

# COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

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## Speaker discusses AIDS and outing

By Tim Carvell

The film “The Silence of the Lambs” portrayed homosexuality as inherently evil, gay rights activist Douglas Crimp said in his lecture, “Right On, Girlfriend!”, last night in Schermerhorn Hall.

“In Thomas Harris’ novel [“The Silence of the Lambs”],” Crimp said, “Jame Gumb was called a ‘fag-basher’ and was clearly heterosexual. Why would Jonathan Demme make a movie that was quite faithful to the book and omit such an important fact?”

“What makes the debate about ‘Silence’ unsettling is the fact that it

is divided along gender lines. Dykes love it for its positive feminist portrayal of Clarice Starling, but gay men hate it for the representation of [serial killers Gumb and Hannibal Lecter] as gay characters. I don’t think people should focus on one portrayal or another,” Crimp said.

Standing in front of a poster featuring a photograph of Jodie Foster and the caption, “Oscar Winner. Yale Grad. Ex-Disney Moppet. Dyke,” Crimp referred to the late gay artist Vito Russo’s comment that “the thing [gay activists] have to change is the governmental mindset that states that calling someone a queer is automatically

libelous.”

The anonymous posters depicting Foster as “Absolutely Queer” began appearing in New York City earlier this year.”

“The function of outing is not to show that the person had a secret, but that the secret wasn’t a secret at all. Perhaps...they shouldn’t have outed the people who had the secret, but the people who were creating the environment that required keeping the secret in the first place,” Crimp said.

Crimp’s speech, subtitled “on Jodie Foster and ‘The Silence of the Lambs,’ outing and bashing back, queer nationalism and AIDS activism,” addressed those issues through specific examples and was accompanied by a series of slides featuring works of gay artists and “outing” signs labeling prominent entertainers as “absolutely queer.”

Crimp, a member of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) and co-author of “AIDS Demo Graphics,” a book on AIDS activism, also spoke about the necessity of AIDS activism and public awareness of AIDS.

“We have returned to battles that we thought were behind us,” he said, citing the movement advocating the disclosure of HIV-positive status to physicians and the scaling-down of federal funds for AIDS research as two examples.

“Perhaps even more demoralizing than these setbacks,” he added, “is the normalization of AIDS. AIDS has simply been added to a list of societal ills. For example, when was the last time that you read a news article on the sheer number of AIDS cases?”

Crimp called the relation between AIDS and gay activism “complex and constantly shifting” and noted that “AIDS has constituted a particularly brutal form of outing. Sometimes people discover an entertainer’s secret in the obituaries.”