[ed] caring for patients with HIV/AIDS. This avoidance or refusal, in addition to denying needed care, stigmatize[d] patients" (74). A 1991 study by Charles Bosk, a medical sociologist, and Joel E. Frader, a medical ethicist, found that "Despite evidence presented in the medical literature that AIDS is not unduly infectious, they report that many doctors are afraid they will become infected. They cite instances of medical students going so far as to claim that doctors, like lawyers, have the right to refuse clients" (Sills 75). The unwillingness of many health care professionals to treat victims of the disease devalued the individual and consequently furthered the social breach.

In the earliest stages of the epidemic, Kinsella reports that the news media was reluctant to cover AIDS because it was assumed that "news about homosexuals would not interest the great majority of 'family newspaper' readers. The later discovery that the disease was found among junkies, yet another group of social undesirables, was hardly likely to boost media appeal" (2). Therefore, the initial information offered about AIDS was scarce and focused on those groups that were deemed as "social outcasts" by the media. The treatment, or lack of it, again cast homosexuals as the primary target of the disease and contributed to the
“side taking” that separated the victims of AIDS from society. In dealing with the social crisis, the media sided with the mainstream by producing stories that were suited to their particular tastes and, as a result, perpetuated homophobia within society.

The New York Times was the first mainstream publication to break the story that the disease attacked homosexuals exclusively. And, even though the publication was reporting the news as it was made available, it offered negative stereotypes of gay men when it stated that “most cases had involved homosexual men who had multiple and frequent sexual encounters with different partners, as many as 10 sexual encounters each night up to four times a week” (Altman A20). Stories like this encouraged a perception that all homosexuals were promiscuous and driven by their sexual desires. The New York Times was not the only publication to present the disease as a gay affliction. Newsweek investigated “Diseases that Plague Gays” (Clark 51). Science News suggested that a “New Outbreak of Serious Diseases Focuses on Homosexual Men” (“New Outbreak” 81). And, New York offered information on “The Gay Plague” (VerMeulen 52). These magazines were not necessarily malicious in their coverage of the disease but, intentional or not, the news media contributed to the widening of the moral breach in so far as they enabled the perception that it was the aberrant lifestyles of gays that precipitated the disease in the gay community. As the medical
community offered mainstream publications more accurate information about AIDS, coverage of the disease improved. Publications warned of the dangers the disease posed to the heterosexual communities. On the other hand, they also used visual representations that contradicted their messages. For instance, stories might acknowledge that AIDS was affecting groups other than gays, but visual representations or photographs often depicted men that were easily identifiable as gay. While the media wrestled with the reality of AIDS and how to tell its story, others involved seized the moment to further their own agendas.

As the United States was coming to grips with AIDS, "televangelists were celebrating the future 'demise' of the gay world" (Ide, AIDS Hysteria 14). Representatives of the New Religious Right found in AIDS an issue that would allow them to further their attack on homosexuals and their lifestyles. Jerry Falwell was one of the harshest critics of gays as he presented the AIDS crisis as "the righteous wrath of a just God" (Ide 9). He told one audience that "when you violate moral, health, and hygiene laws, you reap the whirlwind. You cannot shake your fist in God's face and get by with it" (quoted in Shilts 347). He told yet another audience that "A man reaps what he sows. If he sows seed in the field of his lower nature he will reap from it a harvest of corruption" (quoted in Fee 141). With Falwell's rhetoric came the transformation, or mis-casting, of a health issue into a moral issue. But, for Falwell, making AIDS a moral issue was not
sufficient. He wanted to make the issue a political one. "Falwell’s political
organization, Moral Majority, lobbied against government funded research to find
a cure for the disease. The organization argued that homosexuals should solve
their own problems" ("Addressing" 50).

Perhaps the most significant or high profile player in widening the breach
was President Ronald Reagan, who did not even mention the word AIDS until
September 17, 1985, when at a press conference he announced, "I could
understand why parents did not want their children 'in school with these kids'
who have AIDS" (quoted in Kinsella, 266). Unlike Jerry Falwell and others, who
made AIDS a part of their rhetoric, Reagan was slow to discuss the subject in
public. In fact, by the time Reagan delivered his first speech on AIDS, 36,058
U.S. citizens had contracted the virus and 20,849 had died. Kinsella asserts that
Reagan’s administration found the AIDS issue irrelevant and in some instances a
joking matter.

Even as late as 1986, the epidemic was not given much
serious attention by the Reagan administration. Nothing
sums up the attitude better than a joke reportedly told at
a meeting of the president and some of his key advisors in
1986. The White House was considering further action
against Moamar Gadhafi’s Lybia, which the United States
had bombed in the spring in retaliation for terrorist attacks
against American servicemen abroad. The Lybian leader
was rumored to be a transvestite, so at the meeting Reagan
asked, "Why not invite him to San Francisco; he likes
to dress up so much.” To which Secretary of State George Shultz allegedly replied, “Why don’t we give him AIDS?” (Kinsella 3)

Reagan did not make jokes like this in public, but his silence on the issue of AIDS bothered many in the gay community. Silence is a rhetorical device, and Reagan’s initial silence illustrated his intention to side with the New Christian Right and, hence, against homosexuals. Because Reagan accepted the crisis as presented by the scientific community, the media, and the New Religious Right, he refused comment on the crisis all together.

It was not until May 31, 1987, that Reagan first delivered a speech on AIDS. But leadership in the gay community felt that this was too little to late. Larry Kramer, AIDS activist and founder of ACT UP, was present at the speech and became infuriated when “he became aware that the president’s speech made no mention of the word ‘gay.’ There was talk about hemophiliacs who got AIDS, transfusion recipients, and the spouses of intravenous drug users, but the G-word was never spoken” (Shilts 596). The leadership of the gay community felt that the absence of the word “gay” suggested that, unlike other AIDS casualties, homosexuals were not to be perceived as innocent victims.

The gay community also articulated a side taking in the AIDS conflict and it too contributed to misconceptions about AIDS. According to Larry Kramer, the problem with the gay community in the early days of AIDS was that they were not
united. He warned, "there is one thing we must not allow AIDS to become, and that is a political issue among ourselves. It's not. It's a health issue for us" (Kramer, Reports 27). Kramer was responding to those in the gay community who avoided the AIDS issue, or suggested that the epidemic was exaggerated.

Representatives within the gay community argued that AIDS statistics were, "no worse than the statistics for smokers and lung cancer" or they qualified, "considering how many homosexuals there are in the United States, AIDS is really statistically affecting only a very few" (Kramer, Reports 46). Others asserted that it was a ploy of the government to undermine gay lifestyles. Still others argued that the disease was attacking only those who participated in certain sexual activities or experimented with particular drugs. The scapegoating, of gays within the gay community, encouraged the community to look at particular activities such as rimming, fisting, water sports, frequent visits to bath houses for anonymous sex, and so on, as principle causes for infection. As a result, individuals who participated in activities like these became identified as the principle targets of the disease, while those who did not felt relatively safe (Kramer, Reports 34). These attitudes within the gay community fostered a crisis rhetoric in which focus on the health breach was lost. Rather than presenting AIDS as a disease, many in the gay community focused on specific sexual activities and, as a result, gave credence to those whose arguments were focused on the moral/religious breach. The gay
community, then, marginalized itself as it blamed the advent of the disease on particular members and their sexual practices.

According to Sills, during times of health crises, "Reactions to pandemics and epidemics by frightened individuals and groups have constantly shown a pattern of assigning blame for the outbreaks to specific segments of society. In an attempt to achieve distance from calamity, the human tendency has been to blame others, principally marginal elements of communities: the poor and the alien by culture, religion or life-style" (134). The social construction of AIDS then precipitated a "new homophobia," and encouraged, the further marginalization of gays in society (Ide, AIDS Hysteria 20). This social marginalization attempted to erase all character traits of homosexuals except their sexuality. As a result, the rhetoric that was advanced by the scientific and medical community as well as by the Religious Right was that it was dangerous to be gay. Larry Kramer was well aware of the typification of gays as solely sexual beings. He acknowledges to some degree the accuracy of this typification when he states, "I am sick of guys who think that all gay means is sex in the first place. I am sick of guys who can only think with their cocks" (Reports 46). Kramer uses his position of leadership to address how the behavior of certain individuals within the gay community are contributing to the health crisis and perpetuating the stereotypes of homosexuals as purely sexual beings.
In summary, the crisis stage of this particular social drama was characterized as a time of conflict in which competing rhetorics emerged that focused on either the health breach or the moral/religious breach. With the genesis of the disease, the scientific community contributed to the crisis rhetoric by first publicizing AIDS as a gay disease. Medical practitioners furthered the crisis by refusing to treat the victims of AIDS. Although they presented AIDS as a gay affliction that posed little threat to those outside the gay community, the medical community presented a contradictory rhetoric when it was discovered that they were afraid of contracting the disease through activities that would have been considered casual contact. The media served as the vehicle for getting information to the general public, and here too the message was clearly focused on AIDS as a gay affliction. These reports allowed The Christian Voice, The Religious Roundtable and the Moral Majority to further their respective agendas because now gays were not only seen as a potential social threat but as a biological threat as well.

Jerry Falwell and other members of the Religious Right emphasized that AIDS was no accident. In their opinion, it was a direct action of a God of wrath. By positioning the disease as a direct attack of God on homosexuals, Jerry Falwell and others established a crisis rhetoric that argued as follows: People who get AIDS are gay. The disease indicates God's punishment of their behavior and his
separation from them. Intended to split society into gay and straight, Falwell
developed a rationale that failed or refused to recognize the victims of the disease
that were not homosexual. In this way, Falwell miscast the health breach proving
to take sides with a disease that, in his mind, was killing only homosexual men.

From Ronald Reagan, there was silence. It was not until 1987 that he first
addressed the issue of AIDS and even then he carefully omitted the word gay from
his rhetoric. The omission led many in the gay community to conclude that the
Reagan administration had little sympathy for their cause. The silence of Ronald
Reagan and his rhetoric of omission suggested that Reagan sided with all victims
of AIDS, except homosexuals. Ultimately, Ronald Reagan took sides against the
disease when he realized that the disease was attacking mainstream society.

The gay community lacked the unity that was necessary to address the
issues of AIDS and sexuality in the early days of the crisis. Too many within the
gay community feared the demise of their way of life. As a result they were slow
to react to the reality of AIDS, choosing instead to scapegoat individuals and
groups within their own culture. As a result, the gay community created a crisis
rhetoric within its own ranks that had to be addressed before it could take its AIDS
message to mainstream culture.
Redression

Redression represents a point of action or reaction "ranging from personal advice and informal meditation or arbitration to formal judicial and legal machinery . . . [that] furnishes a distanced replication and critique of the events leading up to and comprising the crisis (Turner, On the Edge 180). During redression, "the community, acting through its representatives, bends even throws itself back upon itself, to measure what some of its members have done, and how they have conducted themselves with reference to its own standards." This time of "critique," or reflexivity, may lead to a "distanced replication and then critique of events leading up to and composing the crisis" (Turner, Anthropology 34).

Redression is a rhetorical act in that individuals and groups attempt to persuade others of a solution that will "set straight" the social conflict, or a part of it. In many ways, redressive acts respond to and critique the crisis phase performances of others.

The Quilt is by no means the only redressive act that responded and is responding to the AIDS crisis, or issues therein. In the scientific community, initial reports of AIDS as a gay disease were transformed over time to warnings that clarified all people were at risk if certain precautions were not taken. They, along with the medical community, began to publicize the disease as a mainstream disease and offered guidelines for safe(r) sex. Published guidelines suggested
practices that were safe, such as body to body rubbing, dry kissing, French kissing (in the absence of open sores in the mouth), massage, hugging, masturbation, fantasy and costumes, anal sex with a condom, and the use of individual sex toys. The medical community also warned against unsafe sex practices, such as unprotected oral sex, unprotected rimming, unprotected anal sex, any activity that could draw blood, sharing unprotected or unwashed sex toys, and sharing needles for IV drug use (Gay Almanac 437). As additional research data became available to the scientific/medical community, their focus shifted from the initial targets of the disease to the disease itself. The redressive activity, then, of the scientific/medical community became concentrated on decreasing the numbers of individuals impacted by the disease. In this way, the scientific/medical community reflexed back on their crisis behavior. This self-reflexive strategy allowed them to correct and ultimately “set straight” misconceptions regarding AIDS. Through their efforts, AIDS was ultimately publicized as a disease that had the potential to attack anyone regardless of sexual orientation.

As the country moved further into the crisis, the media too began to redress misconceptions about the disease. But, according to Kinsella, the “rise and fall of U.S. media coverage, [was] tied not to scientific developments or numbers of dead, but to the extent to which the threat to mainstream Americans seemed to be increasing” (156). To substantiate her claim, Kinsella draws on a graph compiled
by the Centers for Disease Control that evaluated the media coverage of AIDS. According to the graph, the incidences of stories on AIDS increased from 66 in 1982 to 11,762 by the end of 1988. Kinsella and others assert that it was the death of Rock Hudson that turned the media's focus toward AIDS (144; see also Shilts 409). In a USA Today editorial, regarding Hudson's death, the journalist observes, "Many of us are realizing that AIDS is not a 'gay plague,' but everybody's problem. Ironic that a gay man accomplished that feat" (quoted in Kinsella 145).

As AIDS made its way into the mainstream, the media was forced to reevaluate its earlier position on the disease. No longer could AIDS be publicized as a gay affliction. As a result, the media, through a self-reflexive critique, confronted the bias that permeated early reports on the disease.

Within the gay community there were many examples of redressive activity. The Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) was one of the first groups organized to address AIDS and how it was and was not being handled by society at large. The group was formed by activist Larry Kramer and a small group of men in New York City in 1982. Their initial goal was to redress how gays were dealing with AIDS. The group warned that gays had to "stop having sex or to at least stop having it unsafely" (Marcus 420). The problem arose when members of the group, much to the dismay of Larry Kramer, decided that "they didn't think it was
GMHC's or anybody's position to tell anybody else how to live their lives and that people had to make up their own minds" (Marcus 427).

In 1987, the same year the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt was established, Larry Kramer founded an activist group known as ACT UP, or AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. The focus of the group was to bring attention to AIDS using whatever means necessary. Kramer says, "the mission of ACT UP is to end the AIDS epidemic. I think the reason everyone is coming to us now is that they perceive us, quite rightly, as being able to fight the battle, to carry the ball, to raise the issues and follow through" (Interview 135). ACT UP's "redressive" objective to "end the AIDS epidemic" was, certainly a noble and worthwhile mission but, in retrospect, it was unfulfilled. Therefore, even though the goal is redressive, the result is not. The militant demonstrations staged by ACT UP participants proved to articulate a forceful, and much needed, opposing voice to those individuals and groups who desired to silence or ignore the disease, or scapegoat certain victims of the disease. Therefore, although the intent of ACT UP was to redress the conflict, their rhetoric proved to establish a strong antagonistic position that operated to widen the breach between radical, moderate and conservative groups and their diverse views regarding AIDS.

As I discuss at length in subsequent chapters, The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt can be understood as operating in redressive ways. The most
obvious redressive activity occurs at the personal level, however, there is evidence
of some redressive activity at the social and political levels as well. As initially
conceived, the Quilt was understood as a memorial to recognize and pay tribute to
those who had died of AIDS.

According to Cindy Ruskin, “The NAMES Project is a national effort to
create a hand-sewn tribute to the tens of thousands of Americans stricken down by
AIDS. The idea for the Project originated the night of November 27, 1985” (9).
On this date, Cleve Jones joined thousands of other marchers in a candlelight vigil
to commemorate the murders of Mayor George Mascone and Harvey Milk, San
Francisco’s first openly gay city supervisor. As the marchers passed by San
Francisco’s old Federal building, they covered the walls with placards that bore the
names of individuals that had died of AIDS. Jones was moved by the image of the
names, and on that night decided that a memorial to the victims of AIDS was
needed (Ruskin 9).

The NAMES Project Foundation was established in 1987 by a group of
gays, lesbians, and their families in San Francisco’s predominately gay Castro
District. The NAMES Project Foundation sought and continues to advance AIDS
awareness and, in an assertive manner, they encourage the general public, as well
as the gay community, to participate in AIDS awareness. Other purposes of the
organization involve illustrating the enormity of AIDS; providing mourners with a
positive, creative means of expression; and offering moral, spiritual, and financial support for people with HIV/AIDS and their loved ones (Display 3). Cleve Jones states, "We wanted to illustrate the enormity of the AIDS crisis by revealing something of the lives behind the statistics, to provide evidence of the calamity that we saw unfolding . . . and we wanted to give the world a powerful symbol of compassion and humanity" (quoted in Brown, J. vi). To accomplish this mission, the Foundation began the AIDS Memorial Quilt, composed of panels measuring six feet by three feet -- the size of most graves (Fuchs 408).

Each Quilt panel is crafted by an individual or group and offers a personal tribute to an individual claimed by AIDS. It is at this level, the personal level, that the Quilt serves its most obvious redressive functions. The Quilt is redressive in that it allows panel makers to memorialize victims, to process their grief, to express themselves, and by means of a creative activity or performance. By crafting a panel for the Quilt, the panel makers involve themselves in a "heightened mode of communication, framed in a special way, and put on display for an audience" (Bauman 41). Although many individuals craft their panels in the privacy of their own homes, they are, in the act of quilting, calling on an expressive mode that urges them to articulate their feelings for themselves, and also for others. The heightened mode of expression assumes an audience, whether
it be family and friends or those strangers who view the panel once it is included in
the larger Quilt.

The NAMES Project literature states that anyone can participate in the
production of a panel, and offer a few recommendations to the panel maker. The
NAMES Project requires that all panels be six feet by three feet so that they can be
easily attached to other panels for display. It also is recommended that the basic
design of the panel include the name of the friend or loved one. Additional
personal information may be added at the panel maker’s discretion. The NAMES
Project Foundation recommends that the materials used in the panel be able to
withstand the rigors of travel and continual folding and unfolding. With regards to
construction, the foundation recommends the panel maker consider using some of
the following techniques to complete their project: applique, paint, stencil,
collage, and photos. The final request from the foundation is that the panel maker
submit a one to two page letter with the panel about the person being memorialized
within the Quilt. This process allows for a written narrative to exist along with the
symbolic narrative of the panel. The focus of the written narrative, like the
symbolic one, is on the person being memorialized. Therefore the written
narrative that accompanies the panel does not necessarily describe the panel;
instead it describes the relationship of the panel maker to the victim (Display 9).
These narratives, like the panels, are housed at the San Francisco NAMES Project Foundation.

Also, there is no limit to the number of panels that a panel maker might make or that might be made for a victim. The NAMES Project Foundation recognizes the fact that individuals move thorough the grieving process at different rates, and as a result the foundation encourages panel makers to create their panel when they are ready. Individuals may create their panels alone, with family and friends, or turn to one of fifty-three NAMES Project Chapters for assistance. Once the panel is completed, it may be mailed to the foundation or presented in person at one of the regional or national displays of the Quilt (Display 8).

Once the panels are assembled into a collective whole for display, the performative function changes. By giving up the panel to the foundation, the panel maker’s performance becomes refracted as the panel no longer speaks for only a single individual but also for the amassed victims of the disease. In subsequent chapters, I discuss at length how the panel and panel making operate, variously, as redressive and crisis performances at the personal and social levels.

Reintegration

Turner’s final stage of social drama involves the “reintegration of the disturbed social group, or of the social recognition and legitimation of irreparable schisms between the contesting parties” (Turner, On the Edge 180). As mentioned
in Chapter One, in the latter case many social dramas are not solved by the redressive attempts and the drama returns to the crisis stage.

Since the AIDS epidemic remains a dominant part of our society, it is too early to predict whether or not the contesting parties will resolve their conflicts. Diseases, as social crises, pose special problems for any culture and resolution becomes difficult until a cure is found.

The AIDS crisis is a clear example of Turner's concept of social drama. The breach stage consists of both a primary health breach and a secondary social-cultural breach that existed before the disease itself was publicized. The secondary breach articulated homosexuals as aberrant and encouraged their marginalization within society. As homosexuals were the first to contract AIDS, the disease too was marginalized. A health breach was recast as a moral breach and at first people tended to take sides in terms of this secondary (mis-) casting of the conflict. The various positions in the crisis stage were that AIDS was a gay affliction; that "American families" would not be interested in AIDS; that AIDS was a punishment of God on homosexual lifestyles; that AIDS was not worthy of Reagan's attention; and that the gay community had to recognize AIDS for what it was, a disease. In response, the AIDS Memorial Quilt emerged as one of a number of redressive acts. As I discuss in the following chapters, the Quilt encouraged mourners to speak on behalf of those who had died and to express their grief for
themselves and to the public at large. Thereby, the Quilt publicized and socialized the deaths and spoke against governmental policies that, in general, sought to ignore the disease.
Chapter Three

The Personal Context and Function of the AIDS Memorial Quilt

The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt is representative of a quilting tradition that has existed in United States culture from its very inception. Just as quilters turned to needle and thread for a variety of functions, so too have the creators of the AIDS Memorial Quilt. The patchwork quilt grew out of necessity but its purposes go far beyond the harsh conditions that prompted early Americans to fashion their bed coverings out of scraps of cloth. The quilt served a practical function of providing warmth for the early settlers in United States history, but it also fulfilled personal needs.

Conrad explains, “During [the late 1700's and 1800's], when a child died, or men were off to war, or a family member was struggling to establish roots against unspeakable adversity—quilting was perhaps the only solace available to a woman, who was often comforted by the calm repetition of the stitching” (21). After the death of a child or other loved one, women often gathered the scraps of the “dearly departed’s” clothing or other memorabilia and fashioned it into a patchwork quilt that would be preserved as a “keepsake” (Hall 82). This type of quilt was known as a memory quilt, and once completed it was often used throughout the home until the acceptable period of mourning had passed. In order to understand how
traditional quilters memorialized their loved ones. I examine examples of the traditional memory quilt in the following section.

One memory quilt was fashioned by Elizabeth Rosenberry Mitchell in 1839. The quilt became known as the Kentucky Coffin Quilt. The central focus of the quilt was a cemetery in which were placed small coffins, representing those members of the family who had died. The birth and death dates of the deceased were stitched on the coffins. Eight pointed stars made from the clothing of the deceased surrounded the cemetery. At the outer edge of the quilt were additional coffins bearing the names of living family members. When one of these family members died, their coffin was moved to the center of the quilt. The Kentucky Coffin Quilt functioned then as a family icon of mourning, as a keepsake, and as a genealogy of family history. Through the on-going process of crafting of the quilt family members actively crafted a memorial as they addressed their individual and shared feelings of grief.

Another variation of the memory quilt, known as the Tombstone Quilt, was first created in 1842 for Nancy A. Butler by her grandmother. Consisting of a simple white background with blue lettering, the pattern of the quilt resembled a tombstone. The quilt stated the name of the deceased and the death date, and had minimal ornamentation. Each word or date was separated by fabric triangles, and the year of death was framed and accented by two flowers (Conrad 20).
When Grace North died in 1877, her mother, Tamar, designed a crazy quilt to honor her memory. The quilt was created from pieces of silk, velvet, cotton, and lace placed in a random pattern. The fabrics were salvaged from Grace’s wardrobe. Tamar’s memorial to her daughter was unique. Even though the quilt contained the name, birth and death dates of the deceased, it also contained secular as well as sacred symbols of death. The quilt incorporated the calla lilly and angels into its symbolic narrative. It is unclear whether these symbols were personal signifiers of the deceased or if they were cultural symbols commonly incorporated into memory quilts at this time (Peck 98).

Sara Eliza Lyon McLean created a memory quilt to commemorate the death of her sister Hannah Lyon, sometime before 1870. Sixteen year old Hannah was delivering lunch to men in the field when she slipped from her horse and drowned in the French Broad River in North Carolina. Several years later, the dress that Hannah was wearing when she drowned was cut into small pieces and crafted into a memory quilt to commemorate her death (Roberson 18).

Another example of the memory quilt was recorded in a history of North Carolina quilts. The quilt, commonly referred to as the Ribbon Quilt, was made from the bows on the wreaths and flower baskets that attended the coffin at the funeral. The ribbons were removed, ironed flat, and “either sewn side by side or
pieced into a geometric pattern" (Roberson 32). It is likely that this particular type of quilt emerged from the "waste not" attitude of early quilters.

Quilting, then, was a performative activity that fulfilled individual, filial, and social expectations. By crafting a quilt, a woman provided a warm covering for her family. She minimized waste and saved money by using leftover scraps of cloth. The quilt memorialized a loved one, and served as a keepsake. By turning to needle and thread, women were able to retain the memory of a "past" person in a "present" form. As a result of this crafting, individuals were able to process grief through symbolic action and activity. We might understand that, in this way, they participated in or produced their own funerary rites.

Like traditional memory quilts, the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt offers mourners a site for grieving. Through the creation of individual panels, mourners actively produce their responses to the death of a loved one, and to the disease. Because AIDS was first publicized as a contained disease it was easy for much of U.S. society to ignore the disease and its victims. By taking up needle and thread, the panel makers redress this "ignorance" by remembering the "past" person in the "present" form. In a metaphorical sense, it might be argued that, like their predecessors, panel makers salvage the scraps (or what remained of their loved one), with the intent to remember.
The purpose of this chapter is to discuss how the Quilt functions on a personal and individual level; to examine the “experienced” social drama as articulated by twenty-one panel makers; to describe the “quilted” narratives created by the panel makers; to evaluate the function of their experience; and to discuss the function of the AIDS Quilt to them. In order to understand the personal function that the Quilt fulfills it is necessary to first isolate the breach that invites the redressive act of quilting.

Just as there are thousands of panels that make up the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt there are thousands of creators who, for one reason or other, chose to craft a panel for the Quilt. These individuals come to the Quilt for many reasons and bring with them many agendas. However, the purpose that appears common to most, if not all, Quilt participants is to memorialize the death of a loved one.

For the panel makers, the initial breach with which they must contend is that a loved one has died from a disease and that death must be recognized and their grief expressed. Mothers, father, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, children, lovers, and friends come to the project with a desire to side with the victims of AIDS. Their decision to create a panel is, in and of its self, a process of “side taking” where they identify with an individual victim or, perhaps, all victims of the disease. In addition, panel making serves to redress or “set straight” the
invisibility of the AIDS victim: The material panel guarantees that the deceased is made visible, in concrete symbolic form.

In order to understand why individuals become involved with the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, my research began with the panel makers themselves. The following pages contain excerpts from descriptive narratives that twenty-one panel makers shared with me regarding their reasons for making a panel.

To obtain these narratives, I contacted the NAMES Project Foundation on February 2, 1993, and was advised to contact Mr. Scott Osten, Educational Director of the organization. I did so, in writing, on February 3, 1993. On March 25, 1993, I received a response from Mr. Anthony Turney, the new Executive Director of the Foundation. Turney "wished me success in the project but that in order to guarantee privacy for the panel makers he must deny assistance" (Turney, March 25, 1993, 1).

Although I was disappointed by the response, I also understood Mr. Turney's objections and decided to seek another approach. I made plans to contact the thirty-five NAMES Project Chapters that were in operation at that time and to ask them for their support. I prepared packets that included letters to the local directors, and asked them if they would assist me in contacting five members from their chapter who might be interested in the research. Each chapter mailing
included five individual packets complete with cover letter, questionnaire, and confidential release. In the letter, I assured the participants that their wishes regarding my use of their responses would be respected. I also assured them that no information would be used without a signed release.

Before mailing the packets I again contacted the NAMES Project Foundation on March 31, 1993 to advise them of my intentions. I waited until June 21, 1993, and when I received no reply, I assumed that my approach met with their approval. I mailed out the thirty-five chapter packets hoping to generate at least one-hundred affirmative responses. On July 14, 1993, Mr. Turney called me to tell me that when he denied assistance for the project he was speaking as a representative of all thirty-five local chapters. He informed me that he would send letters to all of the local chapters stating that the national office did not endorse the research and, in fact, they discouraged it since it would “infringe on the privacy of the panel makers.” On the other hand, he assured me he would not attempt to discourage anyone already committed to the research. As a result, I generated twenty-five rather than one-hundred participants. I removed four of the participants from the research pool because they failed to submit a confidential release form.

In addition to responding to the questionnaire, each panel maker was asked to submit a picture or sketch of their panel (see Appendix A). Following, in
alphabetical order, is a survey of the twenty-one panel makers and excerpts from the narratives they shared.

Bob Ames (California)

Bob created a panel for his significant other, Curtis Hebert. He states that he created the panel "to add Curt's name to a living, moving, growing, viable, memorial, to demonstrate my love for him and demonstrate that love between two men is every bit as rewarding as any other love. Our commitment to each other is real, deep and selfless" (Ames 1).

The panel contains several icons that were individually and dually significant for Hebert and Ames. The most prominent symbol, located on the left side of the panel, is a large tree poised on a hill with a single flower blooming beneath it. In the right hand corner is a butterfly with outstretched wings. Ames chose to incorporate Hebert's name, birth and death dates on the wings of the butterfly. In the bottom center of the panel is a picture of Ames standing beneath the tree. And, in the top center of the panel a banner contains the words, "Till WE Meet Again Under the Tree Love" (Ames 1).

Ames states that the panel is meant to "depict a favorite place/activity that we shared, namely horseback riding to a spot 'beneath a tree at the top of the world.'" He continues, "it is meant to say to others . . . that we will someday be reunited under that tree. It is meant to give hope to others, like myself, that have
been temporarily left behind, and that we will travel further down another path—
together” (Ames 1; emphasis in original).

**Jay N. Bonner (Pennsylvania)**

Jay N. Bonner made a panel for his “lover, friend, and companion,” Jeffrey
R. Weldon. His panel was created to “be a permanent and living memory to my
lover for all to see” (Bonner 2).

The panel emphasizes Jeffery’s membership in the Philadelphia Freedom
Band where he was a member of the rifle and flag corp. Bonner also states that
Jeffery made and designed the uniforms for the band. The background of the
panel is white and at the top Weldon’s name is spelled out in black letters.
Directly beneath his name are his birth and death dates separated by a rainbow
flag. The left side of the panel contains his band uniform, to the right is a picture
of him holding a birthday cake, and scattered throughout the panel are musical
notes that symbolize his love of music (Bonner 1).

**J. Michael Click (Texas)**

J. Michael Click made a panel for his lifetime companion, Kevin E. Young.
His panel was created “to make a permanent record of his name in lieu of a
tombstone; to release some of the grief I felt; to document our relationship; and to
make a ‘statement’ about love AIDS and loss.” Click admits that “making
[Kevin’s] panel and writing the letter I sent with it was one of the hardest—and yet most healing—things I had ever done” (Click 2).

The background of the panel is off-white and at the top Young’s name is spelled out in red block letters. Beneath Young’s name are two overlapping hearts encircled with a message that reads, “Two hearts joined in a circle of love unbroken, Two lives made one through a love unending.” Beneath this message Young’s birth and death dates, and his home town and state, Fort Worth, Texas, are printed in black (Click 1).

Barbara Coyle (New York)

Barbara Coyle joined inmates at the Elmira Correctional Facility in New York to create their panel. The panel was created to “give a voice and a presence to prisoners living and dying with AIDS.” According to Coyle, the “inmates who designed the memorial wanted a presence” (Coyle 2).

The group used symbols that would be easily understood by those who viewed it. In large letters, at the bottom of the panel, is the name of the facility. The rest of the panel is covered with bars, some of which are broken. According to Coyle, the bars symbolize the prison and the broken bars symbolize “freedom at last.” Five inmates, who had already died of AIDS, are represented by butterflies that are flying to freedom between the broken bars. Two inmates, living with the disease, are depicted by a chrysalis. As Coyle states, these inmates were “not yet
transformed not yet free.” Coyle asserts that the Quilt “has an extraordinary healing power for those grieving and that it serves as an incredible teaching tool” (Coyle 1-2).

Dorothy Durgin (Maine)

Dorothy Durgin made a panel for her son, Jim Durgin. Dorothy created her panel to “[make] a contribution to the Quilt, to deal with my grief and to have it ready for the first World AIDS day, December 1, 1988.” Because of her continual involvement with the Quilt, Durgin became a charter member of Maine’s NAME Project (Durgin 2).

Like many other panels, Durgin’s panel consists of a few highly symbolic objects. The panel is made of a light colored fabric trimmed in blue. On the panel is Jim Durgin’s name, the years of his birth and death, a beagle, three lines from a poem, and a caricature of Jim, similar to one he used in “his advertisement for his commercial art work.” The dog represents one he had as a teenager, and the three lines of poetry are from a favorite poem of Mrs. Durgin. The lines read, “Do not stand by my grave and cry. I am not there. I did not die.” According to Mrs. Durgin, the lines of the poem are symbolic of “his love of nature and hobby of photographing nature, a lot of it on our own property.” Mrs Durgin writes that through the lines of this poem she found comfort and a way to visualize her son
dead of AIDS. The poetry evoked a vivid memory of her son and an activity that had occurred regularly around her (Durgin 1).

Kathy French (No State Given)

Kathy French made two panels for her best friend of seventeen years, James M. Vernon. She states she created the panels “to create a memorial for a dear lost friend, to help in the grieving process, to educate people about the horrible toll that AIDS has taken, and to promote acceptance of people with AIDS” (French 2).

Kathy worked with other friends of James Vernon to complete the two panels. Initially, the group planned to make one panel but chose instead to separate the two main ideas they were interested in expressing. The first panel contains an enlarged photo of James that covers most of the panel. At the top of the panel is James’ signature and beneath, a line that reads, “Jimmy Fort Worth-Texas.” The second panel is comprised of many small “signature squares.” Each square was crafted by an individual in the group and expresses his or her personal tribute to James. The chosen objects and/or written messages are often accompanied by the quilter’s “signature.” Kathy states that “Jimmy’s two panels are side by side on a 12’ X 12’ section of the Quilt. We wanted people who see the Quilt to see Jimmy as a name and a face (not just a statistic).” She continues,
“Jimmy was a beautiful man, both physically and emotionally, and we hope this is conveyed to our audience” (French 1).

Bruce Garner (Georgia)

Bruce Garner created a panel for his “closest and best friend,” Walter Alan Morgan. Garner states that making the panel “fostered the grief process for me. Once I finished the panel, I began to realize how much I had suppressed my grief. The panel let me finally deal with my grief in a healthy way” (Garner 2).

The panel that Garner created for Morgan is a tribute to “the things that were a part of his life.” The panel depicts a room filled with the things Alan liked most. On the right of the panel is an open door beyond which is a snow capped mountain. The snow capped mountain symbolizes Alan’s love of snow skiing. On the right side of the panel is a pair of skies and ski boots. A palm tree is seen through the window in the center of the panel. The palm tree symbolizes Alan’s love of the sun and of his home in Florida. A snorkel rests beneath the window. Looking out the open door is a grey and white dog named Bridgette. According to Garner, Bridget is “looking out the door awaiting her master’s return” (Garner 1).

Tricia Grindel (Georgia)

Tricia Grindel worked with a group of Tom Vitale’s siblings and friend to create a panel. Vitale was Grindel’s former boss and friend. The reason the group decided to make the panel for Vitale was to “[create] something tangible for the
rest of the world to know that Tom was an important part of this world. Those of us who knew him will always have memories to hold on to. People who didn’t know him don’t have those memories.” Grindel also offers, “I think that the Quilt helps Tom live on in everyone’s heart” (Grindel 2; emphasis in the original).

On the panel are objects that represent a time of year that was Tom’s “favorite.” Central to the panel is a huge Christmas tree that was made by Vitale’s sister. On the tree are ornaments, each made by an individual member of the group and crafted so as to highlight their particular relationship with Vitale.

According to Grindel, “the panel shows the diversity of Tom’s relationships and personality.” She also suggests that even though others who view the Quilt may not know him, they can still get some insight into the creative, funny, and artistic components of Vitale’s personality (Grindel 1).

Laverne M. Haight (Pennsylvania)

Laverne M. Haight designed a panel to commemorate the passing of her son, William C. “Billy” Haight. She made the panel as “a tribute to our son.” She continues, “I know he would have told me to do it if he were here. I’m sure he is proud of the outcome” (Haight 2).

The panel contains many objects that represent and tell the story of Billy Haight. Against the light colored background are a cloud, two bright red T’s, a cross, a 4-H emblem, rabbits, a picture of a tuba, a clarinet, musical notes, Marine
Corps emblems, and a picture of "Billy" in his dress uniform. The cloud has Haight’s name stitched on it and a line that proclaims, "Love Lasts Forever." The two bright T’s contain birth and death dates and stand for “Towanda.” The cross symbolizes that he was a Christian. The 4-H emblem and pictures of rabbits represent his childhood interests. The tuba, clarinet, and musical notes represent his love of music. And, the Marine Corps emblems and picture signify Haight’s Marine Corp experience. According to his mother, the Marine icons were the most significant objects because they represent the pride that Billy and his father shared as Marines (Haight 1).

**John P. Hilgeman (Missouri)**

John P. Hilgeman made panels for his “buddies,” Patrick Gregory and Patrick Leonard. He states that he has “made quite a few panels for the Quilt... [but] the two that meant the most to me are two that I made for my two buddies” (Hilgeman 2).

The panel that Hilgeman made for Patrick Gregory is white with a poem at the top of the panel. Beneath the poem is a rainbow and an individual falling into the hands of three individuals standing below. At the bottom of the panel is Patrick Gregory’s name in stylized print (Hilgeman 2).

Leonard’s panel is constructed of pink, blue, and black fabric. As with Gregory’s panel, a poem is at the top of the panel. In the upper right corner is the
hand printed name of Patrick Leonard. Beneath his name are hand printed birth
and death dates. In the lower right hand of the panel is a bright yellow and blue
sailboat. A picture of Leonard is positioned inside the boat (Hilgeman 2).

**Garry Hodgson (New Jersey)**

Garry Hodgson and his family created a panel for his brother, Sten Eric
Hodgson II. Sten’s “Mom, Dad, brothers, Kim, Brian, Garry, sister’s in law Mary
Ann, Nancy, and Mary, and nieces Kelsey, Erin, and Julia” participated in the
project. According to Garry, the family created the panel because “Sten’s death
could not be allowed to pass unnoticed, and this [the Quilt] was a way of declaring
it to the world. We felt that the Quilt was a very important work and we wanted to
be a part of it.” Hodgson also comments on the therapeutic value of the Quilt
when he states, “to whatever extent it helps raise awareness and educate people, it
allows some small good to come out of our loss, and makes it easier to bear”
(Hodgson 2).

The panel the family created for Sten is designed to offer insight into Sten’s
likes and personality. The panel is centered around the skyline of New York City
where he lived. Surrounding the area of the skyline are smaller panels “illustrating
some of the things he loved.” There is a camera that symbolizes his love of
photography and a cactus that represents his travels to the Southwest. There are
lines of poetry and a caricature that was abstracted from a photograph when he was
best man at his brother’s wedding. In one corner, a silhouette of the family and a broken red heart represents the family’s loss. In the other three corner’s are small signature squares created by his three nieces. One shows a silver heart with the name Kelsey under it; another has a heart with hand prints and Erin’s name under it, and; in the final corner, is a square by Julia that has a red heart in the sky and a depiction of herself and her uncle Sten holding hands (Hodgson 1).

**Julia Jackson (Maine)**

Julia Jackson and her family created a panel for her son, Dennie Mike. Jackson reports that she created a panel for her son “so that [he] did not die in vain.” The creation of the panel was “mainly for me as a way to work through my grief and I had to do something for Dennie and let people know.” She admits that the process of making the panel was a difficult one. She writes, “it took a long time to make, all family members shared in making it, with a lot of tears, hugs, and anger at AIDS, it was very emotional” (Jackson, Julia 2).

Jackson states that she thinks the panel is “simple” but it gives insight into Dennie Mike’s personality. The panel is comprised of a baby blue quilted background with Dennie Mike’s name prominently displayed in dark blue letters at the top. At the bottom of the panel are the years of Dennie Mike’s birth and death. Within the panel are smaller messages created by various members of his family. A snowman at the top of the panel represents Dennie Mike’s love of
Christmas. A red heart serves as a token of love. An inscribed Polaroid snapshot says, “I’ll be missing you—Love U Ma.” In ink on white fabric, an aunt contributed the epistle, “Dennie: Artist, Stylist, Humorist, Love Aunt Mary.” Likewise, a black heart with pink lettering reads, “To a Brother and Friend Love Ya Tom.” Personal notes from other family members are present on the panel as well (Jackson, Julia 1).

Antoinette James (Washington D.C.)

Antoinette James made a panel for her brother, John Anthony Guerrero. She states, “there are several reason why I created a panel but the main reason was to honor my brother by validating his existence in this world and his life. His sisters were not allowed to place an obituary in his local paper since the man he lived with had never told his mother he was gay” (2). She continues, “there being no vault or headstone marking his time on this planet, was an important issue to me. In dealing with death I was taught traditional Catholic (and Mexican American) values regarding respect for the dead. I needed a point of reference for me—for my own personal healing, and this panel helped me in that manner” (James, A. 2).

According to Antoinette, her brother was a designer and he had a flair for style. She states that she hopes she has captured John’s flair in the panel. The background for the panel is a bright rose color. On black fabric, at the top of the
panel, are John’s birth and death dates. Beneath the dates, “made from my brother’s decorating samples,” is John Anthony Guerrero’s name. Beneath his name are business cards that symbolize “his successes and failures in business.” To the right of the cards is a picture of Guerrero with a gold heart pinned beneath it. The heart of gold is a representation of how he treated people. Just above the bottom left hand corner is a beaded Rolls Royce. The car represents his “secret hope of eventually becoming financially independent.” At the bottom of the panel is a personal philosophy that Guerrero read daily. James states that she hopes her panel conveys that “He was a person with a purpose in life—to bring beauty into the lives of others, albeit, with some finesse” (James, A. 1).

James (Iowa)

James created a panel for David, his lover of ten years. He states that his reason for creating the panel was that “[David] was a history buff. He is now a part of the ‘The Quilt.’ I did that for him, to become a powerful historical mark.” He also observes that he was “grieving heavily” and making the panel helped him work through his grief. Also, the Quilt gives him strength: “I like seeing his name on the panel. It gives me strength to go on without him by just saying his name” (James 2).

According to James, the panel that he created for his lover was “simple and so was he.” The panel contains objects that represent things that were important to
David throughout his life. The fabric for the panel is from his favorite sweatshirt. A string art windmill signifies David’s appreciation of the string art medium and his love of windmills. A map of Iowa depicts where David lived his entire life. A tupperware refrigerator magnet signifies a job David did as a hobby. There is popcorn, and also ribbons from David’s rodeo days. A lock of David’s hair is hidden beneath one of the ribbons. Lastly, there are signatures of David’s friends (James 1).

**Donna Kohlbach (New York)**

Donna Kohlbach created a panel for her son, Daniel Alan Kohlbach. She states that making the panel was “a labor of love and a way to get through some of the grief. When I presented it, I couldn’t see because of the tears but I needed to feel the pain. I took care of everyone else when he was sick and dying. I needed the release among caring people” (Kohlbach 2). Kohlbach states that she hopes her panel “speaks to family members. It’s ok to love someone with AIDS. They’ve done nothing to lose that love” (Kohlbach 1).

The background of the panel is light blue. At the top of the panel are Daniel’s birth and death dates. Flanking the dates are two white doves holding a ribbon with Daniel’s full name in red letters. Beneath his name, an inscription reads, “Rest in Peace We Love You.” The rest of the panel contains signatures from his family (Kohlbach 1).
Larry Lehman (Georgia)

Larry Lehman and a group of friends created a panel for his best friend, Walt Thomas. Larry states they created a panel, “as a way to remember, as a way to forget, as a way to move one, as a way to share our love and memory of him” (Lehman 2).

The panel consists of a light blue background, or sky, in which floats a multi-colored hot air balloon. On the top of the balloon is Walt’s first name and within the basket are visual representations of “two cats, the Washington Monument [from a D.C. trip], a candle, a wine glass, and his high top tennis shoes that he wore to a Black Tie function.” Surrounding the balloon are messages and signatures from some of his close friends (Lehman 1).

Don MacLeish (California)

Don MacLeish created his panel for his “significant other of ten years,” Larry Dean Sorensen. MacLeish stated that creating the panel was cathartic for him as it “[kept] him busy during his time of grief.” In addition, “I wanted to express my love and to show how Larry was loved by others, that this person was real, and [that he] fought for three long years with this dreaded disease” (MacLeish 2).

The panel MacLeish created for Sorensen consists of a dark background against which are placed a golden moon surrounded by two clouds and twenty-
four stars. The moon symbolizes Sorensen. The clouds represent his “free spirit.”

A single gold star contains a personal message from MacLeish. A white star edged in gold was created by Sorensen’s best friend. The remaining twenty-two stars contain other messages from friends and family. A small photograph of Sorensen is at the bottom of the panel. Nearby, an inscription reads, “A Heaven Full of Endless Love and Friendship...Larry Dean Sorensen...May 7, 1945 - September 17, 1990...He Will Always Shine in Our Hearts and On Us...Orange Co. CA” (MacLeish 1).

**Penny O’Connor (Iowa)**

Penny O’Connor created a panel for “Hospice client and friend,” Todd E. Thompson. She created the panel “because Todd loved the Quilt and asked me to make him a part of it. His mother and sister wanted to do a panel too but did not feel ready yet” (O’Connor 2).

O’Connor describes her tribute to Thompson as “very classy, quiet, and dignified, just like he was.” The panel is charcoal gray which is reminiscent of a color Todd often wore. Painted in white on the gray background are his signature “Todd E. Thompson” and the dates “1962-1989.” O’Connor states she likes the panel because it contains a “replication of [Todd’s] own handwriting. . . .Because it’s his own signature (and we wrote a lot of notes, cards, and letters to one another) it is as vivid a memory as had I used a photo of his face.” She admits that
because of its simplicity the panel may not speak as much to others who view it as it does to her (O’Connor 1).

Richard Smith (Virginia)

Richard Smith created a panel for his partner, Patrick Kernan. Smith’s motivation for creating the panel was to “create a memorial to [Kernan] and to help myself work through some issues of his death.” He also adds that the primary function of the memorial is “to be a visible reminder/symbol to the number of people that have become victims to [AIDS] so that others may learn, become more aware, and educate themselves and others” (Smith 2).

The panel Smith created for his partner tells the story of Kernan and is symbolic of their relationship together. The background of the panel is Kernan’s favorite color, bright blue. His name is clearly spelled out in bold white letters at the top of the panel. There is a golf green that represents Kernan’s love of golf and, as he once articulated to Smith, his desire to someday go to the “Great golf course in the sky.” A card Kernan once gave Smith as a “symbol of their relationship” is incorporated into the panel. There is a rainbow stripe that “finally let[s] people know that [Kernan] was gay.” And, an inscription reads, “Lover, Partner, Friend---Thanks for your support and so much more” (Smith 1).
Rosemary Spatafora (Michigan)

Rosemary Spatafora and her sister Monica created a panel for their brother, Thomas John Knobblock. According to Spatafora, she created the panel "as a memorial for my brother, Tom, whom I loved very much." The Quilt provides "a positive and creative means of expression for those who have been touched by AIDS and show[s] the world in a very dramatic way the humanity behind the statistics" (Spatafora 2).

The panel that Spatafora created for her brother is an elaborate tribute to her brother. The fabric chosen for the background is forest green with small light green flowers. Knobblock's full name and the years of his birth and death are prominently placed at the top of the panel. Beneath his name is his picture and surrounding the picture are quilted representations of the "things he loved in life." "Palmetto trees and waves symbolize the ocean in South Carolina [near Myrtle Beach]; tropical fish and cats are for the pets Tom loved; flowers and mountains are quilted across the top." Surrounding the picture and covering most of the panel are forty pink hearts that bear messages from Knobblock's friends and family. The messages range from a single name inscribed on a heart to multiple lines of verse and personal tributes (Spatafora 1).
Roger E. Warnix (California)

Roger E. Warnix created three panels for friends Jim Hull, Val Martin, and Douglas Murrel Cooper (a.k.a. Tim Kramer). Warnix created these panels because “these were friends. . . . And, it was a tremendous healing process for me. Also, I wanted them to be a part of the most beautiful remembrance of loved ones I have ever seen” (Warnix 2).

The panel that Warnix created for his friend and former lover, Jim Hull, is cast in hues of black, red, and white. The panel background is black. Hull’s name, birth and death dates and locales are in red and white lettering. The panel also contains a picture of Hull on a horse and in the upper right and lower left corners of the picture are vibrant red cowboy boots. An inscription reads, “Sleep Well My Beautiful Friend” (Warnix 1).

Warnix’s tribute to his friend Val Martin is dedicated to his life as “a Leatherman and a Gentleman.” Martin was in the first film Warnix directed for the Adult Film Industry. According to Warnix, the movie became a “leather classic thanks to Val.” The background of the panel is dark green. Val Martin’s name is the highlighted feature of the panel. In the upper corners of the panel are Martin’s birth and death dates. Across the bottom of the panel, an inscription reads, “A Leatherman And a Gentleman” (Warnix 1).
Although his given name was Douglas Murrel Cooper, it was his Adult Film screen name of Tim Kramer that Wamix features at the top of the panel he created for him. Beneath Kramer’s name is a picture of him, offset by two objects that represent his life. In the upper left hand corner is a dirt bike, and in the bottom right hand corner is a reel of film that represents his career as an Adult Film star. Framing the picture is a bouquet of roses that, according to Wamix, symbolizes Kramer’s love of flowers and gardening. The dates and locales of Kramer’s birth and death are also present on panel. At the bottom of the panel is the name Douglas Murrel Cooper. Wamix admits that he used Cooper’s screen name as the dominant focal point because “people who love films will be drawn to this panel” (Wamix 1).

Based on the panel makers’ responses, it is apparent that individuals are drawn to the Quilt for a variety of reasons. However, a number of recurring responses suggest that there are five primary functions that the Quilt fulfills for these individuals. First, it is a memorial to the victims. Second, the making of the panel facilitates the mourner’s process of grieving. Third, the Quilt offers a public site that socializes mourners and aids the individual grief process. Fourth, the Quilt permits self-identification. And, finally, the Quilt acts as a powerful educational tool.
First, the Quilt acts as a memorial where individuals, who have experienced the death of a loved one, can redress their loss. It is due to AIDS and its resulting consequences that a memorial is needed at all. Because of the refusal of morticians to embalm the earliest victims of AIDS and due to the stigma associated with the disease, many victims were denied traditional burial rights. Victims, whose families or friends would have preferred burial, were cremated and their ashes scattered. No headstone marked their existence. As a result, those who mourned their loved ones were denied a physical site that marked the existence of their loved one. The Quilt, then, functions, as a symbolic cemetery where panel makers can memorialize their loved ones. Garry Hodgson comments on the significance of this particular function when he writes, "Like many others, my brother was cremated, and there is no cemetery or other physical place to 'go and see him.' His panel, wherever it may be at the moment, sort of provides an abstract version of such a place" (Hodgson 2). Rosemary Spatafora echoes the words of Hodgson when she writes, "There is no grave or marker for posterity. It was important for me to have something that will go on- -something that will be here after I’m gone so that future generations will know that Tom was here, and that we loved him" (Spatafora 2). Antoinette James also comments on the necessity of a burial site when she states, "there being no vault or headstone
marking his time on this planet, was an important issue to me. . . . I needed a point of reference for me.” (James, A. 2).

As panel makers craft the memorials of their loved ones, they are permitted to create panels that range from the most elaborate in detail to the most simplistic. One of the most elaborate panels in my research was the one that Don MacLeish created for his lover Larry Dean Sorensen. The vibrant colors on the dark black background immediately draw the viewer’s eyes to the panel. The golden sun, the blue and white stars, and the picture of Sorensen surrounded by the sentiments of family and friends act as a compelling memorial to his life. Garry Hodgson’s panel for his brother Sten was also elaborate and told his story in frames. The grey of the New York skyline was offset by the brilliant colors of the smaller panels that surrounded it. Penny O’Connor, by contrast, created a simple panel that had the signature of Todd E. Thompson and the years of birth and death. She admits that “to others the panel may not say as much since it is so simple-- - Although I think some are struck by the unique lettering and overall simplicity of it” (O’Connor 1). Because the guidelines for creating a panel are specific only to the actual size of the panel, panel makers may create whatever tribute they wish. All panels, from the most elaborate to the most simplistic, serve to redress the typification of the individual by particularizing him or her in a cloth memorial.
Many of the panel makers noted another significant function of the Quilt when they cited it as an agency for healing. As the panel makers took up needle and thread to complete their panels, they were able to move through the transitional experience of grieving. According to Turner, “most public crises . . . have ‘liminal’ characteristics since each is a threshold between more or less stable harmonic social process” (Anthropology 34). The liminal phase, then, serves as a transitional period in which those experiencing the crisis find themselves in a place they have not been before. Turner refers to this transitional period as a “betwixt-and-between” state (Dramas 232). Because of the death of a loved one and the stigma associated with the disease, the panel makers find themselves “betwixt and between” social statuses, neither a part of nor separated from the community and its regulations. Through the quilt, panel makers are helped through the transitional phase as they literally work through the shock of the death and move on with life.

The activity of quilting permits panel makers to tell any story they like. As a result of this crafting, they become producers of how the death is identified and processed rather than consumers of death rituals as commonly carried out in our culture by funeral homes and the like. More specifically, they produce alternative meanings for AIDS victims, rather than consuming the inevitable typification of victims as produced by the media and scientific communities. Rather than accepting the death of their loved ones and doing nothing, the panel makers turn to
the Quilt as a means of marking the lives of individuals. The Quilt empowers them to memorialize the victim. It also allows them to identify themselves and their relationship to the victim. Eileen S. McKenney was asked by her son Van to consider making a panel for him upon his death. She writes, "When the time came and I did make his panel, it proved to be... an intense grieving process, a vital step in getting through the heartache of losing my son. . . . When I began to work on Van's panel, it was once again a source of 'letting go' while wanting so badly to hang on" (quoted in Brown, J. 29). Susan Messanger Black understands the healing power of the Quilt when she thanks the NAMES Project Foundation for "allowing us a place to sigh our private and collective grief" (quoted in Brown, J. 37). Donna Kohlbach envisioned her panel for her son Daniel as "a labor of love and a way to get through some of the grief" (Kohlbach 2). According to Bruce Garner, the Quilt "fostered the grief process for me. Once I finished the panel, I began to realize how much I had suppressed my grief. The panel let me finally deal with my grief in a healthy way" (Garner 2).

As a site for telling, the Quilt encourages panel makers to share the story of their loved ones with others. There is an inferred understanding that these stories will be shared publicly as the Quilt is displayed throughout the country. And, panel makers show a desire for the public display of the panels when they comment on the healing and educational power of the Quilt for others. Donna
Kohlbach noted the difficulty that members of her family had in accepting the life and death of her son Daniel, and she hopes that her panel will “speak to family members. It’s ok to love someone with AIDS. They’ve done nothing to lose that love” (Kohlbach 1). For Richard Smith, the Quilt is important because it acts as “a visible reminder/symbol to the number of people that have become victims to [AIDS] so that others may learn, become more aware, and educate themselves and others” (Smith 2). Bob Ames’ intends his panel to not only redress the death of his partner, but also the social stigma of homosexuality that is inherent in the moral/religious breach. He wants his panel “to demonstrate that love between two men is every bit as rewarding as any other love” (Ames 2). Regardless of the purpose for sharing, it seems that the panel maker’s redression of a loved one’s death and their own grief prepares them for a public expression.

This public expression of grief, allows panel makers to benefit from yet another function of the Quilt—self-identification. Through the crafting of the panel, panel makers not only pay tribute to their loved ones, they identify themselves as victims of the disease as well. James Click, for example, states that one of the primary reasons for creating a panel for his love, Kevin E. Young, “is to “document our relationship.” He accomplishes this task by incorporating this inscription in the panel, “Two lives made one through love unending. Two hearts joined in a circle of love unbroken” (Click 2). Through their disclosures, panel
makers not only pay tribute to the known victim of the disease, they present themselves as victims as well. Funeral rites typically acknowledge the deceased but also are crafted to allow identification of those that mourn. Obituaries, for example, actually out-line the familial connections of the mourner to the deceased. The Quilt, then, offers a funeral site where mourners, who might have been omitted from traditional obituaries for a variety of reasons, can identify their relationships to the deceased.

Finally, many panel-makers comment on the educational function of the Quilt. It is through education that the mis-cast secondary breach is exposed as ill-informed and blatantly wrong. According to Garry Hodgson, “As a focus for education and awareness, [the Quilt] is unique in its ability to bring home the concept that people are suffering. . . . It reinforces that there are all kinds of people suffering. It’s no longer ‘the Gay Plague’ to be conveniently ignored by mainstream America” (Hodgson 2). The use of the Quilt as an educational tool not only exposes the inaccurate information about AIDS, it also permits other performance activities that direct attention toward prevention. As the Quilt is displayed in churches, schools, and community centers across the nation, it offers a site where AIDS educators can share updated information on the AIDS crisis with their prospective audiences.
Few, if any, other public memorials afford individual family members the opportunity to “tell” the stories of their loved ones in such vivid detail. The Quilt offers a place where the term “gay” may be completely ignored or highly emphasized. The Quilt is a place where anyone can tell absolutely any story they wish about a person who has died of AIDS.
Chapter Four

The Social Context and Function of the AIDS Memorial Quilt

Historically quilts have functioned to fulfill a variety of personal and practical needs. As discussed in Chapter Three, quilts served a personal need that enabled quilters to work through a transitional phase in their lives. Quilting became a performance activity that enabled women to express themselves through their craft. And, even though Conrad asserts that “husbands and sons often helped with the quilt piecing, just as the wives and daughters helped with the farm work” (24), “the art of quilting was controlled and handed down by women” (Cooper 13). Quilting also fulfilled the practical needs of warmth and frugality. Prescribing to the “waste not” philosophy of the late 1700's, quilters salvaged every scrap of available cloth to make their quilts which then served as bed coverings.

Quilting also fulfilled a social function in so far as it brought members of the community together in a shared social event where they could express their concerns about everyday life with each other while still meeting social-cultural expectations regarding their roles as women. In the late eighteenth through the early twentieth centuries, quilting bees were often organized to prepare for the cold winters but they also functioned as a significant part of the social life of the community (Solvit 7-8). Conrad agrees with Solvit, specifying, “Quilting was... an excuse for women to socialize with neighbors who were often hours away by
horseback. Quilting bees were as important social events as barnraisings” (22). Neighbors would sometimes refuse to go home until the work and socializing was done. Entire quilts were often completed in a single day (Conrad 22). Margit Echols comments on the social function of quilts for quilters in the twentieth century when she observes, “Quilting is a great way for a group to celebrate itself or an event” (8).

One particular function was that women often gathered to complete a daughter’s dowery of quilts. Betrothed women were expected to bring to a marriage thirteen completed quilts. The thirteenth quilt was usually started at an engagement party that the mother-of-the-bride held for women friends and family members. The event “was a time for gossip and socializing” as the women crafted the celebratory quilt (Brown, E. 34). In the evening, “the menfolk would join the women for feasting and dancing” (Brown, E. 34; also see Solvit 8). This case exemplifies how a quilt is not only a site of individual expression; it also excites social exigencies: A collective event is created as women gather to produce or craft a (social-) aesthetic object as co-artists or authors. In this way, their collective authorship temporarily re-conceives how social and cultural systems might operate. Rather than functioning as individual units of labor, disconnected from the final product of their labors (as has been the case in many white- and blue-collar industries since the mid-nineteenth century), the women’s work
articulates a craft industry where the laborer or craftsperson is involved in the production of the product from its inception to its completion. Also, unlike how many aesthetic or art objects are commonly produced, a quilting bee relies on the aesthetic and technical skills of many. “Art” is understood as a collective act and activity.

Further, the dowery quilt example suggests how women simultaneously abide by expectations regarding social roles while they affirm, at least theoretically, the above-mentioned alternatives to social-economic and social-aesthetic production norms. In the nineteenth century, certainly, and into the twentieth century, women were expected to advance their social influence from within the domestic site. It was in the home and by means of women that moral values were (supposed to be) conserved and passed on to future generations, and by means of both religious rites (e.g., prayer before meals), and secular rituals like the quilting bee. Generally, women also were in charge of the domestic purse-strings, or economy. This role empowered them as responsible individuals, and as responsible for the efficient running of the home.

The example of the dowery quilt suggests how women met these social role expectations: They met in the domestic site to craft a product that was efficient in its use of labor and materials and, in so doing, they conserved moral and
economic-based expectations regarding women’s roles in general, and the bride’s obligation to the wedding contract in particular.

Given the many functions the quilting event fulfilled, there is little wonder that the event concluded with feasting and dancing. As with many other rituals, this “blow-off” behavior signifies a celebration of the participants acceptance and successful enactment of the social roles and values the community deem important to their on-going survival.

Album Quilts were a popular gift to mark the leave-taking of a minister or teacher from the community. Dear friends and brides were also recipients of this popular quilt. The Album Quilt was composed of various blocks, each one created by individuals within the community. Once the block was completed, the creator embroidered her name on the block so that the recipient would know who had created it. After the blocks were completed, the women gathered to sew the blocks together and to begin the actual quilting process (McKin 5).

The Beggar Quilt is another example of a patchwork quilt that was instrumental to the social life of the community. “This interesting block harks back to the neighborly customs [in the 1800’s] of begging one’s friends for scraps of their frocks, or for the man’s old neck ties” (McKin 19). Cloth was expensive so the women of the community often bartered their choice fabrics for the fabrics of others. This exchange system enabled women to acquire material that might have
otherwise been unavailable to them, and, at the same time, it offered an arena for socializing. As these women (and, as noted by Conrad, men in some cases) gathered to work on a variety of projects, a sense of community was forged. The individuals gathered to “tell stories, trade gossip, sing songs, and enjoy each other’s company as they sewed” (Quilt Facts 10 November 1992). Quilting and barter bees, then, were communal acts of meeting and gathering that functioned to bind the community as an interdependent network of individuals, family groups, and social units. This communal use of quilting celebrates the interdependence of the community members rather than their independence and, in economic terms, their aggressive competitive individualism.

In this chapter, I examine the social functions of the AIDS Memorial Quilt. First, I discuss the NAMES Project’s understanding of its mission as both personal and social. Then, I examine the issues that panel-makers confront knowing that their panel is (or can be) publicized when incorporated into the larger Quilt and put on display. Then, I consider the Quilt as a site for redressing the primary or health breach. And, finally I evaluate the Quilt as a public site for addressing conflicting social discourses regarding that breach.

In the previous chapter, the AIDS Memorial Quilt was presented as a site for individual memorialization, for grief redression, for socialization, for self-identification, and for education. But, the Quilt is also organized to socialize or
make public those deaths. To insure we remember, the NAMES Project Foundation adopted the slogan “Remember Their Names” as a part of their literature and marketing campaigns. From the beginning, the focus was clearly on the names. Dwardoff comments on the significance of names when he states that “names remind us of what life is all about . . . . Of course, the names we know best are the names of our friends and family . . . . we can remember them and conjure them up inside by simply stating their names” (154).

The Quilt brings the victims of AIDS into the present by reminding the participants and viewers of their names. It does so by amassing panels and putting them on display at regional and national levels. Although the Quilt does not contain all individuals who have succumbed to AIDS, it does attempt to keep pace with the disease. Unlike other memorials, the Quilt grows with the passing of each day. In 1987, the Quilt contained 1,920 panels and by 1998 it contained 42,016 panels that contained the names of 80,466 people who had been killed by AIDS. This number represents only twenty-one percent of AIDS deaths in the U.S., but it is a significant reminder of the continual presence of the disease in society (Quilt Facts, 18 November 1998, 1-2).

The NAMES Project also is organized to socialize panel makers if they so desire. Panel makers may choose to create their panel alone in their home or they may seek the solace of others by working with one of the fifty-three NAMES
Project Chapters nationwide. Once the panel is completed, it is entrusted to the NAMES Project Foundation to be included in the larger Quilt and used to fulfill a larger mission. As they give up the panel, panel makers may, if they so desire, participate in the Quilt performance by presenting their own panel at a public display, unveiling or laying out the panels, reading the names, working as grief counselors, visiting the Quilt, signing the Signature Square, handing out AIDS information, and/or working at one of the Quilt souvenir booths.

The NAMES Project does not mandate participation in any of these socialization activities nor does it exclude others who have not made panels from volunteering or participating in aspects of the ceremony. A panel maker may choose to make their panel alone in the home. They may, if they wish, keep the panel for themselves. And, they may choose to mail it to the NAMES Project Foundation rather than present it in person. The NAMES Project Foundation recognizes and respects the individualized process of grief. As a result, the foundation provides a public site of grieving if a panel maker chooses to take advantage of it.

The foundation also is aware that, for many, the publication of a victim’s death from AIDS may be risky because it calls for disclosure of information that an individual may not want publicized and it may create an uncomfortable alliance for the panel maker as they become “associated” with a victim that some view as a
“social outcast.” This “association” often leads to alienation of the victim’s family by society. As result of this alienation, many early panel makers were (and still are) reluctant to share their complete stories.

From the earliest recorded cases of the disease to the present, individuals face the stigma of going public with their grief. Hence, some choose not to submit the panels and others “censor” the story they want to tell. The degree of disclosure is determined by the panel makers since the foundation does not make them disclose. Some panels contain only first names, or nicknames, or occasionally messages that openly state the fear of “discovery.” One panel maker wrote, “I have decorated this banner to honor my brother. Our parents did not want his name used publicly. The omission of his name represents the fear of oppression that AIDS victims and their families feel” (quoted in Ruskin 79). Another panel was created for a man named Michael. His last name is visibly removed by his parents who literally cut his surname from the panel (Ruskin 78). Another panel reads “Raymond.” According to the panel maker, Raymond’s surname was “omitted not only because his family would have been deeply disturbed to have Ray identified publicly in a gay context, but also because Ray himself never fully came out of the ‘closet’” (quoted in Ruskin 80). One woman, who found it difficult to accept the fact that her husband was bi-sexual, joined her daughter in the creation of a panel. The daughter asked her mother not to put her
father’s name on the panel because “‘I don’t want people to be nasty to me or my friends’” (quoted in Ruskin 69).

On the other hand, many panel makers desire publication of their story and embrace the socialization that results. For these individuals, the publication of their story is a key factor for their participation in the Quilt. For Jay Bonner, his panel was created to be “a permanent and living memorial to my lover for all to see” (Bonner 1; emphasis added). And, for Garry Hodgson, the motivation to create a panel was so that “Sten’s death [w]ould not be allowed to pass unnoticed, and this [the Quilt] was a way of declaring it to the world” (Hodgson 2; emphasis added). As these panel makers create memorials to their loved ones, they assume an audience. Many of their responses suggest that the panels are meant to do more than act as transitional vehicles for working through their grief. They express their support for AIDS victims and the NAMES Project. In a sense, they “take a side” in the social drama. Besides telling their story, then, the panel is a critical act of side taking with the victims of AIDS.

Once a panel maker has contributed their panel to the NAMES Project, they may if they would like participate in activities associated with the display of the Quilt. Whether at the regional or national level, display activities include an initial laying out or unveiling of the Quilt, the presentation and inclusion of new panels into the Quilt, the recitation of names, visiting or walking through the Quilt, or
responding to the Quilt by means of writing on the Signature Square. One might also volunteer to hand out informational fliers to visitors, “man” the booths where Quilt-related souvenirs such as buttons, books, or posters, are sold, and/or participate in the organizational or promotional aspects of the project.

The display of the Quilt is a social act or event. The amassing of multiple and diverse panels suggests the amassing of many individual voices in a public forum to address a common issue. Individual voices are or can be heard and seen but a collective concern binds them into a social unit. To facilitate the socializing imperative, the NAMES Project Foundation has developed a well-orchestrated series of activities that affect how the display occurs or is composed. As in rituals, in general, these activities represent or symbolize the values that the NAMES Project is attempting to advance to the public at large. Also, as in rituals, the encouraging of participants to enact or perform symbolic actions, as compared to prescribing values to them, effects a potentially powerful learning experience. Lastly, as in rituals, the performance of these activities by many people infers a (temporary) social identity and bond. In brief, individuals performing a like activity create a communal link.

The ritual activity begins with the “presentation” of the Quilt to observers. I, for one, feel that the unveiling of the Quilt is one of the most intriguing aspects of the ritual. As observers watch from the sides, the laying out of the Quilt begins.
A display of the entire Quilt requires as many as two-thousand volunteers. First, walkways are laid, to allow observers maximum access to the Quilt. Then, portions of the Quilt, each containing thirty-two individual panels, are placed in the squares created by the walkway grid. Eight white clad volunteers then ceremoniously pick up the Quilt section, turn together to position it, and raise it in unison as it billows in the breeze (Schneider A27). The volunteers then secure the section and move on to complete the same sequence of action in another location. This ritual-like sequence is repeated until the entire Quilt is unveiled. When unveiled, the Quilt covers a space equivalent to twenty-five football fields.

One of the most difficult parts of the ritual for an observer involves the “giving up” of panels. At regional and national displays of the Quilt, a space is set aside for the admission of new panels. Here, the panel maker is asked to complete an information card and to submit, with the panel, a letter that details whatever the panel maker feels is relevant. The presentation of new panels is designed to call attention to the continuing saga of the disease. Each new panel makes it evident that the disease is still among us and that individuals are dying of the disease. The Quilt publicizes that fact as it welcomes individuals, panels, and voices to the social collective of the Quilt.

As viewers are drawn to this social collective of death they also are reminded of the living as friends and family recite the names of loved ones.
memorialized in the Quilt. On a main stage, readers recite the names of individuals enshrined in the Quilt. A visitor may hear "Jim Blair, Joe Bishop, John P. Castillo, Rock Hudson, Jack Caster, Chet, Baby Christian, Robert Joplin, K., A. K., Jeff, Ryan White, Anonymous." The readers are volunteers who maintain the litany of names throughout the entire display of the Quilt. "Many of the two minute recitations end in 'and my best friend,' or 'my sweet little sister,' or some other personal touch. From time to time, a mother's voice cracks over 'my precious son and best friend'" (Sullivan 43). Because of the recitation of names, it becomes impossible to forget the other victims of AIDS--the living.

All participants and individuals are encouraged to wander through the display--on their own or with a companion, for as long or as short a time as they desire. The panels are linked with walkways in between. Although there is always a sense of collective grief, a viewer is able to get close enough to each panel to view it individually. As individuals view the Quilt, they are reminded that they are sharing this moment with others. At one of the D.C. displays, I noticed a man in his thirties making his way through the Quilt. He wore a woman's black feather hat with a black veil pulled over his face. His mourning performance went almost unnoticed. Others were strolling and stopping at individuals panels, some kneeled to look more closely. A small group gathered around a specific panel for a long time, sharing their laughter and their tears. A volunteer, armed with a box of
tissues, approached and comforted them. A man in a wheelchair stopped to view the panel of his lover. I watched as a small child, sitting on his father’s panel, carried on a conversation with a photograph of his dad. He sat on the panel for a while, kissed the photograph of his dad, and said, “by.” He then took his mom’s hand and said, “I’m ready to go now.” As he departed, he looked over his shoulder and whispered, “Good-bye dad, see you soon. I love you.”

The Quilt interests visitors for a variety of reasons. They are drawn into the display by the colors of the fabric, the ironic epitaphs, the repetition of names, and the use of virtually anything and everything to tell the individual narratives. According to Dawidoff, “for the time you spend in the country of the Quilts, you experience what it is like to live with all these persons, the emotions that their lives bring out in you are elicited by the extraordinary variety and interests of the panels” (156). Also, there is a sense of a collective: many voices amassed together to identify a social crisis, to critique it, and also redress it at the level of the individual.

At the center of each display of the Quilt is a Signature Square, a twelve foot by twelve foot expanse of blank fabric where visitors to the Quilt are invited to kneel on the square and leave their own memorial, message or mark. Visitors may, if they choose, write a message on the square or drop by to read the messages of others. There are no restrictions regarding what one writes on the
Signature Square. After the display, the Signature Square(s) are linked and used as “backing” for the Quilt. That is to say, beneath the displayed Quilt rests another quilt. This quilt is a quilt of words that has been left by visitors.

For the most part, the messages left on the Signature Square show compassion for those memorialized in the Quilt and their families. Sandi signed the Signature Square, “I have always been almost repulsed by AIDS and the people who carry it. I now embrace these people and the disease. I see now that these are the same as you and me” (quoted in Brown, J. 170). A student wrote, “I had always been brought up thinking AIDS was a homosexual disease or that heterosexuals got it by ‘sleeping around.’ I was raised to believe that gays were bad people not to be associated with. But, not anymore” (quoted in Brown, J. 312). On occasion, a negative message is left on the Signature Square. Cleve Jones recollects a high-school student who wrote, “All fags should die.” For Jones, the student’s message was not as significant as the responses it fostered. Around the message, the young man’s peers commented on the foolishness, the bigotry, and the unnecessary hate of his message (Jones 4).

On the other hand, the “negative” message is highly significant because it indicates a social-political rhetoric that includes, or makes room for, opposing views. Although, in context and composition the display of the Quilt encourages recognition, acceptance, and education regarding AIDS and its victims, it does not
mandate this view, just as it does not mandate how one chooses to participate. The Quilt, then, appears to understand and include in its rhetoric one of the fundamental values of its audience, at least in the U.S. The display of the Quilt is designed to permit individual choice and free speech within and as a part of its assemblage. In this way, the Quilt conserves and makes use of a belief that most U.S. participants and visitors value greatly, in order to advance its more specific agenda of, indeed, siding with AIDS victims, and redressing their otherwise invisible deaths.

The ritual is designed to include “outsiders” in the performance of the Quilt with a hope that they will be transformed by it and as a result they will return to every day life with a new or heightened understanding of AIDS and its victims. The Quilt, then, as a public performance offers a redressive site where those who are most affected by the disease can inform or educate others by sharing their stories.

In addition to being a public display that encourages panel makers and visitors to recognize and understand the AIDS crisis in both individual and social terms, the Quilt also responds to and critiques the social-cultural discourses that have contributed to and are a part of the AIDS social drama. In this section of the chapter, I review the different sides that have defined and expressed a position regarding AIDS, and I discuss how the Quilt has responded to them.
Within the crisis stage of a social drama, individuals and groups begin to take sides. As the crisis intensifies, members of all groups begin to fine tune their message to further their own rhetorical agendas and to gain recruits. During the crisis phase of the AIDS social drama, many groups worked to reidentify and ultimately miscast the AIDS breach. As Sills and Kinsella observe, during times of plague individuals and groups look for a scapegoat. And, in this case, the identification of a scapegoat shifted the focus away from the disease itself and on to the perceived targets and their lifestyles. This rhetorical scapegoating gave a false sense of security to mainstream society and empowered individuals like Jerry Falwell and groups like the Religious Right as they furthered their respective agendas.

In the early days of the AIDS epidemic, the scientific community and the mass media were two instrumental forces in promoting a general perception of AIDS as a gay disease. The media was reluctant to report on AIDS because, according to Kinsella, “members of the media . . . refused to believe that the deaths of gay men and drug addicts were worth reporting” (1). Sills, on the other hand, states that the media had a “preoccupation with the perception of threat held by mainstream, white middle class America” (132). In other words, as long as there was no perceived threat to mainstream America, there was no story to tell. Sills also indicts the press for its “support of misperceived notions about the disease that
contributed to discriminatory behavior” (133). Although, over time, the media did begin to offer more accurate and abundant information regarding AIDS, the “popular misconceptions of how HIV infection is acquired still exists” (Sills 133).

The media was not the only social agency responsible for the minimal and inaccurate coverage of the disease. Kinsella observes that misconceptions created in the media were impacted by what the scientific community chose to share with the media. The media relied on the scientific community for their information and the information they received was at first inaccurate and second, outdated. The information was inaccurate and outdated because the scientific community was reluctant to share their information with the media because medical journals often “blackballed” medical breakthroughs that were introduced first in the mass media rather than in scientific journals. “For reporters and their editors, the lack of fresh, accurate information from experts on the epidemic meant they had no story to report—and so the public remained in the dark” (Kinsella 2). If the only information available to the mass public was that AIDS was a gay disease, then that was how it would be perceived.

According to Kinsella, “It [took] six years and twelve thousand deaths before most mainstream media--general audience newspapers, magazines, network and local television--started aggressively covering the epidemic” (2-3). When, in
1987, the media began to cover the disease more completely, the genesis of the AIDS Memorial Quilt was well underway.

The Quilt attempts to challenge the issue of AIDS as a gay disease and especially challenge any notion that gays “do not matter” by offering a place where gays and others can join together to bring attention to the disease. Also, although the NAMES Project has never attempted to hide the fact that gay men die of the disease and are represented in the Quilt, the Quilt also is a site where the stories of non-gay individuals and victims can be and are expressed.

Many panels within the Quilt deliberately counteract the commonly held perception that AIDS is a gay disease. A panel for the children of Romania reads, “Touch Romania Inc. For The Children Who Died Alone and Untouched.” The background of the panel is comprised of the colors of the Romanian flag. In the foreground, there is a picture of two toddlers. A panel for “Baby C” is made of a baby blanket on which is a baby outfit complete with Mickey Mouse slippers. The panel reads, “We miss you, Baby C, 1987-1990, 2 ½ years, Huntsville, AL.” A panel for Anthony D. Himes includes pictures of the toddler and two giant blue dinosaurs. The child was one year and four days old at death. The NAMES Project Foundation also includes panels of children in much of its literature, to inform people that not all victims of AIDS are gay, and that the Quilt is designed to memorialize all victims of the disease (Quilt Facts 18 November 1998 1).
Gay and straight women also are remembered in the Quilt. A panel for Donna Ygual reads, "Orange, California, 8-15-62 - 9-5-90, wife, mother, cuz, daughter." A panel for Lori Ann Sereculla features her portrait as the central focus. Around the panel are hand prints and personal messages from family and friends. One hand print reads "dad."

Perhaps one of the most celebrated individuals in the Quilt is Ryan White. White was diagnosed with AIDS in December, 1984, when he was hospitalized with Pneumocystis pneumonia. It was discovered that Ryan had been infected with the AIDS virus by receiving tainted blood (Kinsella 186). White's mother did not conceal her son's condition from the local school board in Kokomo, Indiana, where Ryan attended school. In response, the board requested that Ryan not attend school; that instead he receive home schooling. The Whites refused and "[Ryan] braved demonstrations and ostracism by parents and classmates who sought to bar him from attending school in Kokomo." Parents even "set up an alternative school for their children" (Whitman 8). The Ryan White issue brought the AIDS crisis to Kokomo and threatened to divide its inhabitants into two camps---those who sided with White and those who sided with the "frightened parents" (Kinsella 187). Although White was not the first child with AIDS to be shut out of school, he was the first to have his case heard in court and, in turn, gain the national spotlight (Kinsella 187). As a result, the side taking in Kokomo exploded into a
national debate. When the residents of nearby Cicero, Indiana, heard of White’s
dilemma they invited him to attend school there. The people of Cicero decided to
side with Ryan (Whitman 8). Because of the national attention, White was
perceived as “the AIDS victim whom both the infected and uninfected could love”
(Whitman 8). His story received a great deal of media coverage, and White was
befriended by celebrities such as Elton John, Michael Jackson, and Joe Montana.
Ryan White was eighteen years old when he died in 1990.

In the Quilt, there are twenty-nine panels dedicated to Ryan White’s
memory (Sullivan 43). Upon his death, President George Bush planted an elm
tree in his honor, and former President Ronald Reagan admitted, “‘I’ve learned
that all kinds of people can get AIDS, even children. But it’s the disease that is
frightening, not the people who have it’” (quoted in Whitman 8). However, as
Whitman points out, “the generous compassion shown Ryan White has often failed
to transfer to others with AIDS” (8). Otherwise known for their inactive stance on
AIDS, former President Reagan and President Bush exhibited, in this case, a
willingness to side with a victim of AIDS, as did celebrities, the mass media, and
the public at large. That our compassion was aroused by a child who was not gay
is not of course faulty in itself; rather it reflects and critiques a social-cultural irony
regarding our need or desire to sympathize with “innocent” or “unsullied” victims
in crises like this. That a gay man or raped woman or drug user are somehow less
innocent victims of the disease is the question that our own compassion asks us to
address and redress.

The Quilt responds to the not uncommon social process of constructing, in
response to a social crisis, a hierarchy of heroes and scapegoats, profane and pure
victims, by democratizing the field in which the victims of AIDS are represented.
Any and all victims may be represented in the Quilt and their placement in the
symbolic graveyard is random. Although it is by means of different signifiers in
each panel that we understand the disease strikes all kinds of people, this very fact
refocuses our understanding toward what links the diverse panels. Cleve Jones
offers that the Quilt is about “commonalities.” It does not “focus on the things that
keep us apart.” It “focuses on what those represented have in common” (8). And
what they have in common is that they are all victims of the same disease. In this
way, the Quilt attempts to redress the miscasting of the breach from a health to
moral or morality based issue. It “sets straight” the scientific and medical
communities’ unfortunate misunderstanding of the disease as a gay only affliction
and the media’s perpetuation of that misconception, by memorializing diverse
individuals in what is, overall, a common and uniform way.

The Quilt also responds to the seemingly more deliberate miscasting of the
breach by the Religious Right. In response to AIDS, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson
and others crafted a rhetoric that overtly stated that AIDS was God’s retribution
on the homosexual, and that the disease marked their eternal separation from Him. Both Falwell and Robertson used their mass media facilities to broadcast and promote their assertion that AIDS was a (im)moral based plague.

According to Shilts, Falwell believed his view was empowered by God. He also believed that church and state should not act as separate systems, and when, in 1980, Ronald Reagan won the presidency, Falwell "quickly claimed credit for the Reagan landslide and announced he would push forward with his pro-family, and anti-gay, legislative agenda" (Shilts 44). There is no evidence to support Falwell’s claim that he was solely responsible for Reagan’s victory; however, there is compelling evidence to suggest that he was instrumental in getting Moral Majority members and supporters to the polls to support Reagan. In turn, and in as early as 1979, Ronald Reagan publicly endorsed the views and activities of the Religious Right. And, it was this union, between church and state, that further impacted how AIDS was perceived and treated by individuals, groups, and our U. S. government.

Just as panel makers were coming to terms with the deaths of their loved ones, they faced the (im) moral rhetoric of Falwell and others, and the resulting collapse of separation of church and state. As they endured Falwell’s rhetoric, they also realized that Falwell intended to use all his resources to preach his message of damnation while simultaneously working to impact political processes
and policies. In response, panel makers turned to the Quilt not only to remember their losses but also to rebut the miscast breach of their loved ones as immoral, as damned by God.

Many of the panels in the Quilt include religious signifiers of one kind or another. The signifiers “talk back” to the rhetoric of the Religious Right by asserting that the friends of the victims have faith, their loved ones are in a better place and are accepted by God. The amount of diversity of religious signifiers also uphold a basic tenet of the U.S. Bill of Rights—i.e., freedom of religion. That the Quilt should conserve this basic principle while certain religious groups ignore it, suggests once again how the Quilt operates to redress both individual and social issues affected by AIDS. In this case, in particular, the recasting of the health breach to a breach of morals, by the Religious Right, is recast yet again by the Quilt in so far as it, and its panel makers, urge us to question just what “morals” or principles have been broken and by whom.

A panel for sixteen month old Tiffany Gail McDonald includes the following Bible verse, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not...for of such is the kingdom of God. Mark 10:14-16.” Another panel for Terry Gallagher has two large blue crosses and a message that reads, “Jesus...The Only Way.” A panel for Don Carlson has a large cross and a message that says, “We Miss You.” A panel for Paul Burdett focuses on prayer. The
inscription reads, “Paul Burdett. The San Diego Prayer Vigil was His Creation. Please More Prayer.”

Other panels give significance to faith as icons of the Virgin Mary, the cross, and the Star of David are incorporated into the personal narratives of the Quilt. One panel consists of only a white background on which is placed the Star of David. Another panel shows a young man with a red star standing at a marker that is inscribed “RIP.” The message reads “How can you say you love God, that you don’t see, if you don’t love the people that you do see.”

Just as the scientific community, the media, and the Religious Right influenced how AIDS was perceived by the public, so too did representatives of the United States Government. For the most part, President Ronald Reagan and Vice President George Bush remained silent on the issue, and as a result they were perceived as unconcerned about the disease. Kinsella notes that “without the government taking AIDS seriously, the disease became a kind of curio” (3).

The mass voice of the Quilt critiques the silence and perceived inactivity of the government. The huge patchwork of victims, “affected by something casually dismissed” by the government, sends an “extraordinary, dramatic message of the magnitude of this epidemic—to the President, to Congress, and to the country” (Ruskin 12). Also, displays in particularly Washington D.C. and specific panels within the Quilt function to critique the government and its policy of silence. As
Kinsella points out, "The United States has the most sophisticated scientific and medical establishment in the world, much of it paid for by taxpayer dollars. Yet the politics of the conservative Reagan era served to undercut the poorly funded programs that were pursuing answers to the epidemic" (3). Many panels directly address this point, indicting the government for its minimal funding of AIDS research.

One panel, added in 1992, depicts a wheelchair on which rests the gay flag. Also known as the Rainbow Flag, the gay flag consists of stripes of red, orange, yellow, green, blue and purple. In direct opposition, the U.S. flag is situated in the background. An inscription on the panel reads, "The Desecration of the American Flag, an Unfinished Life." Another panel depicts a person with AIDS trying to ascend a ladder to find a cure for AIDS. His attempt is foiled by a figure of Reagan who wields a bloody dagger. Another panel, in the manner and style of a political cartoon, depicts President George Bush and First Lady Barbara Bush in bed. President Bush reads a paper with a headline that states, "250,000 Diagnosed With AIDS in the U.S." Mrs. Bush asks her husband, "Anything Important in the Paper Dear," to which he replies "Nope!" Roger Gail Lyon appeared before Congress to call for an increase in funding for AIDS research. At that meeting he stated, "I came here today to ask that this nation with all its resources and compassion not let my epitaph read I died of red tape." The words became the
epitaph on the panel that was created to commemorate his death from AIDS on November 4, 1984.

In this chapter, I have discussed how the AIDS Memorial Quilt strives to socialize or make public the disease and its victims. The Quilt activity emerges from an individual expression of loss (in the home) to a collective event where co-authors, in a collective act, present a social-aesthetic expression of their loss.

The Quilt permits the redress of individual deaths and it socializes those deaths by means of public performance, display, and ceremony. In this public performance, the Quilt constructs a social site where individual choices and free speech are part of its assemblage so as to advance specific agendas of redress and side taking. It offers a site where the individual is valued but as part of the social collective.

The Quilt performance also might be understood as an event where panel makers and viewers become co-producers of a funeral ritual. Typically, family members turn to funeral homes to embalm, to house, and to prepare the body for viewing. The family also depends on the funeral home to conduct the funeral and inter the remains. To a certain extent, mourners do or can contribute to the viewing, funeral, and interment rites insofar as they individualize the deceased by selecting speeches, poems, music, and flowers. In its construction, the Quilt draws on the well-known funeral rites and
discourse, but it encourages the participants to take a more active part in how the dead will be memorialized, or represented, to the public. Understanding that each panel is a symbolic or metaphoric representation of a body, a person who once lived, the panel maker takes a key part in preparing that body for viewing. By turning to needle and thread, the panel maker assumes control of the body, its story, and how the story will be composed. The panel maker also may take an active part in the public funeral and burial by participating in the reading of names of individuals who have died of AIDS, one of whom is their loved one. They may symbolically inter the body themselves as they present and place their panel in the patchwork graveyard.

In these ways, the Quilt draws on and re-conceives traditional funeral rites by integrating those rights with the tradition and practice of quilting. The latter reanimates the former by urging a hands-on co-production of the funeral performance and (as in craft industries) the panel maker is, from start to finish, integral to, rather than isolated from, the crafted expression; from the “body” of the person for whom they speak.

The Quilt also critiques the social performances of others -- particularly those that were staged in the crisis phase of the social drama. It most clearly redresses the invisibility of AIDS victims by making them visible in “material form.” It redresses the initial claims of the scientific and medical communities,
and the media by its inclusion of diverse panels that "set-straight" the misconception of AIDS as a gay disease. It sides with the victims of the disease by rebutting the immorality claims of the Religious Right. Through the inclusion of religious signifiers, freedom of religion is conserved. Also, the Quilt sides with the victims as it criticizes key figures in the U.S. government. On a massive scale, the Quilt comments on the inactivity and silence of government in general, and it offers individual critiques of Presidents Reagan and Bush more specifically.

The Quilt functions as both crisis and redressive performance. The Quilt functions as crisis because it overtly sides with all victims of AIDS. With its panels of anger and criticism, the Quilt takes an aggressive attitude that provokes visitors to grapple with the issues of AIDS. The Quilt also serves a redressive function as it empowers victims, families, and viewers to "set straight" the misconceptions of AIDS as a gay disease. The Quilt shows its audiences the diversity of those who contract AIDS. From the configuration of mass death, that the Quilt represents, it becomes clear that no one is safe from AIDS. The wide variety of panels that represent individuals from all walks of life "sets straight" the myth of AIDS as a "gay" affliction.
Chapter Five

The Political Context and Function of The AIDS Memorial Quilt

Historically, quilts fulfilled many functions for the women who created them. In practical terms, crafting a quilt provided a warm covering for family members and made efficient use of available, and often limited, resources. As discussed in previous chapters, quilts also fulfilled personal and social functions. Memory quilts served to memorialize someone who had died, while also offering a site and agency for the expression of and redression of one’s grief. Social roles, expectations and values were conserved and passed on in the crafting and sharing of quilts. The quilting bee also served as a site of communal bonding where women gathered to share stories and catch up on family and local news. Quilts also served political functions in so far as the crafter(s) could include visual signs that expressed not only their identity but also their view on social and political issues.

In this chapter, I will first examine the historical tradition of quilts as a medium for political expression. Then, I will discuss how the AIDS Memorial Quilt embraces the political tradition and function in various ways, and in light of its changing social-political context(s).

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when women were to be seen and not heard, at least politically, women were forced to find a more subtle means of...
expression. One means of expression was the patchwork quilt. The quilting bee offered a social site where women gathered to complete an individual or community project or catch up on the news around them. The quilting bee also acted as a political forum where women spoke their minds to each other, and also made their thoughts known through the quilts they crafted (Brown, E. 34).

In her study, Candace Conrad observes “that quilts although used to commemorate everything from birth to death, were often a gesture of patriotic pride. While ladies did not yet have the right to vote they could cleverly let their opinions be known by giving their quilts names like Clay’s Choice or Lincoln’s Platform, or by stitching out campaign slogans, or by making quilt tops out of political party handkerchiefs” (37). Marie Solvit comments on how women used their quilts to address specific social and political issues of the time. A quilt pattern known as Job’s Tears, in 1800, was renamed the Slave Chain in 1825 (Solvit 8-9). According to Hall, the name change reflected “the tendency of the times, when slavery and not religion was the paramount issue of the day” (65). The slavery interpretation, as offered by Hall, is questionable since religion was the basis for anti-slavery and abolitionist rhetoric in the North. It was in terms of religion that slavery was viewed as wrong. Perhaps Hall’s interpretation reflects a crisis rhetoric that evaluated slavery as a social issue rather than as a moral/religious issue. With changing social conditions, women’s quilts moved
away from traditional themes that reflected the lives of biblical characters and instead focused on specific social issues. The change of focus is seen in the reinscription of a quilt that featured the tribulations of Job, to a quilt that focused on the tribulations of slaves. This same pattern, Job’s Tears, was renamed many times to reflect different social and political events and conflicts of the day. In or around 1845, quilters renamed it Texas Tears to mark the annexation of Texas, and, later around 1860, it was dubbed Kansas Rocky Road or Kansas Troubles. Other politically charged patterns included The Defeat of the Whigs and Yankee Pride (Solvit 8-9).

In these ways, the crafting of a patchwork quilt enabled women to express their political sentiments in a nonthreatening manner. Though women’s roles were regulated, quilting provided women with a forum where they could take sides on the significant issues of the day. Since women crafted within the home, a safe site where they had domestic control, they were able to express their political views and opinions while also fulfilling the social role expected of them. They were, in essence, allowed to turn the rigors of domestic crafting into a site for expression. While their impact on the political marketplace was minimal at best, they were able to express their views publically through the names and patterns they chose for their quilts.
In a like manner, the AIDS Memorial Quilt has over the years empowered the voices of its participants and supporters and advanced its political agenda by creating the illusion that it is not political or that it is a-political. In some ways, the a-political orientation of the Quilt is sincere in so far as the project was devised to provide a redressive site and agency for mourners to remember a victim and work through their grief (Display 3). The Quilt also is available to all regardless of their political, social, cultural, and sexual beliefs and values. The Quilt "is open to anyone who wants to participate. There are no aliens, no foreigners, or outcasts" (Baker 166). The Quilt veers away from overt political "side taking" in an attempt to make room for all. In so devising a project where nothing is censored and where the breach and redression are articulated in universal humanitarian terms, the NAMES Project Foundation has drawn diverse individuals and groups, evident in the almost 50,000 panels of which it now consists. In other words, by constructing a generic political rhetoric, the Quilt has amassed a grass-roots contingent that cuts across political, social, and cultural boundaries. It is supported by many groups, who represent many values and beliefs that, in many other cases, would not get along.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, only a small percentage of panels are overtly political. And like historical quilts, the AIDS Quilt advances a political agenda by means of a rhetoric that can be and has been viewed as non-serious or non-
threatening. Cleve Jones comments on this facet of the Quilt when he states, “I think of the Quilt as a very subversive work, because on the surface we are safe and non-controversial. We don’t take issues on the political questions that surround the epidemic. But from the very beginning we have sought to have an impact on the political process. And we have chosen to do that by adopting a non-political vocabulary and a non-political symbol” (Jones 3)- i.e., the patchwork quilt.

Throughout history, the patchwork quilt has been understood as politically passive or non-threatening because quilting is women’s work and it occurs within the domestic site. Since women were denied the right to vote until 1920, they were not considered powerful political voices and therefore neither was the patchwork quilt. According to Jinny Beyer, “from the second quarter of the nineteenth century until the late 1890’s, quilling flourished; however it was usually considered as ‘plain’ and fit for only old women who could no longer see to do fine work” (4). Because the Quilt was and still is considered a “low” cultural craft it is easily ignored as a significant medium for political expression within the market place. In summary, everything about quilts suggest, “don’t take me seriously.” And, in part, it is due to this rhetoric that the AIDS Quilt has been approved by PTA’s, Boards of Education, principles and deans, and gained
entrance into schools, community centers, and public sites across the nation and abroad.

In his discussion of the “political clown,” Joel Schechter notes the significance of the clown figure in conveying carefully coded political messages. The political clown is permitted “to move across the boundaries separating the stage world view from everyday life” (Schechter 5-6). Brecht’s “stage clowns,” for instance, “embody the democratic impulse to resist hierarchies and to bring actors into the worlds of their audience—into everyday life—and to bring spectators into the politically conscious world of the actors, so that the two might be almost interchangeable” (Schechter 11). Like the political clown, the tradition and rhetoric of quilting rest in it being able to communicate multiple coded messages to a diverse audience, who might otherwise be threatened by its agenda.

The Quilt carries and communicates a complex political message of self and group empowerment. Like black spirituals and slave tales the Quilt is a double coded message. As slave owners listened to the Negro spirituals, they heard songs about the afterlife. Whereas, the slaves heard and decoded the songs as they also related to escape. When visitors see the Quilt, they may view it simply as a collection of memorials. Others, however, see the Quilt as both a crisis rhetoric that “sides with” the victims of the disease, and as a powerful redressive act and agency that “sets straight” the rhetorics of the scientific and medical communities,
the mass media, the Religious Right, and U.S. government representatives with regards to their miscasting AIDS as a gay disease.

Although they comprise a small percentage of the total Quilt, concrete political signs are evident in the Quilt. One panel, in the form of a political cartoon, depicts President George Bush in bed reading a paper with a headline that reads, "250,000 Diagnosed with AIDS in the U.S." His wife asks, "Anything Important in the Paper Dear?" His reply: "Nope." Panels, such as this, are crafted to criticize the perceived inactivity of the government regarding the AIDS epidemic.

Double coded messages also are evident when the physical site or context of the displayed Quilt is considered. The Quilt is displayed in both regional and national sites. As discussed in the previous chapter, the display is accompanied by a distinct ceremony. The display and ceremony offer a site for individual redress. The performance also operates to socialize individuals into and as part of a larger shared concern. Additionally, the public display helps to redress the lack of monies for AIDS research. When on display, the Quilt is inherently political in so far as invisible and unnamed victims of the disease are made visible, they are "named." However, the issue is whether or not the Quilt performance offers a political critique of the agents and agencies who have sought to ignore the breach, or have sought to miscast the breach as a gay affliction, or
have sought to maintain the crisis stage of the drama in order to avoid taking responsibility for redressive acts.

The Quilt has been shown in its entirety only five times. The site for the display of the entire Quilt has always been Washington D.C. In 1987, the Quilt consisted of 1,920 panels (Ruskin 10). It returned to Washington in 1988 and featured 8,288 panels (“History” 2). In October of 1989, the Quilt was displayed on the Ellipse across from the White House and included more than 11,000 panels (Brown, J. vii). At the 1992 International Display, more than 21,000 panels were pieced together and their collective mass spread out over fifteen acres (Schneider A26).

Whether large or small, the placement of the Quilt anywhere redefines space. In particular, placement near and in view of the national monuments in Washington, D.C. temporarily redefines the monuments and the values they carry. They and what they represent become a part of the AIDS social drama. Depending on one’s perspective, the “domestic” Quilt gains political strength and validity in being spatially and visually associated with the national monuments. The Quilt also rewrites the monuments in its terms as they too become part of the symbolic graveyard. According to Weinberg, “the placement of the Quilt for two days on the huge lawn between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial was
fitting; the surrounding white marble and limestone buildings were like giant headstones in an enormous cemetery" (37).

The history of the monuments and what they represent is re-oriented, recast, and critiqued in light of the Quilt. According to Hawkins, "whenever the Quilt is temporary neighbor to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the White House and the Capitol, there are certain disturbing connections that become inescapable: links between the war we did not win, the epidemic we cannot cure, and a government that has not yet developed a comprehensive AIDS policy" (776). The Quilt, then, draws its political power from its literal presence among the nation’s most significant monuments.

The individuals inscribed in the Quilt also take on additional meanings. They are no longer victims of a socially stigmatized disease, they are offered up as American casualties of a biological war. Like the veterans of the “forgotten war,” these names remind us that the people immortalized in the Quilt lived with and ultimately died of AIDS. Also, the Quilt reminds us that, until recently, victims of a disease were ignored by leading representatives of our government and the policies they did not write. They became the casualties of a biological war that turned moral and political. The placement of the Quilt text amidst national monuments creates visual analogues and contrasts that strengthen the political validity of the Quilt, and its critical abilities.
In addition to advancing a political message by means of its physical display, the Quilt has, throughout history, included activities that are or can be perceived as political. Additionally, more overtly political groups, such as ACT UP, have aligned themselves with the Quilt, devising demonstrations that occur simultaneously with its display.

In 1987, when the Quilt was laid out on the Mall in Washington it was a significant part of the second National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Approximately half a million people attended the march ("History" 2). At this particular display, the Quilt served as a grim reminder of the increasing numbers of AIDS casualties but it did not detract from the usual activities associated with gay pride. “During the weekend of events two thousand lesbian and gay couples participate[d] in a mass wedding in front of the Internal Revenue Service building” (Gay Almanac 20)

As the Quilt grew physically, marking the on-going social drama and the increasing numbers of AIDS victims, it became empowered to express a more overt political position. The NAMES Project Foundation adopted a powerful political slogan, “Because we won’t let them forget (Display 7). In 1989, the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize and in the same year “Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt” won an Academy Award for the best-feature length documentary film ("History" 3). By 1992, the
Quilt had welcomed over three million visitors (Quilt Facts 10 November 1992 1). The progressive growth of the Quilt encouraged a side-taking that overtly blamed the government for its perceived lack of concern for victims of AIDS.

When the Quilt was introduced in 1987, there was little that could be done to change the political process. Reagan, a second term president, was completing his term and it was clear that George Bush would succeed him. The election occurred within approximately one year of the establishment of the Quilt and of the militant group ACT UP. Without a well established political voice, there was little chance of enacting change within the status quo. The disease erupted and spread during the Reagan administration. The lack of funding for the disease and the perpetual cuts in funding led some to question Reagan’s concern for the victims. In December of 1981, one full year into the epidemic, the Reagan administration reduced funding to the Centers for Disease Control and appropriated no funds to AIDS research. In February 1984, the Reagan administration recommended cutting the AIDS budget by ten million dollars. At this time, there were eight-thousand cases of AIDS reported in the U. S. (Kinsella 265).

Because AIDS began with the Reagan and Bush administrations, these presidents are the most clearly identified political antagonists. Both Reagan and Bush declined invitations to view the Quilt, and as a result it was assumed that the
Quilt was a memorial “not sanctioned” by public authority (Sullivan 43).
Likewise, both First Lady Nancy Reagan and First Lady Barbara Bush turned
down invitations to visit the Quilt although it was only a few hundred yards from
their residence (Schneider A27). Because Reagan and Bush refused to recognize
AIDS as a health issue, they were not only targets within the Quilt but also targets
of other political demonstrations that gathered around it. Bush, in particular, was
targeted by ACT UP at the 1992 national display of the AIDS Quilt.

In bold black letters, a 1992 ACT UP pamphlet states, “Welcome to the
Quilt: Our National Inheritance from the Reagan/Bush Administration.” An aerial
view of the 1988 Quilt display shows the Quilt placed on the Ellipse in front of the
White House. Under the Quilt is the word “Death.” Beneath the visual of the
White House is the inscription “Silence.” The inferred message is “Silence
equals Death.”

In the text of the brochure is a warning directed at President Bush: “For
now he shall reap what he has sown.” And then two invitations are offered. One
invites the reader to a “Political Funeral,” the other to a “Hands Around the
White House.” The invitation to the political funeral reads, “Now is the time to
bring AIDS home to George Bush. Join us to protest twelve years of genocidal
AIDS policy . . . In an act of grief and rage, we will carry the actual ashes of
people we love in a funeral procession to the White House. We will deposit their
ashes on the White House lawn.” This act fulfills two significant functions. First, it signifies death and it identifies Bush as responsible for it. The activity also broadens the base of social responsibility by addressing the fact that victims of AIDS are denied a fundamental rite—Christian burial of the body. Many of the earliest victims of AIDS were cremated because funeral homes refused to embalm them. As a result their ashes became politically charged symbols. As requested, demonstrators brought the ashes of their loved ones to the White House where they were “ceremoniously spilled on the White House lawn” (Weinberg 39).

The invitation to “Hands Around the White House” reads, “In a righteous farewell to the Bush Administration, join hands with thousands of others as we contain our government’s inaction through a peaceful embrace. . . . And we mean this as an act of love. Really. We really do.” A line of protestors with a large red ribbon circled the White House three times (Weinberg 39). This act “side takes” with the victims of the disease and offers a critique of Bush’s administration. With the alliance that formed between the NAMES Project and ACT UP, a strong political rhetoric emerged that placed blame for the AIDS epidemic squarely on the shoulders of Presidents Reagan and Bush.

Also associated with the Quilt display in 1992 was a candlelight vigil that moved from the Ellipse to the Lincoln Memorial. A crowd estimated at 90,000 by National Park Police participated in a candlelight vigil that moved from the
Ellipse, past the White House, and to the Lincoln Memorial (Schneider A26). As protesters passed the White House they paused to shout the ACT UP chant of "Shame, shame, shame" (Weinberg 39). The protesters then marched to the Lincoln Memorial where Cleve Jones, among others, presented speeches. Jones critiqued the Bush administration by singling out and attacking the President himself. "We know you are our enemy. We will count the days and we will bring you down!" (quoted in Schneider A26). According to Weinberg, "Many who had come to Washington just to view the Quilt found their anger channeled into demonstrations. The Quilt's presence in Washington focused the national media on [not only the Quilt but] the ACT UP protests" as well (39).

In 1993, Bill Clinton became the first President of the United States to openly embrace the Quilt. On World AIDS Day, the image of the President flanked by 12' x 12' section of the AIDS Memorial Quilt was transmitted in news coverage to every major television network. "Standing before Quilt sections at Georgetown University, President Clinton pointed to a panel made for his friend Dan Bradley and emphasized that no one has been untouched by the AIDS epidemic" (NAMESletter Winter 1993, 1). Also, on this day, sections of the Quilt hung in the Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Small Business Administration, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Labor, the Department of Education, the Department of Commerce,
and the National AIDS Policy Office (Namesletter Winter 1993, 1). And, for the first time since its inception and "after years of refusal" sections of the Quilt were prominently displayed "in the White House" (Turney, 8 December 1993, 1).

Prominent members of the Clinton administration have viewed the Quilt, and Tipper Gore has participated in the ceremony that occurs when the Quilt is displayed. In the 1992 display of the Quilt, Tipper Gore joined hundreds of other volunteers to recite the names of individuals claimed by AIDS (Schneider A27).

In summary, the display of the Quilt is a political act and agency of crisis rhetoric. As a symbol of mass death, the Quilt sides with the victims contained within it, and attacks those who have the power and means to redress the social drama. By bring attention to the amassed victims of AIDS, the Quilt redresses the health breach on the most basic level. But, when it is displayed among the nation's monuments, its function is not to solve the problem but to open up and maintain the crisis rhetoric in an effort to encourage those who have not acted to do so. The Quilt acts as an ongoing performance that refuses to "solve" the drama within the space and frame of its presentation. It leaves the problem unsolved, as it is.
Chapter Six

The AIDS Memorial Quilt as “Novel”

In this study I focused on the AIDS crisis as a social drama, and evaluated the various functions the Quilt plays within that drama. First, I discussed the breach, crisis, and redression stages. Second, I analyzed the functions of the Quilt within the social drama. The personal, social, and political functions of the Quilt were evaluated. In this chapter, I review the study. I then draw on Bakhtin’s social-literary theory of “novel” to theorize the Quilt as novelistic discourse. In conclusion, I offer how the findings of this study might be applied in other social-cultural contexts.

In Chapter Two, I called upon Victor Turner’s theory of social drama and applied it to the AIDS crisis. Using Turner proved helpful because it encouraged me to understand the social conflict as an on-going process that remains unsolved. Turner’s four phases of social drama include breach, crisis, redression, and reintegration or recognition of an irreparable schism. I identified two fundamental breaches—the health breach and the moral/religious breach. By evaluating the crisis phase of the drama, I was able to identify specific crisis performers and performances. The principle players in this particular drama were identified as the scientific/medical community, the media, the Religious Right, Presidents Reagan and Bush, the gay community, and AIDS victims and mourners. Though many
attempts were made at redress, I concluded that most attempts were not successful as redressive acts. Rather than “solve” or “set straight” particular issues within the AIDS drama, many performances returned the groups to crisis. It also was concluded that the inability to redress the issue is not necessarily a sign of failure. By keeping the crisis rhetoric alive, it is difficult if not impossible for society to dismiss an unresolved conflict as resolved. Turner’s final phase of reintegration or recognition of irreparable schism did not apply to the study since the conflict remains unsolved.

Unlike “social movement theory,” that anticipates a conclusion to the conflict before analysis begins, Turner’s theory proved invaluable in that it exposed, and allowed the necessary flexibility to evaluate, the multiple components of a drama that is still in process.

In Chapter Three, I called upon the shared narratives of twenty-one panel makers to evaluate the personal functions of the Quilt. In their answers to my questions, the panel makers articulated five common functions that they felt the Quilt fulfilled. It served as a site for memorializing the victim, a site for grieving, a site of socialization, a site of self-identification, and a site for education. Hence, I concluded that the making of the panel for the Quilt was a performance act and agency that often proved redressive for the individual and his or her processing of the social drama.
In Chapter Four, I viewed and analyzed the socializing function of the Quilt. I concluded that the Quilt fulfilled a variety of social functions. As mentioned in prior chapters, many AIDS victims were denied traditional rites of burial, and the Quilt offered the victims' families and friends a site that redresses or "sets straight" that denial. It is at the social level that panel makers become active agents in the social process. By publicizing their grief, panel makers show that they are taking sides with the victims of the disease. Further, the contribution of individual panels to the larger Quilt creates a collective or co-authored voice that infers a social responsibility for the disease. By attending the public display and ceremony, viewers also are integrated into the social performance and its processes. The individual is amassed into the collective voice that responds to the disease and to the social discourses of others. The Quilt, then, fulfills social imperatives as it offers both crisis and redressive performance rhetorics.

Lastly, the Quilt fulfills a political function, both in its content and use. Although rare, there are panels in the Quilt that are examples of political protest. But, perhaps, the most significant political statement the Quilt makes is when it is displayed. The Quilt has been displayed in its entirety five times, and each display occurred in Washington D.C. When situated amidst the nation's best known, if not also most respected, monuments, the Quilt becomes a loaded political signifier. The double-voice ability of the Quilt allows it to be read as conservative
and seemingly unthreatening, but when viewed as a voice of amassed death it
gains increasing power. The Quilt also gains political power in that, when
displayed in Washington D.C., it serves as the centerpiece for other more vocal
rhetorical acts. The Quilt as a political voice rebuts the discourses of certain
political representatives, while at the same time it sides with the victims of the
disease. The display of the Quilt in its entirety constructs a collective voice that
forcefully responds to and critiques the silence of our government.

The Quilt, then, is a co-produced, interactive performance medium and
event that is crafted to fulfill a variety of personal, social, and political functions.
Within its texturing, it includes a diverse range of individuals and groups, their
views and their values. In this way, the Quilt reflects and makes known the
complexity of the social drama. Also, the Quilt reflects the drama because, like the
epidemic, it is not yet complete. The performance of the Quilt, then, refuses to
shut down a social conflict that is not yet resolved.

In this and other ways, the Quilt is an example of that which Bakhtin
identifies as novel or novelistic discourse. In this section of the chapter I draw on
Bakhtin’s distinction between epic and novel to first acknowledge the epic-like
discourses at work in the Quilt or, perhaps more accurately, how the Quilt might
be interpreted as epic. I then define and discuss how the Quilt is novel.
In The Dialogic Imagination, M.M. Bakhtin, contrasts novel or novelistic discourse with epic discourse. Epic discourse he asserts is a “finished” product that “valorizes” the “absolute past” (15). Bakhtin states, the “novel” resists an “absolute past” by “reflect[ing] the tendencies of a new world still in the making” (97). It is continually in process and resists “well defined contours” (4) because it characteristically calls upon, analyzes and critiques past, present, and future (events); official and unofficial (culture); individuals and social modes of discourse. In effect, the novel opens rather than “fixes” the temporal frame allowing the past “maximal contact with the present (with contemporary reality) in all its openendedness” (11). The Quilt’s ability to keep pace with the disease, and its ability to “open” rather than “close” discourse is what enables it to be viewed as novel.

Many, perhaps most, panel makers valorize their loved ones in a straightforward serious type of symbolic eulogy. Bakhtin observes, “The dead are loved in a different way. They are removed from the sphere of contact, one can and must indeed speak of them in a different style. Language about the dead is stylistically quite distinct from language about the living” (20). The primary stylistic differences, it appears, are that we speak of the dead in the past tense, the content reflects social expectations of respect for the dead, and the individual’s death is portrayed as a societal loss. In other words, we assert that the dead made a
positive impact on their society. Eulogies, by their nature, focus more on the positive attributes of the dead than on the negative attributes.

A panel for David M. Green serves as a good example of epic discourse that utilizes the stylistic characteristics mentioned above. First, the author calls upon the language of traditional headstones by incorporating birth and death dates. This use clearly casts the victim in the past. The author also incorporates past tense verbiage in his discussion of the victim. The second stylistic characteristic, respect, is presented in the direct speech of the author. The message reads “Beloved.” The final stylistic characteristic, positive relation to society, is apparent in the direct speech of the author when he states, “He made a difference.”

There are no discrete visual symbols to read here, and on its own, the panel is an example of epic discourse. But, when added to the larger Quilt it becomes novelistic. The panel remains unchanged but the messages it emits alter. The introduction of the panel into the larger Quilt redefines the panel as the viewer learns, by context and not internal discourse, that David M. Green died of AIDS.

In his critique of the Quilt, Richard Mohr interprets the panels as eulogistic insofar as the panels emit information that might be understood not to honor or valorize the victim. Mohr observes, “Lies of omission abound. A panel for an acquaintance of mine reported that he helped found a gay organization and that he liked Broadway musicals. That is true enough, but what he really loved was to eat
shit and get beaten up. His narrators, out of squeamishness, lost his center of gravity.” In summary, Mohr argues that sex “is bleached right out of the Quilt” (121).

On the one hand, Mohr appears to be calling for more complex, less sanitized renderings of AIDS victims. On the other hand, Mohr’s complaint appears to be informed by the assumption that the panel narratives should offer truthful, objective, straightforward representations of the victims’ lives. The authors should report the facts in the manner of third-person, reporter narrators. Further, it appears the reporters should expose the sexual details of the victims lives since, so goes Mohr’s assumption, it was by means of sexual activity that the victims contracted the disease. Mohr’s argument, then, is based in what, according to him, the panels do not do: They do not report sexual activity.

Although there are many panels in the Quilt that offer literal and figurative sexual signifiers, the more important point here is that Mohr fails to understand or fails to articulate that the communicative genre, mode, and function of the Quilt is not that of so-called factual reportage—although, at both the individual and social-political levels, the Quilt does report the fact that people have died of a disease. (And, finally, it seems to me that this fact is far more important than the fact that many, though certainly not all, victims contracted the disease due to sexual activity). As I have argued throughout this study, one of the functions of the Quilt
is to offer a site where mourners can memorialize victims who have died from a socially-stigmatized disease. That is to say, the Quilt asserts the right of the victim to be remembered by mourners, not as a pollutive scapegoat but rather, in whatever way the mourners see fit given the minimal regulations of the NAMES Project. In light of this function, Mohr’s call for factual reportage is as inappropriate as it would be of any funeral rite. That the eulogies offered by these mourners should somehow be more “truthful” or straightforward than eulogies generally are once again casts AIDS victims and their mourners as having done something wrong. They should “tell the truth” whereas mourners of victims who have not died from AIDS may eulogize the loved one however they would like.

Contrary to Mohr, the NAMES Project does not ask mourners to “tell the truth.” Rather, it permits them to draw on any visual, literary, and speech genres they would like to tell whatever story they deem appropriate. As I discussed above, many panel makers appear to call on genres that function to valorize the victims. An epic discourse is assumed within individual panels.

According to Bakhtin, “the novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and diversity of individual voices artistically organized” (262). A novel discourse includes a myriad of voices rather than attempting to restrict them. Heteroglossia is the term Bakhtin uses to define how a “voice,” or what appears to be the primary stylistic line in a text, is
imbedded with or encroached upon by other social-cultural voices.

Heteroglossia is a “multiplicity of social voices” that include “professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashion, languages that serve the specific socio-political purposes of the day even the hour” (Bakhtin 263). For Bakhtin, then, heteroglossia refers to the competing social voices that enter the novel by means of “another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express authorial intentions in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse” (324). This double-voiced discourse serves “two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intentions of the author. In such discourse there are [at least] two voices, two meanings, two expressions” (Bakhtin 324).

Each and every panel in the AIDS Quilt is contexted in terms of its being a part of a larger interdependent language system; the Quilt as a whole and, in turn, the social drama I have discussed in this study. Although individual panel makers may view or prefer to view their panel as discrete and separate from the contexting Quilt and social conflict, at the level of publication all panels and their signifiers become loaded with the social-cultural codes and discourses that inform and are imbedded in the Quilt and the conflict to which it responds. That is to say, despite
the author's intent, no panel operates on its own once it is added to the larger Quilt. It becomes part of a language system that contains contesting voices within it and, as a whole, functions to contest discursive systems "outside" itself. In this way, the Quilt and its multi-faceted panels are novelistic. In a sense, the eulogized deaths are re-articulated by their being collected in a novel form that conceives "death" and as active voice in contact with and speaking to the living present tense. The Quilt as novel discourse can be seen to be operating within panels, between panels, and at the level of the Quilt as a whole.

Julia Jackson and her family created a panel for her son Dennie Mike. The panel is comprised of a baby blue quilted background with Dennie Mike's name prominently displayed in dark blue letters at the top. At the bottom of the panel are the years of Dennie Mike's birth and death. Within the panel, there are nineteen messages created by various members of the family (See Appendix B for additional details).

This panel is an example of Bakhtin's novel on a variety of levels. First, the panel resists the "absolute past" by bringing the story of Dennie Mike into the present. As argued above, all panels once made public bring the death of an individual into the present where it is/may be revisited at each display. The panel is "open-ended" because it advances multiple meanings due to the diversity of "speech types" and "social voices" imbedded in its fabric. The lack of a single
controlling author allows a variety of voices to emerge and "tell," in the present, the story of Dennie Mike.

In the panel, Julia Jackson's voice is one of the most prominent. A Polaroid photograph of Dennie Mike, at the center of the panel contains an inscription that reads, "I'll be Seeing You. . .Love U Ma." These words, in her own voice and language, establish Julia's relationship with her son. Also, Jackson calls upon the voice of literature when she uses a poem to express herself. The poem reads,

My Son Dennie  
For the happiness you bring me,  
No one will ever know.  
It tore a part of my heart out.  
To have you go.  
You did not go alone.  
For part of me went with you.  
The hour God called you home.  
If my love could have saved you.  
You never would have gone.  
There is no greater loss than to lose your child.  
Dennie you will never be forgotten.  
Love and miss you so very much.  
With aching heart and tears that just won't stop.  
Love Ma XXOO. (Jackson, J. 1).

In this poem, Jackson calls upon the social discourses of religion and a commonplace vernacular to write her poem. The religious voice is evident in the seventh line, "The hour God called you home." This commonplace phrase can be found in a variety of religious death rituals and obituaries. Also, the "XXOO" at the bottom of the panel reflects a societal short cut for "hugs and kisses." In this
way, Jackson calls upon a "child-like" or "romantic" form to express her emotions to her son. Jackson uses the poetic form to converse with her son as if he were still in the present. Her mixture of tenses shows that she has not accepted the death of her son. In the first line of the poem she shows a reluctance to let go when she states, "For the happiness that you bring me." It also should be noted that Jackson prominently states her own predicament, as a mother, when she says, "There is no greater loss than to lose your child." This direct discourse does not act as dialogue with Dennie Mike, but assumes another audience all together. In these few words, in her own voice, it seems that Jackson addresses not her son but the "stranger" who views the panel.

Lastly, "direct discourse" enters the panel in the direct speech of other family and friends. One message inscribed on the panel reads, "'Miss you' Love yor [sic] Bro Bob." Another states, "To A Brother and Friend. Love Ya. Tom." And, yet another speaks to another individual all together. It reads, "Special Thanks to Mary Lou. Without Her This Panel Would Not Be Done. Heartfull [sic] Thanks. Love You, Aunt Judy" (Jackson, J.1). For "Aunt Judy," the panel created to honor Dennie Mike is more than a memorial. It is an ongoing dialogue with a dead son, brother, and nephew, and it is also an open conversation between the panel makers themselves, and between the panel makers and those who might view it. In this case, the panel makers call upon written and oral discourses to tell
Denny Mike’s story. Many panels, however, rely on visual language to tell their stories.

Barbara Coyle, for example, helped a group of inmates create their own panel “to give a voice and a presence to prisoners living and dying with AIDS” (Coyle 2). The panel resists well defined contours by juxtaposing visual symbols that do not naturally “fit.” The voice of the prison is perhaps the most striking element in the panel. The most prominent features are the name of the facility and a visual representation of the prison. “Elmira Correctional Facility” is boldly displayed at the bottom of the panel, and, the panel is covered with bars that represent a prison cell. The authors use butterflies to represent the inmates who have died. The juxtaposition of symbols suggests two competing voices within the same panel. Prisons are meant to withhold freedom and butterflies (as representative of nature) are meant to be free. Through the creation of a panel, prisoners are given voice to remind viewers that they too, like other victims of AIDS, are dying. An interesting component of this panel, however, is that it casts AIDS as a symbol of freedom rather than death. Once the victim succumbs to the disease, they fly from the prison to find their freedom (Coyle, 1).

Coyle’s panel is provocative in that it does not reflect the individual interests of those memorialized within the panel. Instead it comments on their mutual circumstance. Life behind bars would not necessarily lend itself to the
disclosure of intimate details that tend to permeate the other panels mentioned in this study. But, the one thing that these inmates have in common is their incarceration and, as a result the social perception of them as outcasts. Why, for example, would prisoners need a voice unless they felt that it had been taken away or was not significant enough to hear?

The above examples illustrate how panel makers as authors construct a novel discourse that allows the direct speech of the author(s) and the social speech of others to enter the panel. On yet another authorial level, the contexting Quilt and the AIDS social drama impact the meanings each panel emits. A religious symbol, for example, might indicate that a memorialized individual belonged to a particular religious denomination. However, within the larger Quilt, the symbol also rebuts the crisis rhetoric of the Religious Right that suggests that gays are "cut off" from God. By becoming a part of the collective voice of the larger Quilt, the individual panel gains meanings as it informs and is informed by the panels of others. Because the Quilt as a whole rejects well defined contours, individuals that would otherwise not be joined are joined in the Quilt. As a result, the different panels may have nothing in common other than the fact that the individual memorialized died of AIDS.

For example, the following panels are joined in the Quilt and compete with each other as the authors of the panels call on very different discourses and
stylistic characteristics to tell their stories. The panel for Douglas W. Morrin reads, "I am a gay man who works for the IRS in Northern, Kentucky. I saw the death certificate stapled to the back of his final tax return. He was sick for twelve months. He had never married. Even though I never knew him, I was saddened by his death from AIDS." In this particular panel, there is a juxtaposition of the direct speech of the author as well as the speech of Morrin. First, the direct speech of the author enters the panel as the author tells us his story. He marks himself as a gay man in his own words. He tells us that he works for the IRS, and that he lives in Northern Kentucky. Having summarized his story, the author, in the manner of a third person narrator, proceeds to tell the story of Morrin. The words belong to another speaker, since the information was taken from Morrin’s tax return.

According to the author, Morrin was sick for twelve months, he never married, and he died of AIDS. Although, the author never comments on the sexuality of Morrin it can be inferred from the indirect speech line, "He never married," that Morrin was possibly gay.

A panel for sixteen month old Tiffany Gail McDonald lies across the aisle from the panel for Morrin. In this particular panel, the voices of the mother, father, grandparents, brothers and sisters are activated by the inclusion of their names in the lower left hand corner of the panel. The authors also call on the voice of scripture to mark their loss. They quote Mark 10:14-16: "Suffer the little
children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for such is the kingdom of God.”

Although this scripture carries significance for the panel makers as well as the
victim, the juxtaposition of the panel to other panels around it allows the scripture
to be read as a religious voice that speaks for all those represented in the Quilt.
Another aspect of Tiffany’s panel is that it incorporates a rainbow into the
narrative. Within the context of the larger Quilt, the rainbow becomes refracted
and double-coded. Although the authors probably called upon the rainbow as a
natural phenomenon that, according to folk myth, has a figurative pot of gold at its
end, the rainbow also signifies “pride” to the gay community, and is used as the
colors for their flag.

As panels like these lie side by side a heteroglot is formed that draws its
strength from diversity. The heteroglot involves multiple authors with multiple
relationships who call upon multiple genres of visual, literary, and speech
languages to tell the stories of their loved ones. Multiple intents are also evident in
the Quilt. The contexted voices implicate the amount of diversity and allow
expressed sexuality to lie next to the voice of a child which lies next to a religious
epistle which lies next to the voice of a mother.

Although the panels themselves function as novel discourse, they were
never crafted to stand alone. They were created to be added to the larger Quilt
and, as a result, the voices within each individual panel are informed by the
collective whole. When the idea of the Quilt was first conceived in November of 1985, the founders of the Quilt were looking for a way to memorialize one-thousand San Franciscans that had died of AIDS ("Ten Year Timeline" 1). Through their efforts, the Quilt has grown to a massive memorial with over forty-three thousand individuals named within its fabric.

The Quilt, as a whole, functions as a novel performance in that it resists any attempts to be perceived as "finished." As it keeps pace with the disease, the Quilt exposes the on-going impact of the disease, and refuses to allow any of the victims memorialized within the Quilt to be forgotten. The Quilt acts as forty-three thousand funerals in perpetual motion.

Another voice imbedded in the Quilt is that of the medium itself. By adopting the patchwork quilt as the medium for expression, the founders of the Quilt call upon a rich quilting tradition. Cleve Jones writes, "we chose the symbol of the Quilt in a deliberate effort to evoke and recapture the traditional American values that had yet to be applied to this apparently 'nontraditional' situation--values of cooperation, mutual respect and individual freedom," (quoted in Brown, J. vi). Although the Quilt calls upon the quilting tradition, it also bends that tradition to accomplish its purposes and give voice to its cause. Traditional quilts provided an outlet for individuals to work through grief, to memorialize their loved ones, to socialize, and to express political agendas. However, in each of
these cases, the finished quilt fulfilled a practical function within the home. The NAMES Project takes the quilt out of the home, the most personal of spaces, and makes it public. In so doing, the Quilt calls upon the social function of the quilt to present its message in a palatable form. Since quilts are revered as warm, practical art forms that deal with issues of family they are not perceived as suspect within culture. By adopting this medium, the Quilt gains access to a variety of venues.

Designed to report AIDS causalities, the Quilt also calls on the voice of memorials. According to Christopher Knight, "monuments are vessels created to hold individual memory, while public monuments are meant to hold communal ones. The NAMES Quilt has erected a graceful bridge between the two, linking private grief with public mourning" (8). Most memorials, dedicated to large numbers of individuals, are created after the crisis or conflict has passed. The NAMES Project, on the other hand, keeps pace with the disease by continually adding names to the Quilt. The Quilt also redefines how we use memorials. The voices represent both the official and unofficial, the common person and the celebrity. Once the individual voice is initiated into the larger Quilt it becomes a part of a collective voice that responds to AIDS rather than to specific victims of the disease.

By applying Bakhtin's concept of novel, we move from an understanding of the Quilt as operating within the social drama and in response to a social conflict
to understanding how the aesthetic medium itself operates and, in this case, is reflective of the social activity. Using Bakhtin, it is possible to isolate and identify specific personal, social, and political voices at work and at play within the Quilt. Also, different types of languages and functions emerge that lead to a understanding of the medium itself.

An understanding of the Quilt within the drama and as a significant social-aesthetic that reflects the drama suggests how we might use such a medium to address other social conflicts and, potentially, re-animate cultural rituals that perhaps no longer meet the needs of an ever-changing society and the multiple people and cultures collected within it.

The Quilt offers us alternative ways we might address social conflicts. Its praxis urges us to consider how individual participation and creative expression permits those involved in a conflict to become active agents while it also infers that they are part of the social body that generated the conflict and the social collective that can address and redress it. In other words, the Quilt shows us how to encourage people to take action, to be social actors, as compared to being (or accepting the role of) passive on-lookers. Also, the Quilt teaches us the value of a multiple-voiced social-aesthetic rhetoric. Although some might view such a rhetoric as weak, unclear, provincial, or “at best or worst” duplicitous, these exact characteristics and perceptions are those that allow the Quilt to be accepted on
many levels and in many venues. In this way, the Quilt speaks for many and, thereby, has the potential to influence and educate many.

When my grandmother, who introduced me to quilting, died in 1989, my brother performed at her funeral. She was ninety-one years old, had lived a good life, and in her own words, “was ready to go.” My grandmother planned much of her own funeral by choosing the songs, the flowers, and the minister before she died. She broke from tradition by choosing a congregational hymn where all those present were asked to join in a song to commemorate her passing. My brother’s eulogy also broke with tradition in the mode that he used to share the story of her life. As he recalled the intimate details of her ninety-one years, much of the family was brought to laughter not tears. And, not all of those present at the funeral appreciated the “comic” modality. Within twenty-four hours, I heard a woman, who was not a blood relative, comment on the “tasteless” nature of my grandmother’s funeral. At first I was enraged but I soon realized that the woman’s comments were informed by her expectations: Societal norms encode funerals as serious affairs. Laughter is suppressed or couched in apology.

As such, my brother’s attempt to novalize the funeral rite was accepted by some and rejected by others. The Quilt, too, operates in this way: Its double-voice (serio-comic) exigency tries to make room for many while it also reinscribes how we as a culture perform our funeral rites. And, not everyone is comfortable with
the inferred alterations and their ability to not only memorialize victims but simultaneously critique the act of public memorial. The quilted funeral re-conceives who authors the funeral, what material is acceptable, how it is composed, and for what reasons. The active co-production of this public memorial operates to reclaim culture and its expression for the people and, specifically, for those people who want to take an active part in a social phenomenon that finally affects us all.

The Quilt is a powerful site for novel performance in that it not only commemorates the dead it also offers a site for the living. According to Quilt Facts over twelve million individuals have seen the Quilt, and many have left their mark on the Signature Squares that accompany the Quilt (18 November 1998 1). According to Jim Williams of the National Education Association, “Those who have seen the AIDS Memorial Quilt know its power. It is an ideal venue for beginning a dialogue that can be difficult to start. . . . It opens discussion between peers, educators and students, parents and children and the community as a whole” (“National School Quilt Program” 2). The Quilt creates a unified social voice that makes two very strong comments: First, it acknowledges that all who are memorialized have died of AIDS while at the same time it acknowledges that someone loved them unconditionally.
Works Cited


Click, Michael. Author’s questionnaire. June, 1993.


Krouse, Mary E. "Gift Giving and Social Transformation: The AIDS Memorial Quilt as Social Movement Culture." Diss. The Ohio State University, 1993.


MacLeish, Don. Author's questionnaire. June, 1993.


Appendix A

Questionnaire and Confidential Release Form

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

4. Why did you create a panel?

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?
7. What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?

8. In a recent issue of The Advocate, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have "outgrown the quilt." What do you think?
Confidential Release Form

PLEASE READ THE QUESTIONNAIRE CAREFULLY BEFORE ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS.

Your Name: ____________________________________ Age ______ Race ______

Name of the individual for whom the panel was created: ________________________

Relationship: __________________________________________________________________

Birth/Death dates of individual for whom the panel was created: __________
Panel # if known: ______________

What year was your panel added to the AIDS Memorial Quilt: ______________

Are you affiliated with any NAMES Project Chapter? Which one? __________
   1) Would you be interested in a follow-up interview? ____________

2) If you answered yes, please provide the following:
   a) Phone #: __________________________
   b) Best time of day to call: __________________________
   c) Home address: __________________________________________________________________

3) Can the information obtained in this questionnaire be used for this and future projects?

4) If there are any restrictions to the use of this information, please state those restrictions in the space below.

5) Your Signature: ____________________________
   (WITHOUT YOUR SIGNATURE, NONE OF THE INFORMATION OBTAINED THROUGH THIS QUESTIONNAIRE WILL BE PROCESSED)

6) Today’s Date: ______________________________
Appendix B
Research Questionnaires

Questionnaire: (Ames)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

   (A sketch of the panel was provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

   The panel depicts a favorite place/activity that my lover and I shared, namely horseback riding to a spot “beneath a tree, at the top of the world.” It is meant to say to others, because it is my firm belief, that we will someday be reunited under that tree. It is meant to give hope to others, who like myself, have been temporarily left behind and that we will travel further down another path -- together.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

I created this panel alone, but would like to make another panel with some friends.

4. Why did you create a panel?

To add Curt’s name to a living, moving, growing, viable memorial to demonstrate my love for him and that love between two men is every bit as rewarding as any other love. Our commitment to each other is real, deep and selfless.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

I could not discuss the panel with Curt, he believed he would beat AIDS and I could not undermine that hope in any way.

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

Yes, several times. Two local displays, and again in Washington, D.C. in October, 92. I will see it again in Oct., 93 at a display in West Hollywood, at the P.D.C.
7. **What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?**

To give evidence to the politicians and to the public at large of the devastation of the AIDS epidemic and to give a very personal face to the individuals who have died. They become more than statistics.

Awareness = education = protection = fewer lives lost.

---

8. **In a recent issue of *The Advocate*, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.” What do you think?**

Only in the sense that those who volunteer, make panels and get educated so far have been predominately gay. As hundreds of pediatric panels and those of straight individuals are added, the Quilt becomes more meaningful than ever.
Questionnaire: (Bonner)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

   (A photograph of the panel was provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

Jeff was a member of the Philadelphia Freedom Band. He headed the band front (Rifle & Flag Twirlers). He also made & designed the uniforms. It says to me that he loved music, and bands. It also says that he had flare. All his friends say “It says it all.” As for what part I like, I like it all. To me it is Jeff. The panel speaks to Philadelphia, its marching band and all Jeff’s friends and acquaintances, to let them know how gay he was, and proud of it.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

I created the panel, I got it all together myself.

4. Why did you create a panel?

To be a permanent & living memory to my lover, for all to see.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

Yes, enough to let me know that what I did would be loved by him.

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

It has not been added at this time. I am taking Jeff's panel to the NAMES Project in San Francisco myself on October 1, 1993.
7. What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?

To bring awareness to people that see it. No one can see it and not be moved, in some way or another. Just like yourself. It is also to make people aware of how this disease is killing people from all walks of life, and all ages. It has no type of person. It kills men & women, blacks & whites, and little children that never had a chance or choice.

8. In a recent issue of The Advocate, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.” What do you think?

It will never “outgrow the Quilt.” The Quilt has to be explained to all. To show that we need research, and medical supplies, and money to pay for care. Also to educate the world to be aware, and be careful, and love each other.
Questionnaire: (Click)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

(A photograph of the panel was provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

I believe Kevin's panel says very simply yet rather eloquently that he was greatly loved and cherished by his partner, and I believe other people who see his panel get that same message.

I am especially proud of his name; the dark red velvet letters stand out not only the panel but on the entire 12 x 12.

Kevin's panel speaks to anyone who has ever loved another person.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

I designed the panel myself, but had help with the sewing -- and emotional support as I finished it.

4. Why did you create a panel?

I made the panel for many reasons: (1) to make a permanent record of his name in lieu of a tombstone; (2) to release some of the grief I felt; (3) to document our relationship; (4) to make a “statement” about love, AIDS, and loss.

Making his panel and writing the letter I sent in with it was one of the hardest -- and yet most healing -- things I’ve ever done.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

No, I did not know about the Quilt while Kevin was alive, so of course we never discussed it; however, part of the idea for his panel came from a card he once gave me, so in a way he had a form of input...

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

Since turning it into the Project in July 1991, I have seen it twice - once in Dallas and once in D.C. (I will see it a 3rd time in Ft. Worth in Sept ‘93.)

Its placement within 12 x 12 #1787 in no way alters the message it sends.
7. What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?

I think that ultimately, although the Quilt is a memorial, its primary function has become educational in nature. It facilitates AIDS education and prevention. And it opens people’s eyes to the impact of the disease and fosters compassionate response. I personally have seen the Quilt’s ability to engender volunteer activity and to break the silence surrounding AIDS within a community.

8. In a recent issue of *The Advocate*, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.” What do you think?

Unquestionably, the Quilt will continue to have a unique and crucial role to play in the fight against AIDS. As the demographics of AIDS change in the U.S., some gay-specific organizations will undoubtedly play a less active role in the battle (which is not to denigrate those organizations!); but there will still be AIDS-phobia (without, hopefully, a measure of homophobia added in). And there will still be grieving survivors. I believe, if anything, the Quilt and the NAMES Project will have an increasing role to play in the future.
Questionnaire: (Coyle)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

(A sketch of the panel was provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

The panel depicted broken prison bars with butterflies flying through the bars - representing freedom at last. I believe that there was 5 butterflies and 2 chrysalis representing two inmates still alive - I loved that part. (the inmates who designed the memorial wanted a presence.) It's been a while and I can't remember the names or placement exactly.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

Group effort - Prisoners and agency staff

4. Why did you create a panel?

To give a voice and a presence to prisoners living and dying with AIDS

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

Yes - we worked with a group of Elmira Correctional Facility inmates infected with HIV.
They designed the quilt panel and we sewed it together.

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

Yes - 2 times

It’s very powerful to see the panel attached to the quilt
7. What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?

Healing and education -
It has extraordinary healing power for those grieving and it is an incredible teaching tool.

8. In a recent issue of The Advocate, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.” What do you think?

I disagree - I think everyone deserves a panel of memory after their death - What a gift & a remembrance - Rick may have been speaking to $, displays, logistics, whatever - but ultimately its a personal, private memory - a gift of love that speaks truth to power.
Questionnaire: (Durgin)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

(A photograph of the panel was provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

Jim's panel has a figure similar to the caricature he used in his advertisement he did for his commercial art work. His dog he had as a teenager, whose picture he still had among his things. The last two lines of a poem I like that spoke of his love of nature and hobby of photographing nature, a lot of it on our property.

Do not stand by my grave and weep
I am not there. I do not sleep
I am a thousand winds that blow
I am a diamond glint on snow
I am the sunlight on ripened grain
I am the gentle autumn rain
When you awake in the morning hush
I am the quiet uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circling flight.
I am the soft starshine at night
Do not stand by my grave and cry
I am not there... I did not die.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

Alone

4. Why did you create a panel?

To have a contribution to the Quilt, to deal with my grief, to have it ready for the first World AIDS Day, Dec. 1, 1988. Soon after that, we formed a chapter of the National Quilt NAMES Project/Maine. I was a charter member.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

No, he was already deceased.

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

Many times. We have his quilt back to New England for displays at least once a year. I saw it in Washington last October. My thoughts are still the same, a visual reminder that my son did live, that his panel is a memorial to him for all to see.
7. What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?

The primary function is for the loved ones of people who have died of AIDS to do something positive to remember them by. It shows the world how many loved ones have died and that there are so many families and lovers left behind who grieve for them. It keeps the attention of the world on the fact that we need to educate those who are healthy to avoid this illness and for an ongoing need to find a vaccine to protect everyone. It is a beautiful sight, all those individual panels. A sad memorial.

Our Maine Chapter has a presentation we do in the schools or churches or businesses that are interested which emphasizes the compassionate side of AIDS, the side that tells of the loss of individuals. We have slides of all the panels made in Maine for Maine people. We tell stories behind the panels, some sad, some funny. We have individuals tell of their own personal experience with AIDS, their personal stories about their sons or brothers or friend. We find that the children or people are very receptive when they see the personal side of AIDS. The message is not to turn your back on a person with AIDS, don’t be afraid of catching something from them, but give them the love and support they need and give their families that same support. It is hard enough going through such an experience without having prejudice to contend with. We find our program very successful in educating people to the personal, compassionate side of AIDS. I get more from doing these programs than I give. It’s such a satisfaction to see these children really listening and responding to the Quilt.

8. In a recent issue of The Advocate, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.”

What do you think?

It is getting so large that it is impossible to see every panel. The answer is to divide it into sections of the country, maybe four so it won’t be so burdensome. It would be nice to show all of it together every four years if a site large enough can be found. As for discontinuing it, I am not in favor. Every person who has made a panel will tell you it is a healing process, a feeling of accomplishment.
1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

   (Photographs of the two panels were provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

We created two panels for our friend. We originally planned to create only the left panel & send out small squares for friends & family members to sign. (These small squares were to be affixed to the back of the original panel.) When we saw the beautiful artwork & sentiments on these little squares of fabric, we realized we needed to create another 3'x6' panel just for them. Jimmy’s two panels are side by side on a 12' x 12' section of the Quilt. We wanted people who see the Quilt to see Jimmy as a name & a face (not just a statistic) & that he impacted a lot of lives in his 35 years. Jimmy was a beautiful man, both physically & emotionally, & we hope this is conveyed to our audience.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

group effort

4. Why did you create a panel?

1) to create a memorial for a dear lost friend
2) to help in the grieving process
3) to educate people about the horrible toll that AIDS has taken
4) to promote acceptance of people with AIDS

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

He had no input in this project personally, but as we made the panels we constantly asked ourselves “Would Jimmy be pleased with ....?”

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

We have seen the panel twice since it was added to the Quilt. Seeing Jimmy’s panel in the Quilt only heightened my commitment to this project.
7. **What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?**

To illustrate the enormity & humanity of the AIDS epidemic by showing that those people who have died of AIDS were real human beings with names, faces & lives. One cannot see the Quilt without realizing what a tremendous toll this disease has taken on our society.

8. In a recent issue of *The Advocate*, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.” What do you think?

Absolutely not! No matter how many lives are lost, we must never lose sight of these people as individuals. For me, making a Quilt panel helped me to constructively grieve the loss of my friend & let go of some of the anger I harbored at losing him at such a young age. I think everyone is entitled to this opportunity to let go of those they loved & lost & the opportunity to know that their panels may help to educate others & save some lives.
Questionnaire: (Garner)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

(A sketch of the panel was provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

The panel describes Alan and the things that were part of his life. The panel is the view of a room. The open door shows the sun rising over snow capped mountains. Alan loved to snow ski. In the room are Alan’s ski’s and ski boots. He would like to be on those snow covered heights. Palm trees, sun and water are seen through the window. Alan lived in south Florida. He loved the beach and the water. In the room are his snorkeling mask and other equipment. Also in the room is a small gray and white dog named Bridgette. She is looking out the door waiting for her master’s return. (She has since joined her Master and doesn’t have to wait for him any more).

The panel has a degree of roughness about it. I am not a tailor - my sewing shortcomings are quite visible. That also reflects Alan - He was - in some ways - a little “Rough” when it came to decorating and arranging. He was the “no frills” type. My desire is that the panel memorializes Alan and brings hope to others. The sun rising over the snow covered mountains is the symbol of that hope.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

I had help with the design. I described what I wanted and a friend sketched it for me. I did 95% of the actual sewing.

4. Why did you create a panel?

I wanted to create a memorial for my best and closest friend. I missed him terribly and still do. Rarely a day goes by that I don't think of him. As it turned out, making the panel fostered the grief process for me. Once I finished the panel, I began to realize how much I had suppressed my grief. The panel let me finally deal with my grief in a healthy way.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

No

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

Yes - many times
Placement did not alter what I wanted to say.
7. What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?

It is probably the most powerful educational tool we have in AIDS education. It is gentle, yet quite insistent with its message. The Quilt takes people where they are and moves them. It puts the human lines behind the statistics. It breaks down barriers - all kinds. It teaches.

8. In a recent issue of The Advocate, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.”

What do you think?

I think Rick Rose is rather jaded and uninformed. I suspect he has missed the message of the Quilt. I even suspect he has not made a panel for anyone. As one who has been a part of several dozen displays, I have never seen the Quilt fail to move people. It has a gentle but firm message and it can break through the toughest veneers. AIDS may be “outgrowing” a lot of things - the Quilt is not one of them.
Questionnaire: (Grindel)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

   (A sketch of the panel was provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

The panel was made by several people - siblings and friends - who were close to Tom. The theme was Christmas because that was Tom's favorite time of year. His sister, who initiated the idea for the quilt, made a big Christmas tree for the quilt and asked friends to make ornaments that symbolized their relationship with Tom.

To me, the panel shows the diversity of Tom's relationships and talents and personality. You look at some of the ornaments people made and kinda chuckle, thinking, "Yeah, that's Tom all right." I think others looking at the quilt - even though they didn't know him - would really get the sense of his personality: creative, funny, artistic.

I don't think the panel speaks to anyone in particular except those of us who knew him.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

The panel was a group effort among his siblings and friends.

4. Why did you create a panel?

We wanted something tangible for the rest of the world to know that Tom was an important part of this world. Those of us who knew him will always have memories to hold on to. People who didn’t know him don’t have those memories. I think the quilt helps Tom to live on in everyone’s heart.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

To my knowledge, the panel was not discussed with Tom before he died.

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

No.
I have a policy about the quilt: because I work for an AIDS Service Organization, grief is a daily part of my life. I once saw the quilt display on video and it so overwhelmed me, I was emotionally immobilized for days. I don’t think I could see it in person.
7. What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?

I think it started out as a symbol of awareness, to stimulate people into action and get involved.

8. In a recent issue of The Advocate, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have "outgrown the quilt." What do you think?

I read the editorial that you're referring to, and I have mixed feelings about it. Certainly, the Quilt is a tremendous expenditure of time and resources; the money could be used in a lot of ways. The other issue I have is that displaying the quilt is like "preaching to the choir." the people who go to see it are generally those who have been touched by AIDS and are aware of its impact.

However, I think the quilt serves several important functions. First, the very act of making a Quilt panel can be a cleansing and healing experience for those who are grieving. Second, a Quilt panel is a tangible testament to someone's life. Third, when people see the Quilt, or a portion of it, I think it's some consolation that "my brother/sister/lover/friend etc. was not alone. Finally, to me, the concept of the quilt is inspiring. To see all of those panels and know that each one represents a human life and was made out of love and compassion really helps me to appreciate the struggle of people with HIV as well as to more fully appreciate life and health and people.
Questionnaire: (Haight)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

   (A photograph of the panel was provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

   Our panel #1783 was designed to show others some of Billy's interests. Upper left corner is a cloud. When I look to Heaven I feel Billy is looking down through the clouds. So I put his name on one. His cousin, my niece, came up with "LOVE LAST FOREVER." The purple Cross shows he is a Christian. The Rainbow always comes up after the rain. To the left of the Rainbow is his Tuba he played in the High School Band. The black with silver are musical notes. Below the Rainbow & above the "4H" emblem is Billy's Clarinet he took 1st in High School Band (prior to the Tuba). The large T's have his birth date on one & his death date on another. The "T" also stands for Towanda. I'm sure Billy can spot it from the Heavens. The rabbits are what he was interested in during his 4H years. (He had other projects but that was the, shall I say, largest in number of his projects.) I embroidered the Marine Corps Emblem on this panel not just because Billy was a Marine, but being a Marine made Billy proud. He felt he had pleased his Dad, a retired Marine. That's the kind of young man Billy was - always trying to please someone. I guess for that reason the part dedicated to his time in the Corps means most to me.

   I hope someday you get to look at quilt panel #1783. Thank you for letting me share this project with you.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

Most of the ideas were mine. The thought in the cloud "LOVE LAST FOREVER" was my niece's idea.

4. Why did you create a panel?

As a tribute to our son. I know he would have told me to do it if he were here. I'm sure he is proud of the outcome.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

No - I did not know anything about the quilt before he (Billy) had passed away.

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

I have only seen our panel added to the quilt in pictures. We had planned to go to Bethlehem last Feb. when we had a bad snow & ice storm the day we were going. A friend of ours took pictures & that's the first & it's beautiful.

Does not alter anything.
7. **What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?**

Teaching others that people from all walks of life, and all different interest can, and did get AIDS and died. There are many other functions but I feel showing and teaching is most important.

8. **In a recent issue of The Advocate, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.” What do you think?**

I’m not sure what Rick Rose is saying by that statement, but certainly the number of cases of AIDS has been on the increase without much support, especially in the small towns. Friends & Families are afraid to come out in the open & show support. I guess it all boils down to discrimination against those with AIDS & their families ---

What a pity --
Questionnaire: (Hilegman)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

(Photographs of the two panels were provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

I have made quite a few panels for the Quilt for various people I have known, but the two that have meant the most to me are two that I made for my two buddies - Patrick Leonard & Patrick Gregory.

Patrick (Leonard) loved 50's items and the colors pink & turquoise. He & his lover, Dan, had a 50's antique shop. Patrick painted his last apartment pink and turquoise. When we were preparing for the Quilt display in '88, we flew to the workshop in San Francisco to learn more about making panels and more about organizing our own workshop. On the way back, I saw the sky light up with pink & turquoise light. The poem and panel describe my feelings about Patrick's death. The photo is of him running a meeting in the workshop with his wonderful bubbly personality and smile. A lock of his hair is contained in a small plastic bag under the photo.

The poem and panel for Patrick Gregory are based on his athleticism and his artistry. Pat gave me the confidence that I could do a decent job in making panels. The theme is of his Lesbian and Gay friends carrying him off the field accompanied by family. The poem and panel are inspired by the nurses. An MCC pastor, Brad, translated the poem into Greek for me. A lock of Pat’s hair is under the falling figure. The rainbow colored arch places Patrick in St. Louis, where he grew up and lived all his life.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

The two panels for Patrick Leonard and Patrick Gregory were created alone.

4. Why did you create a panel?

These two panels were created as a memorial to my two buddies. After Pat Leonard died, I determined to get the Quilt back to St. Louis as a memorial to him. As Pat Gregory deteriorated, I also wanted the display to be a retrospective of the many panels he had made for friends he lost. Pat Gregory died a month before the display. So the display became a memorial for him as well, with panels for Pat Leonard, Pat Gregory and so many other people who had died locally and elsewhere.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

I didn’t discuss the panels with either of them while they were alive. But with both men, a poem came to me while they were alive, and this poem formed the basis for the panel. And each panel contains a lock of hair from the person commemorated.

Patrick (Leonard) left his sewing machine to me in his will. I literally learned to use it making his panel. I had a heck of a time and had to sew, rip out the threads and re-sew before it finally came out right.

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

I’ve seen both panels at various displays. The first time I saw Pat Leonard’s panel was at the display in D.C. in ‘89. I was very pleased to see groups of people and individuals stop by that panel & others that friends and his mom and step-dad had made. Thousands of people who had never met Patrick, learned of him and his name that day and saw how much he was loved. The panel not only helped me to grieve, it became a wonderful tribute to this man I loved so much. Few people know who made this panel. Thousands have seen the panel and know something
of the man whose name has been kept alive. The last time I saw both panels was at the display in D.C. in Oct. '92. I have made many pilgrimages to see the panels in between. It is like paying a visit to see my two Patricks.

7. What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?

I have seen the Quilt and sections of the Quilt so often that it no longer has the impact on me that it once did. But it continues to overwhelm thousands of people who see it for the first time, and it brings home the terrible waste of this disease in a way that nothing else can. It humanizes, personalizes this epidemic. The deaths are no longer statistics. It is persons who were lovers and mothers and children, friends, fathers, with names, faces, articles of clothing, bits of hobbies, art work, poems, letters, ideals, professions, favorite colors and foods, and pets, and on and on and on.

8. In a recent issue of The Advocate, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.” What do you think?

AIDS was always much bigger than the Quilt. The vast majority of people worldwide who have died of AIDS have no panel. And many of those who do, are not listed by name. But the Quilt continues to provide an important function for many who have lost loved ones to AIDS. My phone number is listed as the number to call in the St. Louis area for panel information, and I continue to get a few calls each month. Some from hundreds of miles away from people who want to make panels for someone.
Questionnaire: (Hodgson)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

(A photograph of the panel was provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

No. 1: The panel centers around NYC. Sten lived there, and would live nowhere else in the world. Surrounding it are smaller panels illustrating some of the things he loved. Photography, a line from one of his poems, and the art museums and cathedrals he so loved are represented in panels. Several others portray some of the many places he traveled to: Italy, the Southwest, China, Wales. Others speak to his closeness to his family. The picture of him was abstracted from a photograph when he was best man at Kim’s wedding. The silhouette of our family, and the red heart represents what we once had that is now lost. The other three corners show his nieces, who he adored. A fourth one will never know her Uncle Sten; we found out she was coming a week after he died.

No. 2: It says to me that here was a bright, talented, happy man, very much loved by his family. He was full of life, and though his life was far shorter than it should have been, he lived the hell out of it.

No. 3: I’m not sure. There is obviously a lot behind some of the panels that most folks wouldn’t know. For those that knew him, I hope it brings a smile from a happy memory. From others, I hope it evokes some idea of the loss our world has suffered.

No. 4: Well, I am rather biased here, but my favorite is the one in the lower left corner. My daughter Julia was 5 when Sten died, and made her own part of his panel, a picture of her holding hands with her Uncle Sten. She was the first grandchild in our family, he was her godfather, and the two of them adored each other. He spent much time during his last year sharing his world with her: New York, taxis, the ballet, Christmas at Radio City. The other children were too young, alas, to remember him well, but he was, and is, a big part of Julia’s life.

No. 5: I think it speaks most strongly to those that knew Sten, and can understand the meaning behind some of the panels, but I hope it speaks to others in the abstract as well.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

It was a group effort. Everyone in the family participated. Mom and Dad, brothers Kim, Brian, and Garry, sisters-in-law Mary Ann, Nancy, and Mary, and nieces Kelsey, Erin, and Julia.

4. Why did you create a panel?

I’m not exactly sure. Sten died in August, and sometime later we learned that the Quilt would be shown in its entirety in October in Washington. We thought Sten should have a panel there, so that became our goal, and our deadline. We finished it the night before we left to go down there. I think we felt that Sten’s death could not be allowed to pass unnoticed, and this was a way of declaring it to the world. We felt that the Quilt was a very important work, and wanted to be a part of it. To whatever extent it helps raise awareness and educate people, it allows some small good to come out of our own loss, and that makes it easier to bear. I think that making the panel was very cathartic for all of us, and participating in the Washington exhibit was tremendously helpful in our learning to deal with this. Several of our family have become active in volunteer work, e.g. volunteering at the Rutgers display, delivering meals to AIDS patients, etc. This has been very satisfying, and helps overcome the sense of helplessness we’ve dealt with during the years of Sten’s illness. We were unable, ultimately, to save Sten, but perhaps we can save someone else.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

No, it was something we didn’t really think of until after the fact.

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

We’ve seen it twice. First in Washington, when it was added into the new panel section, then a few months later when it was on display with 19 others at the New York Historical society. We only found out about the NYHS display by accident, when a friend of Sten’s spotted a blurb about (with a picture) it in New York Magazine. I don’t think its placement alters it as much as strengthens it. When we saw it at NYHS, the panels displayed, while interesting, lacked the visceral impact
you get when they are among hundreds or thousands of others. I haven’t seen Sten’s panel in a 12 x 12, but when I saw it in Washington, I felt a rather kindly disposition toward his “neighbors”.

7. What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?

I think the Quilt functions on a number of levels. As a focus for education and awareness, it is unique in its ability to bring home the concept that these are people suffering, not just numbers. Walking around and seeing all the wonderful people that have been lost, and the awful effects on those who loved them, really brings home what a tragedy this epidemic is. It also reinforces that there are all kinds of people suffering (it’s no longer “the Gay Plague”, to be conveniently ignored by mainstream America). While working at a display of the Quilt at Rutgers this spring, I watched my boss walking around with her college-age daughter. It occurred to me that she must be scared to death that this could happen to her child. She later confirmed that she brought her daughter along for exactly this reason, to drive home a point in a manner that no amount of parental preaching could do. I had a number of friends see the Quilt for the first time at that display. They were all deeply moved, and came away with an understanding that you just can’t get by reading about it or seeing pictures. A secondary function is to help the healing process for those left behind. Making a panel for a loved one is a very moving process; extremely difficult but immensely satisfying. Seeing the Quilt, and meeting others who have lost loved ones makes you realize you are not in this alone, and that somehow makes it less difficult. Like many others, my brother was cremated, and there is no cemetery or other physical place to “go and see him.” His panel, wherever it may be at the moment, sort of provides an abstract version of such a place. I may not see it today or tomorrow, but just knowing it is out there somewhere is comforting. It mirrors my own belief that he is out there somewhere and that we’ll meet again.

8. In a recent issue of The Advocate, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.” What do you think?

I think I’d need to read the article to comment intelligently on it. However, I do feel that some of the wind may have gone out of the AIDS movement’s sails. I believe this is due to the change in administration in Washington. Having an obvious, visible enemy in power does a lot to mobilize people. At the Washington display in October there was a palpable anger and hostility in the air. It’s harder to
stay angry at incompetence (or impotence) than malevolence. I think the Quilt still
has a major role to play in educating people about the crisis. The power it has to
open people’s eyes (and their hearts) is enormous, and I do not see another way to
evoke the response it does. I have worked with the NAMES folks on a few
occasions, and they are true saints; their tirelessness and devotion to the cause is
inspiring. As I left the Rutgers display, I have silent thanks that there were people
like this around; as long as there are, there is still hope.
Questionnaire: (Jackson)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

   (A photograph of the panel was provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

   My panel is simple, it says to me just how much I love & miss my son so very much & still do, it still hurts inside me that I cry every time I see it or even look at his pictures. It says to others, there is a face to AIDS, a person, that once loved life, and was too young to die, to be aware, to love people w/AIDS. They cannot hurt you. Help them; be their friend; do not turn your back from them. THEY need you. I love every part of my panel simple as it is. It took a long time to make, all family members shared in making it, w/a lot of tears, hugs, and anger at AIDS, it was very emotional. Dennie Mike’s panel reaches out to all young and old alike, it is sad and funny at the same time. children love it, adults love it. It was put in our local paper - full page.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

All family

4. Why did you create a panel?

So that Dennie Mike did not die in vain, mainly for me - I had to do something for Dennie and let people know.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

No I did not talk to Dennie about a panel. I never thought that he would die.

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

Yes. I travel to all schools & speak about Dennie K-12. Their minds are still open and if I can save just one child that's what matters. It was painful to have Dennie put in with the Quilt, but he is with good people, it still will take a while for me to let go.

No, it does not change anything. We love it the way it is.
7. What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?

To reach out to everyone, more so the kids. They need to know; and the Quilt says it all without having to teach or talk about sex.

8. In a recent issue of *The Advocate*, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have "outgrown the quilt." What do you think?

NO WAY. It has got to keep going. If we stop now everything will go backward. Back in the closet. We must keep it going on and on and on. Get a large farm field for display, what matters what state it is in. People will come.
Questionnaire: (James, A.)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.
   (A photograph of the panel was provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

   My brother was loved by those that knew him as a decent, kind and loving human being whose talent shined in his work as an interior designer. It only seemed logical that I used fabric from my brother's decorating samples for his name. The bright fuchsia background was used to symbolize his bright and happy personality, and ability to stand out among others. The gold heart attached to his photo represents his heart of gold that he was known for during his business dealings as well as in his personal relationships. The black satin pieces represent his taste for the formal, dressier occasions he enjoyed as well as his liking everything to be smooth and glossy. The words written at the bottom of the panel were words he read daily, a sort of philosophy he subscribed to and shared with me at my lowest moments. The business cards represent both his failures and successes in business. His most successful business was John Anthony Designs in Fort Smith, Arkansas. The beaded Rolls Royce applique represents the lean times he experienced when trying to establish his business in Minneapolis and he supported himself by moonlighting as a chauffeur. The Rolls Royce also represents his once secret hope of eventually becoming financially independent. (He almost saw his dream come true. He was stricken with AIDS at a time in his life that he had more clients and business than he could handle alone.) The beaded cactus with cowboy hat applique represents his love for the southwest, particularly Dallas, Austin, Houston, and San Antonio, Texas. My favorite part of this panel is my brother's photo. His photo is there as a reminder to the world that he once existed as one of the human species: handsome, happy, and healthy, before this disease destroyed his life. By displaying his business cards, by incorporating the flashy with the formal, by writing the credo he believed in, and by presenting his likeness on this panel as part of the entire display, I wanted others to know AIDS does not discriminate. He was a person with a purpose in life—to bring beauty into the lives of others, albeit, with some finesse. He was loved and needed by many yet these facts did not protect him from a horrible death. It is this message that I hoped my panel would send to anyone who saw it.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?
I created the panel alone. It was not easy for me, since he had all the artistic talent! My initial ideas were haphazard and uncreative to say the least. The panel seemed to take on a life of its own and created itself. It was as if John had a guiding hand in the direction it eventually took.

4. Why did you create a panel?
There were several reasons, but the main reason was to honor my brother by validating his existence in this world and his life. His sisters were not allowed to place an obituary in his local paper since the man he lived with had never told his own mother he was gay. So out of fear of her finding out the truth, he did not want her to know my brother had died. My brother's ashes were scattered at his personal request, in another state from the one he actually lived and died in. There being no vault or head stone marking his time on this planet, was an important issue to me. In dealing with death I was taught traditional Catholic (and Mexican-American) values regarding respect for the dead. I needed a point of reference for me—for my own personal healing, and this panel helped me in that manner.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?
I never got a chance to discuss making a panel with him because when I saw the Quilt for the first time (the first time it was displayed in Washington, D.C.), I was so awed by the love that was apparent in all the panels and the love all around that was being expressed by those comforting each other or in helping those searching for a name. I took a few photographs of that day and one particular photo showed the rays of the sun pouring down from the sky, out of the clouds, and seemed to touch the panels on display on the ground. It was a favorite of mine that seemed to capture the mood of the day. Anxious to share that with my brother, I tried to show it to him. He wouldn't look at my photos and was not comfortable in talking about the Quilt. I believe he was seeing a lot of his friends at that time being diagnosed with HIV or had already lost friends to AIDS. I didn't bring up the subject again. Later, while I was making the panel, I wished I had talked with him to get his ideas and so he could have had a hand in designing it. I guess I was afraid he would have told me not to do it and I would have been doubly perplexed in trying to honor his request.

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?
I saw my panel immediately after it was added to the quilt. I have only seen it while on display at the NAMES Project office (once) and once again during the International display in Washington, D.C. in October 1992. The placement does not alter the message on my panel.

7. **What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?**

I think the quilt functions as a strong visual aid that illustrates the enormity of the destruction and horror of this disease. It educates the public about how this disease knows no boundaries kills all. There is no set age group, no one ethnic group, no particular sex nor one lifestyle, or socioeconomic group that is more vulnerable than another. The display reinforces the fact that this disease is still killing people every day.

8. In a recent issue of *The Advocate*, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.”

What do you think?

I had read a similar remark, or quite possibly the same remark; I don’t remember exactly where I read it. I interpret this remark to mean the Quilt was initially intended to call attention to the lives lost to a horrible disease that, at that time, was not in the forefront for research money. Since that time, the disease has continued to grow, despite the added money collected and funding obtained for AIDS research. Also the general public is supposedly more aware of AIDS and the Quilt may be a simplistic, passive way of acknowledging the continued existence of AIDS. Could he also be saying the time has come for a more aggressive message by a more aggressive messenger? Whether he meant all of this or not, I cannot discount the healing power of the quilt for the panel maker. It is a great medium to get in touch with your feelings and to come to terms with the loss of a dear life, whether you knew the person intimately or not. As long as AIDS continues to remain a part of our lives, the Quilt needs to remain a part of our lives also, if only to serve as a somber, silent reminder of the valuable lives lost to a terrible plague. The quilt continues to teach us all.

THE WORDS AT THE BOTTOM OF MY PANEL READ:

"DON'T QUIT
When things go wrong--as they sometimes will,
when the road you're trudging seems all up hill,
When the funds are low, and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but you have to cry,
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest if you must, but don't quit.
Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As everyone of us sometimes learns.
And many a failure turns about,
When he might have won had he stuck it out.
Don't give up though the pace seems slow.
You may succeed with another blow.
Success is failure turned inside out.
The silver hint of the clouds of doubt.
And you can never tell how close you are;
It may be near when it seems so far.
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit.
It's when things seems worse,
That you must not quit.

(Kristone)

(words our brother lived by--We will never quit fighting for a cure for AIDS...) We love you, John, may your suffering and pain be over forever. We thank God for sharing you with us. During your short lifetime you taught us about love, joy, pain, forgiveness, and suffering.

Peace be with you.
Love Bonnie, Toni, & Trish"
Questionnaire: (James)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.
   
   (Both a sketch and a photograph of the panel were provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

   1. He did String Art in college, many of them with windmills. (So does his headstone)
   2. He was in rodeos growing up. These are just two of his ribbons. (A lock of his hair is under the big one.)
   4. Approx. location of his home.
   5. He LOVED popcorn!!
   6. Tupperware refrigerator magnet. (He sold Tupperware as a hobby.)
   7. Friend’s signature
   8. Friend’s signature
   9. Fabric of his favorite sweatshirt
   
   I was grieving heavily when I made the panel. It was to show people who he basically was. It was simple. So was he. I like seeing his name on the panel. It gives me strength to go on without him by just saying his name. I hope this panel speaks to Iowans. It (alas) happens here too!
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

Alone

4. Why did you create a panel?

He was a history buff. He is now part of the history of "The Quilt." I did that for him, to become a powerful historical mark.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

No. How I wish I could have!

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

Yes, 5 times. No.
7. What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?

People “get it” when they see it. They (most) change in some way for the better.

8. In a recent issue of *The Advocate*, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.” What do you think?

I read that article. Some good points are made. I don’t have an answer. It costs so much to maintain and display. This may sound outrageous, but when a cure for AIDS is found, I wouldn’t mind if the panel I made was burned ceremoniously.

*Closure*
Questionnaire: (Kohlbach)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

   (A photograph of the panel was provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

My panel was meant to say that we all loved Dan. I had as many family members as possible sign the quilt. The best signature was his 5 year-old niece - even though her family (my daughter and her husband) weren't always accepting and understanding, they still loved him.

I hope it speaks to family members - it's o.k. to love someone with AIDS. They've done nothing to lose that love.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

It was a very personal one person effort.

4. Why did you create a panel?

I spoke to my son about it before he died. He died Oct. 23, 1990 & the quilt was being shown in Binghamton Dec. 1. It was a labor of love & a way to get through some of the grief. When I presented it, I couldn’t see because of the tears but I needed to feel the pain. I took care of everyone else when he was sick & dying. I needed the release among caring people.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

He didn’t know what the design was but he was happy I wanted to do it for him.

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

Yes. It came back to Binghamton in March, 1992 & I went to see it again. I didn’t even notice the placement.
7. **What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?**

We cannot ignore the numbers the quilt represents. Nor can we ignore the love and pain represented in the panels. No one can see it or even parts of it, and not be moved.

8. **In a recent issue of The Advocate,** (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.”

What do you think?

I think the quilt has grown with the epidemic. What was first thought of as a “gay banner” has grown to include all those who have died - from infants to grandparents. We are all at risk & we need the reminder. AIDS isn’t going to go away until everyone has the knowledge to protect themselves and wipe out the fear that keeps people with AIDS isolated and abandoned.
Questionnaire: (Lehman)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.
   
   (A photograph of the panel was provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

   Blue background with a hot air balloon on it, the basket of the balloon is filled with many of Walt’s favorite things. The basket has his 2 cats, the Washington Monument (from a D.C. trip) candle, wine glass, and his high top tennis shoes he wore to Black Tie function. The panel is also signed by his friends, which shows how much he was loved!
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

It was my “design” but several friends helped.

4. Why did you create a panel?

As a way to remember, as a way to forget, as a way to move on, as a way to share our love and memory of him!

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

No

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

Yes, many times, no
7. What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?

1. To serve as a memorial to those we have lost.

2. To help educate everyone!

8. In a recent issue of The Advocate, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.” What do you think?

I feel Mr. Rose is WRONG! The quilt is a very powerful symbol to create a means of education and raise awareness. There are millions who have yet to see the quilt or to get the facts about HIV/AIDS.
Questionnaire: (MacLeish)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

(Several photographs of the panel were provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

As you can see I named the panel A Heaven Full of Endless Love & Friendship. The moon represents Larry and the way he touched us all. The gold star is from me, the closest to the sun. The star with the gold on the outer edge is his closest friend. The other stars are his friends & family. The clouds represent his free spirit. The mountains at the base are the ones we see from our back and front yard. The picture is my favorite of him. It tells others that this person was loved and how special he was. Every star I asked someone to write something special about Larry. I like the warmth of the whole panel and how it describes Larry and how special he really was. Not only in my life but others too. And I wanted everyone who saw it to know this too.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

Yes. I started with all the great hopes of getting everyone together to share in the experience. But to find out that not everyone could do this.

4. Why did you create a panel?

It kept me busy during my time of grief. I wanted to express my love and show how Larry was loved by others - that this person was real. And fought for three long years with this dreaded disease.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

No. Larry was in total denial of his having aids.

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

Yes. (twice). No. He is surrounded by others who were loved.
7. **What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?**

AIDS Awareness!! A means of people to work through their grief. It is a wonderful tool for AIDS education for all levels. It has opened many a door.

8. **In a recent issue of The Advocate, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.” What do you think?**

I believe it has not. I am angered how many people don’t even know of the quilt. I feel that it is not on display enough.
Questionnaire: (O’Connor)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

   (A photograph of the panel was provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

My panel for Todd is very classy, quiet, and dignified, just like he was. It is a simple charcoal gray (a color he wore often) painted w/his signature in white. I like it especially because it is a replication of his own unique signature - he was an architect who had very unique, artistic handwriting. Because it is his own signature (and we wrote a lot of notes, cards, and letters to one another) it is to me as vivid a memory as had I used a photo of his face. To others, it may not say as much, since it is so simple -- although I think some are struck by the unique lettering and overall simplicity of it. I would have liked to incorporate a skyline or some sort of architectural design that would appeal to other architects, but did not have time or talent to do so.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

Alone - with only the help of an Art teacher (who did not know Todd or myself) to enlarge the signature onto the 3x6 panel.

4. Why did you create a panel?

Because Todd loved the quilt and asked me to make him a part of it. We had a local display here in Nov. of 1989, which he was too ill to attend (he was hospitalized at the time) and I vowed to do a panel. His mother & sister wanted to do a panel too, but did not feel ready yet - so I asked them if I could go ahead. I really wanted to get it done in time for October of 92's International Display in D.C. - I knew this would mean a lot to Todd. To do so, the panel had to be in S.F. by June 15, and I asked his mother & sister if I could do it alone. They agreed, and still want to do one together someday - when they feel ready.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

Not really - just the art teacher who chalked the signature onto the panel for me, and a friend who happened to be w/me and gave a bit of input at the fabric store. It turned out to be a very solitary & peaceful project for me, and I honestly kind of liked it that way.

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

Yes! Just once, at the Int’l. display in D.C. in October, 92. The display was so huge that it was honestly a bit overwhelming and I felt Todd was a bit “lost,” but then I noticed that his panel was adjacent (in the same 12x12) as another man (who had been a friend of both Todd’s and mine) from this community. That made it even better!
7. **What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?**

To **remember** those who have died of AIDS is the primary function! True, other functions are to inform, educate, etc., but **REMEMBERING** our loved ones & the names & faces & spirits of others is the PRIMARY function.

8. In a recent issue of *The Advocate,* (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.” What do you think?

Perhaps in size, it has “outgrown” the chance for another field display, but has AIDS outgrown the Quilt when we consider the primary **function** of the Quilt? NO WAY!
Questionnaire: (Smith)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

   (A photograph of the panel was provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

   A blue background - His favorite color
   A Rainbow stripe - To finally let people know he was gay
   His name/date of birth/date of death
   A golf green - He loved golf and talked about going to the “Great Golf Course in the Sky.”
   A card that he gave me that he said symbolized our relationship

   The panel is very personal and really doesn’t say anything to others or a group. Just that someone very special has died.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

The panel was created by myself.

4. Why did you create a panel?

As a memorial to him and to help me work through some issues of his death.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

No.

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

Yes. I’ve seen the panel 2 times since being added to the Quilt.

No. The panel stands alone.
7. What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?

Two functions:

1) To be a visible reminder/symbol to the number of people who have become victims to this virus so that others may learn, become more aware, and educate themselves and others.

2) To be a more visible memorial to someone who has suffered from a disease that is still not widely and openly talked about.

8. In a recent issue of The Advocate, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have "outgrown the quilt." What do you think?

What other reminder would there be of the number of people who are dying of this epidemic?
Questionnaire: (Spatafora)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

   (A photograph of the panel was provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

   The background of this panel is a forest green with lighter green flowers printed on it. The name is made out of one inch squares of lighter green fabric and is worked into the panel - not sewn on. The hearts are appliqued on. This is a "friendship quilt" in that each heart is signed by a friend or loved one. Tom’s picture is also included as a focal point on the panel. Around his photo we have quilted symbols of things Tom loved in life. Palmetto trees and waves symbolize the ocean in South Carolina (near Myrtle Beach); tropical fish and cats are for the pets Tom loved; flowers and mountains are quilted across the top.

   This panel is a mourning panel. It was made shortly after Tom’s death. This panel tells others how much we loved Tom. When he died, he took a piece of our hearts with him. It is a personal expression of my deep love for my brother and my attempt to preserve his name. Tom’s body was cremated and right now his partner, John, still has his ashes. There is no grave or marker for posterity. It was important to me to have something that will go on -- something that will be here after I'm gone so that future generations will know that Tom was here, and that we loved him.

   I especially like some of the messages that were written on the hearts that people signed. They are very beautiful and touching.

   This panel speaks to today and tomorrow. To today it says "Look, people are dying from AIDS. People that we love are dying and we have to wake up to AIDS."

   To tomorrow it says that a man named Tom Knobbblock lived on this earth. He was only 33 years old when he died from AIDS. He loved flowers, the ocean, the mountains, cats and tropical fish. He was loved by many people and it broke his sister’s heart when he died.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

My sister, Monica, and I created the panel. A few friends helped us quilt it. Many of Tom’s friends took part by signing a heart.

4. Why did you create a panel?

As a memorial for my brother, Tom, whom I love very, very much.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

No, Tom and I never talked about his panel for the Quilt. However, he always told me about whenever he visited The Quilt. He was the one who made me “aware” of the Quilt. I think that was his way of letting me know that he wanted a panel.

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

Yes, twice.
No, I am happy with the placement of Tom’s panel. It’s in the lower left hand corner of his 12 x 12.
7. **What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?**

To provide a positive and creative means of expression for those who have been touched by AIDS and to show the world in a very dramatic way the humanity behind the statistics.

8. **In a recent issue of The Advocate, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.” What do you think?**

As long as people are dying from AIDS there will be loved ones left to deal with the pain and grief. AIDS has not outgrown the Quilt but I think the Quilt might be outgrowing our ability to handle and care for it. As I look at it, the Quilt is an international trust and international treasure.

When I turned my panel in I did it with the trust that the NAMES Project would take care of it and preserve it. When I saw the entire Quilt in Washington, D.C. in Oct. 1992, I wondered how they could possibly handle its volume. And it’s growing daily. It’s an international treasure because it’s the largest piece of folk art in history. It’s a truly beautiful expression of love.

Having taken portions of the Quilt around to schools as part of AIDS Awareness programs I have seen first hand its immense educational value. Students see it and, to many for the first time, AIDS becomes real to them. Suddenly they know the names of people who have died from AIDS. They see the testaments of love to these people and they realize the loss to humanity that each AIDS death is. The Quilt’s presence is also a caveat to people about the need to protect themselves.
Questionnaire: (Warnix)

1. Please provide a picture and/or sketch of your panel in the space provided.

   (Photographs of each of the panels were provided.)

2. Describe your panel. What does it say to you? What do you think it says to others? Is there any particular part of the panel that you especially like? Does the panel speak to any particular individual or group?

   **JIM** - He was a cowboy, a horseman, and a charmer - He left us long before his time. He was a vibrant person—I try to put the personality in to the letters, i.e.: the vibrance of the Red, White & Black Trim that crisscrosses the letters—I like the overall statement of the entire panel - It speaks to the Gay community--

   **VAL** - The studs on the black letters represents the leather stud Val was. I wanted the panel to also represent class because I considered him a classy gentleman. Val was the star of the first adult film I ever directed which was a leather classic. Thanks to Val. I think it will say leather and class to others as well- Again - I like the lettering of his name because it expresses his personality. It certainly speaks to the leather community--

   **TIM** - The glitter and spark of the hundreds of Bugle Beads sewn into the letters of his name by hand represents the excitement he enjoyed as one of the top stars of adult films-

   He was a star; a lover of the people and a real person that enjoyed his dirty bike - He liked the beauty of the world such as beautiful flowers. He had a great garden. I included his given name at the bottom of the panel but used his screen name as the dominating focal point - People who love films will draw to the panel.
3. Did you create the panel alone or was it a group effort?

The design & cutting was my own as well as the beading, studding, but the machine sewing was done at the Hollywood workshop.

4. Why did you create a panel?

These were friends. Jim was my lover for a period of time - We were all very close and it was a tremendous healing process for me - Also I wanted them to be a part of the most beautiful remembrance of loved ones I have ever seen - At every display, their life on earth is brought to mind even by people who didn’t know them.

5. Did you discuss your ideas for a panel with the person for whom the panel was made? If so, how much input did they have in the finished product?

No---

6. Have you seen your panel since it was added to the quilt? How many times? Does the placement of your panel, within the quilt, alter what you wanted to say?

At this time I am working on two more panels - when I finish the eight panels I have on my list, I will put together my own 12x12 of my beautiful friends - Then it will go to San Francisco & become a part of the Quilt.
7. **What do you think is the primary function of the quilt?**

The quilt is healing -- it is educational, it raises money for local AIDS Service Organizations, and it is probably one of the most beautiful & enormous works of folk art. Every panel in the Quilt is truly a work of art.

8. **In a recent issue of The Advocate, (Dec. 1, 1992), Rick Rose, a resident of Washington, D.C. suggests that AIDS may have “outgrown the quilt.”**

What do you think?

Unfortunately, the Quilt only represents about 13% of the people who have died of AIDS. AIDS outgrew the Quilt years ago--
But for people who need the healing process brought about by the panel making and the ability to educate and raise funds for AIDS Service Organizations, AIDS will never outgrow the power of the Quilt.
Vita

Louis Edward Myers was born in Newport, Tennessee, on April 9, 1960, the son of Clarence E. and Audrey K. Myers. He graduated from Cocke County High School, Newport, Tennessee, in 1982. In 1982, he was awarded the bachelor of arts degree from Carson-Newman College where he majored in Communication Arts. In December of 1986, he received a master of arts degree from Louisiana State University in the field of Rhetoric and Public Address. He taught for thirteen years at Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tennessee. He returned to Louisiana State University in August 1998 to complete the dissertation. During the 1998-1999 academic year, he served as an Instructor in the Speech Department. He is now a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in speech at Louisiana State University in May, 1999.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Louis Edward Myers

Major Field: Speech Communication

Title of Dissertation: The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt: A Novelistic Approach to Decoding the Layers of Meaning in the "Pieced" Social Drama

Approved:

[Signature]
Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signature]

[Signature]

[Signature]

Date of Examination: March 24, 1999