

Empowered Women Empowering Women: The Portrayal of Women’s Relationships in Lesbian Coming Out Narratives

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While research has been done on how different facets of one’s identity can shape the way they deploy literary tactics in lifewriting, little research has examined the way that lesbian autobiographers tell their stories. Current research does not properly address how and why lesbian autobiographers choose to discuss their relationships to other women, in platonic, romantic, and sexual ways. This project expands on that topic by analyzing the scrapbook and memoir of Kansas City lesbian-feminist activist Chris Almvig, titled “Recollections of Flying Out of the Closet: Lake of the Ozarks and Kansas City, 1972–1974.” Almvig’s works are unique because of how much private information Almvig gives about other women in her life. Studying Almvig’s work is thus necessary to fully understand the rhetorical and literary choices of marginalized LGBT+ women.

Written autobiographies and other autobiographical artifacts have been cherished in academia as one of the ways to understand how a person uses rhetoric to challenge the pre-conceived perceptions of their life based on their identity. This may be done through a variety of mediums such as memoir, poetry, zines, scrapbooking, or other genres to construct autobiographical art. In this essay, I focus specifically on the use of the coming-out memoir as a method of responding to the heteropatriarchal oppression faced by lesbian women. Jen Bacon notes that coming-out narratives are the best way to identify what lesbian individuality means, because they encompass “identity negotiation and performance” (257). To best preserve the dignity and complexities held within coming-out narratives, researchers of autobiography should examine the ways that lesbian women tell their stories of relationships with other women.

Through understanding the connection of relationships and the rhetorical practices in which they are told, society is better able to understand the needs of the lesbian community, along with the love that is shared between women.¹

To further understand how lesbian women explore their relationships with one another in writing, I undertake an examination of the work of feminist activist Chris Almvig’s scrapbook, held within the Gay and Lesbian Archives of Mid-America (GLAMA) at the University of Missouri-Kansas City’s (UMKC) LaBudde Special Collections Library. Almvig’s scrapbook consists of three folders. The first is a memoir titled, “Recollections of Flying Out of the Closet: Lake of the Ozarks and Kansas City, 1972–1974. Written in May of 2010.” The second folder contains addenda to the memoir, including newspaper clippings, extensions about her friends, and flyers

from Almvig's involvement with the Kansas City Women's Liberation Union (KCWLU). The last folder contains eight newsletters from the KCWLU, complete with poems and essays. To best examine the way that Almvig portrays her relationships with women during the 1970s Kansas City feminist scene, I focus primarily on her written memoir instead of attachments.² Almvig's memoir is unique in that it includes bolded first and last names and photos of women she had sexual relationships with. There is seemingly little that is kept private from readers in the written memoir. Almvig's memoir poses interesting questions regarding the ethics and politics of name recognition within a text, and why those rhetorical choices were made. I argue that her use of such details was meant to pose a challenge to queerphobia by way of destigmatizing lesbian relationships and empowering LGBT+ readers.

A fascinating aspect of Almvig's donation to GLAMA was that her email address was included at the end of her memoir. The inclusion of her email address granted me the opportunity to reach out to Ms. Almvig myself. In keeping with good research practice, I researched Almvig's life and theorized her rhetorical choices before contacting her to gain her thoughts on my work. Throughout this paper, I present my own arguments, and then add quotations from my email correspondence with Almvig herself, detailing her thoughts on my arguments.

Feminist scholars of autobiography have demonstrated that women's work within the field tends to be pushed aside. As with many genres, autobiography is often defined by the work of men. In *Telling Women's Lives*, sociologist Judy Long remarks that the "seeming gender neutrality of genre masks a

double-distilled masculinity that impedes the inclusion of women" (16). Women's rhetorical practices are disregarded when viewed with a comparative lens to masculinity. As she notes, "The projection of maleness to universality pervades the literature on autobiography. Critics confess an intense interest arising from a sense of connection between themselves and the autobiographical subject" (22). When women's work is viewed with men's work as the guiding principle, and then criticized by men who utilize masculine methods of story-telling as their framing principle, women's rhetorical contributions to the genre are lost. One of the unique features of autobiography that ends up being "lost" when scrutinized through the lens of masculinity is the structure of how the life is told. Long asserts that, generally, masculine autobiographies tend to focus on reaching a final "destination," (19) whereas autobiographies written by non-men are often told through patterns. Long found that one of those important patterns is that women's autobiographies are more likely to be told as stories of relationships. In the case of Chris Almvig's memoir, the pattern that is prevalent is the telling of women's relationships. Because the autobiographical practices of lesbian women in particular are understudied in comparison to that of heterosexual men (Long 10), we need research analyzing the rhetorical choices of lesbian writers in relationship portrayal. In summary, Long argues that women's autobiographical writing tends to embrace communities of relationships rather than personal accomplishments.

In contrast to a focus on communities and relationships, there are autobiographical works by women with a focus on aggressive self-interest. Judith Taylor's "Enduring

Friendship: Women's Intimacies and the Erotics of Survival" focuses on the inclusion of the cruelty in women's relationships that is portrayed in feminist memoirs. Taylor argues that there is a sort of "feminist capital" that requires cruelty within women's relationships (96). As she notes, "The most common analysis of cruelty in women's friendships found in the narratives is that it stems from the problem women have in recognizing and being recognized by one another. Feminists recount the ways in which other women use recognition as a means of control. They refuse to acknowledge one another's existence or acknowledge it too much" (109). In power-grabbing moves, feminist memoirs may tell stories of being refused recognition by other women, or being treated with over-recognition to the point of feeling harassed (109). Those stories are then eroticized and told in "sexy" ways as a badge of honor of overcoming (107). In contrast to Taylor, I will argue that Almvig's recognition of women in memoir, although overt, was a refusal of the power of heteropatriarchy as opposed to denying power to other women.

Understanding Almvig's life independent of the memoir is necessary to better understand the intricacies of the memoir. Per a Florida residency database, she was born in Florida on November 4th, 1946 ("Individual Details"). Yearbook data from AncestryLibrary showed that Almvig attended Downer's Grove Community High School in Downer's Grove, Illinois. The 1962 yearbook from Downer's Grove Community High School showed Almvig involved in a club titled "Y-Teens," which claimed to have over 600 members and was committed to social service, among other things ("Cauldron 1962"). It is unknown

what exactly Almvig was passionate about during her school years, or what social service she helped with as part of that group, but as SAGE, the organization she later founded, commented on their website, "As Almvig grew up in the suburbs of Chicago, she found herself drawn to the aid of fellow humans. She carried this interest all the way to college, where she pursued social work" (Coffman). The evidence that Almvig has always been drawn to the aid of other humans could possibly have been what inspired her to write in a way to destigmatize lesbian relationships. Later, Almvig attended college at Culver Stockton College in Canton, Missouri ("Dome 1966: Culver Stockton College Yearbook"). According to her memoir, Almvig then pursued her master's degree of social work in a college in Chicago. After one year of being in the master's program, Almvig dropped out and found a job as a social director of Tan-Tar-A resort and convention center in Osage Beach, Missouri.

In the winter of 1972 in Osage Beach, Almvig was able to explore lesbian sexuality for the first time. In her memoir, she wrote, "In an effort to remedy my loneliness and satisfy a healthy sex drive, I had desperate sex with scores of convention men." After realizing that her sexual relationships with men were not satisfying her need for intimacy, Almvig came to face the truth that lesbianism was part of her identity. She began privately engaging in lesbian sexual relationships, before her good friend, Bob Meggart, took her on a two-day trip to Kansas City to explore gay bars. After more trips to Kansas City for its gay scene, she was convinced to move there and begin working at the Jewish Community Center. She wrote, "Working at the Jewish Community Center would

satisfy a number of aspirations and Sharon [a lesbian friend] would introduce me to lesbian life in the big city.”

Almvig’s life in Kansas City was changed when she made friends with Priscilla Camp, leader of the KCWLU. In 1974, the group led her to be on a panel at the University of Missouri-Kansas City for the Women’s Resource Center’s month-long series on *Morality in Society*. She was on the panel with Alan Bell from the Kinsey Sex Institute, Steve Fuchs from the Kansas City’s Gay People’s Union, and Jill Johnston, author of *Lesbian Nation*. Pictures were taken of the panel and published in the *Kansas City Star*. As a result, Almvig was fired the next day at the Jewish Community Center after her boss saw the news clippings. Although the loss of her job led to a significant financial struggle, the upside of the situation was that she became more involved with the KCWLU’s efforts. She became the house-mother of the group’s headquarters and spent the rest of her time in Kansas City living there and focusing on leading conscious-raising groups, including one at Park College in North Kansas City. In the summer of 1974, Almvig met Carol Bloom, a feminist lesbian from New York City who stopped by Kansas City to meet the women of KCWLU. The two fell in love and moved together to New York City after Christmas of 1974.

After moving to New York City, Almvig started SAGE (Service and Advocacy for GLBT Elders) with Doug Kimmel, a gay man. The group advocates for the advancement of public policies that protect and enhance the lives of elderly LGBT+ citizens. The group was started in response to the new burst of LGBT+ activism in the 1970s and 80s. Almvig and Kimmel felt that the efforts of the time were primarily associated

with younger LGBT+ people and that elders were being neglected. According to a video for the organization, SAGE launched the United States’ first “friendly visiting” program for LGBT+ elders in 1978, the first drop-in center for LGBT+ elders in 1984, and finally, the first HIV/AIDS support group for LGBT+ elders in 1989 (SAGEUSA). The organization is still active today. Almvig continued to live in New York City for 25 years before moving to St. Petersburg, Florida, where she resides today. Her memoir was written in 2010 and was donated to Stuart Hinds, the Associate Dean of Library Collections at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, to whom Almvig reached out after hearing that the University was going to be opening the Gay and Lesbian Archives of Mid-America (GLAMA).

As previously mentioned, Almvig’s memoir should be studied as a story of relationships rather than as a quest for a final destination. Each “event” that happened in Almvig’s life is overshadowed by her description of the women who surrounded her at the time. Readers can literally see the importance of Almvig’s woman friends in her life; their names are bolded in the text. In addition to bolded names, Almvig included many pictures of her friends as well. Along with the visual pattern in the memoir, there is a pattern to the way Almvig discusses her female friends. She describes her friends very personally, letting readers know their first and last names. Even more unique is the fact that Almvig documented her sexual experiences with many of the women included in the memoir. There are nine explicit instances in the text of Almvig talking about sex with a woman of whom she gives the first and last name.

The sexual relationships that are discussed

in Almvig's memoir could be easily construed as an attempt to embarrass another woman. Judith Taylor would agree with this sentiment and offer the idea that Almvig's inclusion of her sexual relationships was a calculated move. Taylor's notion of over-recognition (109) would certainly apply here. Almvig was not afraid of name-dropping. For example, Almvig wrote, "One day, Tara [Ayes] approached me and asked if we could have sex." Another sentence remarked that, "She [Pat Fitzpatrick] consented to meet me in my office, and despite a 20-year difference in age, that meeting led to a steamy affair." Almvig was unrelenting in her casual mention of sexual relationships. Not only was Almvig potentially embarrassing these women, but there is a chance that some of them may have been outed by their inclusion in Almvig's memoir.

Almvig's description of romantic relationships (without description of sexual affairs) or platonic relationships could also fall prey to conceptions of "feminist capital" provided by Taylor. In particular, Almvig included an explanation of a romantic relationship she had with a woman named Alice Lewis. After Lewis moved to California, the two attempted to pursue a long-distance relationship before Almvig realized that Lewis was, in her words, "crazy." It seems as if this point could have been made without the introduction of the last name. In addition, there are examples of platonic relationships in the text as well where it seems as if Almvig is attempting to embarrass a woman in her life. Writing of her encounter with an alcoholic friend named Julia Diamond, Almvig said that, "She was so drunk and I couldn't understand a single word she said and I hung up." The inclusion of this named woman's private

struggle with addiction seems to be oversharing, and it is worth analyzing why these rhetorical choices were made.

While Almvig chooses to bolden the names and include photos of women from her life, the "antagonists" of her memoir are presented with non-bolded names and without pictures. For example, the classic "bad guy" of the memoir was Almvig's boss, Sol, who fired Almvig from her job at the Jewish Community Center after learning about her sexuality. Despite the clear strife that Sol created for Almvig, Sol's name was not bolded nor was a picture included within the memoir. If Almvig were attempting to gain a sense of power by embarrassing other people, it seems as if Sol should be the main target. It seems natural that he should be absolutely smeared in the memoir, but this is not the case. Instead, the bolded names and pictures of Almvig's friends and sexual partners were given instead. If Almvig were truly attempting to embarrass the women she wrote about her in memoir with "over-recognition," she would also have over-recognized Sol as well. Since Almvig does not attack Sol, this shows that she is not a power-hungry person. There must be another reason for her use of recognizing the women she was involved with.

In communication with Almvig, she wrote to me that she did not think that she needed to intentionally embarrass Sol. She wrote, "I did not write about that hideous time of being fired by him, to embarrass him. He embarrassed himself by being caught embezzling money from the JCC and being fired." This remark from Almvig herself, in response to my questioning of her rhetorical decisions regarding Sol, is consistent with my argument that she was more interested in discussing the women in her life.³

While it might seem that Almvig was attempting to embarrass the women in her life, I would argue that Almvig's telling of private sexual encounters included in her memoir was rather an attempt to empower women, destigmatize homosexual relationships, and resist heteropatriarchy. As Long argues in *Telling Women's Lives*, women may seek allies with their autobiographical writings. Long writes, "Her writings may be part of the enslaved woman's compact with herself—and with the potential army of allies, other women" (32). Almvig may have imagined that her coming-out story would be well protected in the hands of LGBT+ readers and allies within an LGBT+ archive. I argue that Almvig trusted her readers with the names and faces of other women, and that her inclusion of sexual relationships she had with other women was not intended to be a way of embarrassing them to her audience, but rather as an honest, raw embrace of lesbian sexual, platonic, and romantic relationships.

Some might compare Almvig's stories of her lovers to what Karen Allison Hammer describes as "butch life writing." Hammer defines "butch" as a term generally used to describe masculine presenting lesbians, but in a more nuanced way as an "unpacking of the present and historical complexities of a particular style of lesbian performance" (27). She notes that because critics create an absence of lesbian scholarship in the 21st century, a focus on "butch life writing" must be utilized (27). She uses this construct in order to better understand the works of Gertrude Stein and the way that Stein discussed her relationship with her partner in her work. The notion of what constitutes "butch life writing" is complex. Hammer artfully notes that, "Butch describes a style of

life writing, a poetics and prosody of inside and outside, operating either within one work or in separate compositions." Essentially, "butch life writing" is a type of autobiography written by lesbian women with its own distinct features, most prominently including a grappling with ideas of inner selves and public selves (41). One of the ways that the notion of inner selves as opposed to public selves is challenged by Stein is her inclusion of sexual desires. Hammer noted how Stein had an "obsessive desire" to talk about sexual satisfaction (30). Although Almvig's work is alike in this regard, I hesitate to fully apply this title of "butch life writer" to Almvig. In our correspondence, Almvig does not describe herself as butch; instead, she noted that "others might label me as a lipstick lesbian." But I utilize Hammer's ideas of "butch life writing" because of how they are similar to Almvig's rhetorical choices. The style of casual inclusion of sex with seamless injections of names and faces along with it is not necessarily common in autobiographical works, but is a rhetorical practice shared by both Chris Almvig and Gertrude Stein.

The question of why Almvig may have posed a challenge to ideas of public or private selves circles back to the existence of queerphobia. During both the times in which Almvig's memoir occurred (1972–1974 in Kansas City) and the time she wrote it (2010), queerphobia was prominent. A case could be made that the acceptance of the community has progressed; however, oppression is still faced by the LGBT+ community in very prominent ways. Literary scholar Terry Castle remarked in 1993 that even in feminist spheres of academia, there was still a "morbid refusal to visualize [sex between women], as if lesbianism and 'not

doing it' were somehow perversely synonymous" (II). Certainly, things have changed since 1993; however, the "morbid refusal" to acknowledge queer sex is still alive. Even if current day scholarship includes the experiences of lesbian women, it may shelter their sex lives in a way that heterosexual sex is not. Notions of sex between lesbian women on one hand may be either objectified, eroticized, and stripped of its humanity, or on the other simply avoided as if it does not exist. Almvig's explicit inclusion of sexual partners may have been in response to this refusal of recognition. Her unquestionable fearlessness in embracing queerness in all its formations in relationships, be it sexual, romantic, or platonic is an act of resistance to heteronormativity. As Bacon notes, the narratives of LGBT+ people, and all that is included in them, represent a challenge to heteronormativity. Specifically, Bacon writes that they allow for "preserving dignity and working towards a queerer way of seeing the world" (255). Almvig was preserving the pride of lesbian sexual relationships. Rather than participating in any form of sexual shaming, Almvig boasts her relationships with pride, as a response to heteropatriarchial oppression.

Almvig seems to have chosen to author a coming-out narrative because of the power of the genre. Almvig has gone on to lead an extremely successful life. With the opening of a non-profit for elderly LGBT+ folk, Almvig had a host of subjects to discuss in her memoir regarding homosexuality. Her foundation, SAGE, boasts on its website that, "With offices in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Chicago, SAGE coordinates a growing network of 30 local SAGE affiliates in 20 states and the District of Columbia" (SAGE USA). With such a

successful non-profit and an enormous amount of work put into enhancing the lives of the LGBT+ elderly, it seems like this work should be the focus of Almvig's autobiographical efforts for the Gay and Lesbian Archives of Mid-America. Why did Almvig choose to submit a memoir about two years she spent in Kansas City, Missouri in the 1970s over one about how she effected change for people through something she created? I argue that Almvig chose to write about her coming out of the closet story and embracement of lesbianism rather than her success with enhancing the LGBT+ movement because the rhetorical power of coming-out narratives is the stronger one. Although stories of success may also be rhetorically powerful, coming-out narratives throw a direct punch to the face of heteronormativity and empower LGBT+ readers who have not yet lived their true lives. In the same way Michel Foucault writes that "The mere fact that one is speaking about [homosexuality] has the appearance of a deliberate transgression" (6), there is a truth to be told that stories about "coming out of the closet" represent the greatest challenger to the heteronormativity that is prevalent in literature. Xhonneaux Lies writes that:

Naturalization of the closet allows coming out to be seen as a strategically liberating act. The act of coming out supplies role models, draws others toward the gay struggle, counters the internalized homophobia and self-limitation inherent to secrecy, generates a more powerful group by increasing the number of visible homosexuals, and shows that gays are everywhere, and therefore cannot be easily circumscribed and effectively discriminated against. (97)

Almvig chose to write about coming-out instead of creating a non-profit because coming-out narratives had the greatest potential to empower younger LGBT+ individuals. Following the patterns of rhetorical choices in autobiography described by Long, she chose to tell her life story as a story of relationships, rather than as a traditional story of “destinations” (Long 19) or achievements to empower LGBT+ readers with a narrative was more likely to match their own.

Almvig’s decision to set her narrative in the time-frame of her own coming-out experience also shows how committed she is to garnering support for the LGBT+ movement. With her explicit references to lesbian sex within the memoir, Almvig shows how she is unafraid of what others think about queerness and seeks to educate those around her. Her enthusiasm is clear when she discussed her feelings about holding a consciousness-raising group at Park College. She wrote:

The campus was lovely and the first meeting was exhilarating, at least it was for me. The eight young women were thirsty for connecting with the concepts of feminism. They were smart, well-read, and energized by their own personal strength and their collective strength. I looked forward to each week’s meeting and would make copies of feminist writings and poems for discussion and they would bring their own.

Almvig seeks liberation from heteropatriarchy and her enthusiasm makes it clear that she is extremely committed to introducing those around her to embracement of lesbianism and feminism.

These analyses, however, do not specifically respond to some of the things that

could be interpreted as “embarrassing” for the platonic and romantic relationships in Almvig’s life, such as the textual portrayals of Alice Lewis and Julia Diamond. Perhaps in these instances, it may have been true that Almvig was attempting to gain the “feminist capital” that Taylor spoke of. It is more likely, though, that Almvig was in these instances just writing about her life. Although a few women were depicted negatively, most of the women she brings up with first and last name in the memoir are described in wonderful ways. For example, Almvig’s friend Paula Neilson is described as “beautiful and filled with enthusiasm.”

In her correspondence with me, Almvig asserted that she was, in fact, just writing about her life in those instances. There was no intent to embarrass anyone, she maintains; she was just recounting her life. Almvig wrote to me that:

Julia Diamond was open about her alcoholism and went on the help many with their addictions. I did not call Alice Lewis crazy; I said that she went crazy (perhaps not the best chosen word, as I am not a “writer.”) I should have said that she was extremely upset that I changed my mind about moving to live with her in CA. Nothing I wrote was meant to embarrass anyone. This was my life and these women were important to me.

Almvig was bringing her life into words for GLAMA at UMKC.

Almvig’s work shows the power of women’s relationships. The written memoir even ends with Almvig noting that Kansas City changed her life. Despite going on to be the founder of a large non-profit that seeks to accommodate LGBT+ elderly people,

Almwig instead wrote about her years in Kansas City, making it clear that the relationships she found in the feminist movement in Kansas City were among the most important influences on her life. Specifically, she wrote that after her time in Kansas City she was ready to take on New York because, “I was a big, strong woman.” She became that strong woman after embracing how powerful women’s relationships are. One or two sayings about a romantic partner or platonic friendship that appeared to be negative did not support the reading that Almwig was strategically attempting to embarrass other women. Those few comments were overshadowed by the far greater number of times that lesbian sex is brought up within the memoir to destigmatize and further empower other LGBT+ women.

Almwig responded to me that her inclusion of sex within the memoir was absolutely intentional. In response to my argument that sex was brought up as a way to destigmatize lesbian relationships, Almwig wrote to me that, “Men write about their sexual relationships as if they were conquests. The women I write about whether sexually or for friendship, were part of my journey.” Almwig’s own explanation is in line with Long’s idea that women tend to tell their life stories as patterns of relationships rather than as destinations of success (19). The women on her “journey” led her to fulfillment. Her written memoir, and then later correspondence with me, show that the role of women’s relationships was extremely impactful to her life.

Almwig may have imagined that her works would be safely read by an audience of women, particularly other queer women. It is possible that she offered the names and

pictures of the women she had platonic friendships with to let other women know that these women are honorable, empowering woman friends. The imagination of an audience, no matter how secret a work is, remains in the minds of those who complete autobiographical works. In *Telling Women’s Lives*, Judy Long writes that

The making of a record, no matter how secretly intended, evokes an audience. Subjects who require secrecy and privacy for autobiographical writing nonetheless remain entwined with an imagined reader. Even secret writers entertain the hope of a future audience, and many diarists have flirted with the idea of publication. [...] Most often, the intended audience for women’s self-referential writing is other women. Women subjects imagine a female reader. (33)

Long believes that the reason women imagine other women reading their work is because women tend to prioritize connection in a different way than men do: “The female subject often situates herself in a web of relationships, or tells her history in terms of relationships. Relationships are important in women’s developmental trajectories, as well as at the point of self-writing. [...] Feminine values valorize connection. Relationship is a deeply held value of women, and is related to female concepts of adulthood and virtue” (44). Although I take issue with Long’s essentialist notions of sex, gender, and values, I do think that part of the thought process can be applied to Almwig’s works. Because in literature women *seem* to value connectivity and relationships with one another more than men do, it may be true that Almwig deployed

the literary tactics that she did because she wanted to fully express her connectedness to the women she wrote about by truly unraveling who they were to the reader. The reader is also presumed to be a woman. Almvig, however, was not *just* imagining any woman audience; she was imagining an audience of queer women, more specifically. She was seeking solidarity with other feminist, lesbian women.

After theorizing that Almvig imagined LGBT+ readers, I received confirmation from Almvig, who wrote to me,

Furthermore, I figured only LGBT people would be interested in reading my story or sifting through other items in the archives. At one point, I did briefly consider the implication of using “real names,” but then thought that my friend, Evelyn Akers was documenting the lesbian softball years and using names and drag queen names were being used to document the Jewel Box Revue years, so I thought that was the purpose of the

archives...to document the LGBT people who came before us.

Almvig imagined that her work would be safely contained within GLAMA at UMKC. She believed that it would be interesting to LGBT+ individuals, and because of that, she felt that she had a duty to archive her history correctly.

Almvig’s autobiography is an important place to start to analyze the portrayal of relationships in lesbian feminist autobiography. In my interpretation, Almvig’s inclusion of sexual encounters, complete with names and faces, was a calculated attempt to destigmatize lesbian relationships and offer a way to empower LGBT+ women. As Long described it, women’s work is often “A foundation for protest” (32). Almvig’s constant inclusion of sexual relationships are not business as usual; they are protest. Not only are coming-out narratives inherently a challenge to heteronormativity, but Almvig’s inclusion of names and faces show an unrelenting desire to challenge queerphobia.

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Notes

¹In my research, I seek to understand these differences in relationship portrayal and rhetorical strategy without prompting emphasis on gender-essentialism. While it is important to recognize the difference between how relationships are portrayed in autobiographies based on identity, it is more important to note that these trends are not the foundation for all of women’s work. Lesbian women are diverse and cannot be categorized into one rhetorical practice. In addition, labelling a certain rhetorical practice as strictly “male” or strictly “female” opens way for transphobic ideologies to disrupt research. Such use of biological-essentialism or strict gender expectations and assignments should be avoided in order to acknowledge that gender is not limited to masculinity or femininity.

²Almvig’s memoir is not paginated. To avoid confusion, I did not attempt to paginate the pages myself. Thus, any quotes from the memoir are presented without corresponding in-text locations.

³To acknowledge a potential pitfall of this argument, I recognize that because Sol is not a woman, it's questionable whether Taylor's theory of "feminist capital" can refer to him. If Taylor's interpretation of feminist capital is limited to just gaining power over other women and not the men who participate in heteropatriarchal practices, then my argument that Almvig is not seeking feminist capital would not apply. I argue, though, that if even this is the interpretation, there exist other instances within the memoir that point to Almvig seeking to empower these women and not embarrass them. Rather than being interested in any sort of chance to gain power, Almvig is instead interested in resisting heteropatriarchal norms and homophobia.

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