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Eleanor Roosevelt as a Queer Heroine in Susan Wittig Albert's *Loving Eleanor*

Abstract: How might we reimagine Eleanor Roosevelt not only as a political icon but as a figure whose entire life—private and public—queered traditional boundaries of being, sexuality, and power? Susan Wittig Albert presents this possibility in *Loving Eleanor* (2016), which examines the romantic connection between Lorena Hickok (Hick) and Eleanor Roosevelt (hereafter ER or Eleanor). The novel follows the queer bond and enduring friendship between them through a period from 1928 to 1962, while also depicting Eleanor's non-traditional relationships with multiple men. Albert's narrative also demonstrates how ER's energetic personality interacts with the sociopolitical environment of her time to show her adaptable approach to different social classes, racial and ethnic groups. Through queer theory and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concepts of rhizomatic proliferations, becoming-woman, becoming-minoritarian, and other becomings, this essay argues that the fictional Eleanor defies established gender, class, and sexual norms, embracing the ever-evolving and boundless nature of desire, sexuality, and transformation. The analysis reveals how Albert's depiction of ER differs from conventional stories about her to present an unconventional and complex portrait of her character.

Keywords: *Loving Eleanor*, Susan Wittig Albert, Eleanor Roosevelt, queer studies, Deleuze and Guattari

Introduction: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Queer Theoretical Framework

Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962) is widely regarded as one of the most influential and admired First Ladies in United States history. She held the position of First Lady from 1933 to 1945, and earned recognition as a "[t]eacher, journalist, broadcaster, diplomat, political activist, [and] human rights crusader" (Cook, "Foreword" xiii). Our online library catalog survey under "Eleanor Roosevelt" (April 2025) confirms this perception by showing her mainly as a statesperson and international icon.¹ Moreover, Angela Beauchamp, in her essay on Eleanor Roosevelt's on-screen representations, observes that she is also widely portrayed as a devoted wife and mother (n.p.). However, Beauchamp equally identifies a crucial number of queer portrayals of Eleanor which include her depiction as a woman who became saintly by rejecting romantic life out of sorrow; as a "bad mother"; as uninterested "in 'normal' relationships and sex with

¹ See *Eleanor Roosevelt and Adlai Stevenson (The World of the Roosevelts)* (Richard Henry, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); *The Forum and the Tower: How Scholars and Politicians Have Imagined the World, from Plato to Eleanor Roosevelt* (Mary Ann Glendon, OUP, 2011); *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II* (Doris Kearns Goodwin, Simon & Schuster, 1995); *Eleanor Roosevelt: First Lady, Humanitarian, and World Citizen (Spirit of America, Our People)* (Pam Rosenberg and Robin Gerber, Childs World Inc, 2003); *The First Lady of Radio: Eleanor Roosevelt's Historic Broadcasts* (Stephen Drury Smith – Editor, Blanche Wiesen Cook – Foreword, The New Press, 2014); *Eleanor Roosevelt and the Anti-Nuclear Movement: The Voice of Conscience (The World of the Roosevelts)* (Dario Fazzi, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); *Eleanor Roosevelt's Views on Diplomacy and Democracy: The Global Citizen* (Dario Fazzi and Anya Luscombe – Editors, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

men"; as "the angry feminist who hates men"; and most recently, as having led a distinctly separate and "queer" social life, often highlighting her as a lesbian or bisexual woman (n.p.). These portrayals, while not always flattering, reveal the complexity behind her public image. Together, they suggest a person who eludes simple categorization, which is the main focus of this essay.

This analysis examines Susan Wittig Albert's *Loving Eleanor* (2016) to reveal how Hick's reimagined perspective exposes ER's private desires and queer selfhood which merge with her public activism, thus disrupting both sanitized official narratives and reductive judgments of her life, personhood, and legacy.² Albert in her "A Biographical Afterword" describes this work as "a fictional interpretation" which is based on her reading of "the women's letters held in the FDR Library, on Hick's writings about ER, and on the multitudinous sources available" (294). The novel thus brings back a hidden history, as Emily Herring Wilson observes that Hick is absent from most photographs, which suggests some family members wanted to keep her out of the pictures (131). This pattern of suppression extends even to their correspondence. When writer Doris Faber accessed Hick and ER's passionate letters in 1978, she reacted with similar discomfort. In her book's "A Personal Note and Some Acknowledgments," Faber confesses she was so appalled that she asked the FDR Library director: "Eleanor Roosevelt was a great woman, and her effusively affectionate letters should be removed at least until the year 2000" (330–31). Faber's reaction reflects the entrenched heteronormative biases that shaped historical interpretations of ER. However, historian Blanche Wiesen Cook discloses the truth others had tried to suppress in her biography *Eleanor Roosevelt, Vol. 1: 1884–1933* (1992). "The romantic and passionate relationship between ER and Hick was [...] simply there—inevitable and undeniable," observes Cook, noting that, "[t]hey gave each other pleasure and comfort, trust and love. They touched each other deeply, loved profoundly, and moved on" (479). Cook further defines ER as a woman who "followed the impulses of her own vision, and the needs of her own heart" (7). Albert reimagines this silenced intimacy and all her other controversial desires and connections in a way that echoes Cook's sentiment. This essay uses queer theory and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concepts of becoming-woman, becoming-minoritarian, and rhizomatic connections to argue that Albert portrays Eleanor as a queer heroine who defies traditional gender, class, and sexual norms, as well as racial divides, actively seeking new becomings and fighting against social boundaries. The application of modern theoretical frameworks to study historical figures such as Eleanor Roosevelt might seem anachronistic at first but this method reveals the hidden nonconforming, non-heteronormative aspects of ER that standard accounts and scholarly works omit.

The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines queer as "having or relating to a gender identity or a sexuality that does not fit society's traditional ideas about gender or sexuality" ("Queer" n.p.). This emphasizes sexual identities outside mainstream norms, yet queer theory contests these classifications as well. Rachel Loewen Walker notes that "[t]here is no essential 'male' or 'female,' and consequently, there is no essential 'lesbian,' 'gay man,' or 'bisexual,' instead these subject-positions are the result of a pervasive heteronormativity that we cannot escape" (11). In Walker's assessment, non-normative sexual categories cannot establish stable classifications even though they exist. Jennifer Reed supports this understanding by stating:

The point of queer is to conceptualize human connection outside of the terms of heteronormativity, outside of the binaries that structure straight/ gay. This is the great gift that queer offers to dominant culture as a whole, not just to people who identify as LGBTQ. Queer allows us all to see the contradictions, repressions,

² Amy Bloom's *White Houses: A Novel* (2018) and Kelly O'Connor McNees's *Undiscovered Country* (2018) are historical novels (romances) that also reimagine the affair between these two women in their middle years. See also, Susan Ferentinos's *Courage to Love Gender and Sexuality in the Life of Eleanor Roosevelt* (2023).

and erasures that heteronormativity relies on for, and in, its very structure. It then also facilitates our understanding of the ramifications of this social structure. (*Queer Cultural Work* 57)

Reed demonstrates how queer dismantles repressive dualities that restrict all kinds of human expression and connection, instead of simply broadening pre-existing categories. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick develops these ideas in *Tendencies*. She frames queerness as an active process rather than a fixed identity by defining it as: "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be made*) to signify monolithically" (8). Sedgwick continues to explain:

Queer is continuing moment, movement, motive—recurrent, eddying, *troublant*. The word "queer" itself means *across*—it comes from the Indo-European root-*twerkw*, which also yields the German *quer* (transverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English *athwart* ... *across genders, across sexualities, across genres, across "perversions."* ...The immemorial current that *queer* represents is as antiseparatist as it is antiassimilationist. Keenly, it is relational and strange. (xii, emphasizes original)

Sedgwick views queer as a spanning, crisscrossing energy, instead of just a term used to describe particular labels or genres. Through being queer or queering, one actively resists normative systems to develop novel, weird, and wayward ways of connecting and defining oneself.

Furthermore, in *Deleuze and Queer Theory*, Chrysanthi Nigianni and Merl Storr present essays that explore queer theoretical perspectives informed by Deleuze and Guattari. The authors in the Introduction establish queer as a self-critical term, acting as a "vital force" with the potential "to affect and effect changes in the way one theorises, its capacity to produce deviant lines along established thinking and disciplines, its ability to queer the queer, that is, to undermine the self, to resist any normalization" (1). They and the contributors develop new queer methodologies of affirmative potentialities and propose "an ontology of becoming," "rhizomatic relatedness," and "an open futurity, in terms of virtualities and not mere possibilities" (8). Other Deleuzo-Guattarian conceptual tools, including becoming-woman, becoming-minoritarian, and acting rhizomatically are also discussed, which we argue characterize ER's queer becomings.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize subjectivity or the self in terms of becoming, which does not signify a simple transformation, but an intricate, composite, and often difficult-to-control process:

A becoming is always in the middle; one can only get it by the middle. A becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between, the border or line of flight or descent running perpendicular to both. If becoming is a block (a line-block), it is because it constitutes a zone of proximity and indiscernibility, a no-man's-land, a nonlocalizable relation sweeping up the two distant or contiguous points, carrying one into the proximity of the other—and the border-proximity is indifferent to both contiguity and to distance. (293)

Becoming is neither "a resemblance, an imitation, or, at the limit, an identification" (237), nor is it "an evolution by descent and filiation" (238). They accentuate that it "is always of a different order than filiation. It concerns alliance" (238). Jeffrey J. Cohen and Todd R. Ramlow clarify and connect this to queerness: "Becomings have neither origin nor destination; like the queer, they are neither filial nor teleological. They do not confer identity—molar, sedimented, unitary—but produce an entity cobbled from disparate, provisionally allied parts, a relation of affects and speeds. Thus, becomings and their haecceities (thisnesses, herecesses, radical individuations) are always middles, never destinations" (para. 9). This

emphasizes becoming as queerness-in-motion; not an identity to arrive at, but an ever-unfolding, disruptive act itself.

Notably, becoming, according to Deleuze and Guattari, implies becoming-woman. This idea, however, does not involve striving to be or resemble a woman, nor does it entail conforming to societal notions of femininity or altering one's physical body to align with traditional female attributes (275). They propose that every transformation originates and progresses through the process of becoming-woman (277). Elizabeth Grosz explains: "For women as much as for men, the processes of becoming-woman involve the destabilization of molar, or feminine, identity. If one *is* a woman, it remains necessary to become-woman as a way of putting into question the coagulations, rigidifications, and impositions required by patriarchal (although this may well be a term they do not use) power relations" (176, emphasis original). Grosz further elaborates that becoming-woman denotes "fragmenting and freeing up lines of flight, 'liberating' multiplicities, corporal and otherwise, that identity subsumes under the one" (178). Becoming-woman, then, is not about assuming a static womanhood or displaying femininity, but about undoing the system that defines woman as subordinate.

If the process of becoming-woman disrupts fixed identities, becoming-minoritarian takes this disruption to a collective political level. Deleuze and Guattari explain that minorities may exist as subgroups within dominant systems, their very marginality becomes a site of creativity and change (105–06), generating "uncontrollable movements and deterritorializations of the mean or majority" (106). This implies "the breaking-away from power relations that cause an injustice to others" (Waghid 68). How can someone like ER, who occupies a privileged status, practice becoming-minoritarian? She demonstrates this process by breaking down the rigid social structures of her wealthy traditional family and cultivating transformative solidarities with marginalized groups which we examine in detail. Becoming-minoritarian, similar to queerness, develops flexible alliances which fight against oppressive systems.

The process of becoming-woman, becoming-minoritarian or becoming in general requires rhizomatic connections which means radical interrelatedness. The biological term *rhizome* which the *Cambridge Dictionary* defines as "a stem of some plants that grows horizontally along or under the ground and produces roots and leaves" ("Rhizome" n.p.), functions as Deleuze and Guattari's central metaphor for this process. They distinguish rhizomatic systems from arboreal ones: unlike a tree with its vertical growth and fixed roots, a rhizome grows horizontally, constantly forming new connections and uprooting itself (21). They explain: "Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome" (9). Rhizomes grow adventitiously; they are simultaneously systematic yet perpetually overflowing. As Jonathan Kemp clarifies, such rhizomatic structures generate "not singular but multiple, inhabited by a radically constitutive and productive otherness" (161). The emphasis on non-linear connections establishes an interactive ontology which develops through continuous activities of connection-making, disruption, and reconfiguring ties. Our examination of ER is guided by these conceptual frameworks, which highlight her unconventional alliances, queer sexual practices, and boundary-pushing positions.

Eleanor Roosevelt as a Queer Heroine in Susan Wittig Albert's *Loving Eleanor*

Loving Eleanor is told by Hick, whom Michael Hill describes as "a pioneering reporter, noted author, Depression-era New Dealer [and] confidant of Eleanor Roosevelt" (n.p.). As Hill documents, she wrote biographical works such as *The Story of Helen Keller* and *The Story of Eleanor Roosevelt* (n.p.). Her dual perspective as both insider and observer of ER's life makes her an authentic voice in Albert's fictional memoir. At the same time, it allows Albert to delve into ER's inner life and less visible relationships and provide a more intimate portrayal. Hick introduces Eleanor as "the lonely woman whose wistful, half-

hopeful vulnerability had so surprised and touched [her]" (Albert 49). Her husband shows no interest in her, and her mother-in-law displays open hostility toward her (65). Within this unhappy domesticity, her restlessness becomes palpable. She is willing to and has already begun to transform and break free from her restrictive marital duties. Hick's observations of EL reveal her rhizomatic aspects:

Mrs. Roosevelt was an anomaly, and as a reporter, I loved anomalies, especially when the anomaly was a woman doing something that made her stand out as something other than a wife, a mother, and a clotheshorse. This woman went out on the campaign trail, edited the *Women's Democratic News*, wrote magazine articles on women in politics, taught at an exclusive girls' school, and, with two friends, owned a furniture factory on the Roosevelt estate. A furniture factory? Now, *there* was an anomaly for you. (25, emphasis original)

Here, Hick demonstrates how Eleanor pursues various activities which go beyond conventional female roles. The two friends mentioned in this passage are Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman, while the factory is Val-Kill Industries, which was established in 1926 near Fall Kill (Ferentinos 1), and served as a job source for local young craftspeople (2). Through this venture, Eleanor practices business activities while building an entrepreneurial community of women, which demonstrates her decentered lateral growth, the rhizomatic imperative that Deleuze and Guattari describe as, "Always follow the rhizome by rupture; lengthen, prolong, and relay the line of flight; make it vary, until you have produced the most abstract and tortuous of lines of n dimensions and broken directions" (11, emphasis original). Eleanor maintains personal connections with Cook and Dickerman and other lesbian couples including Elizabeth Read and Esther Lape (Albert 52). During a time when such attachments were socially disapproved and called "[f]emale impersonators" (52), ER's alliances show her progressive understanding and acceptance of different interpersonal configurations. According to Adrienne Rich, identifying and connecting with other women is a crucial act that unleashes immense female power:

Woman identification is a source of energy, a potential springhead of female power, curtailed and contained under the institution of heterosexuality. The denial of reality and invisibility to women's passion for women, women's choice of women as allies, life companions, and community, the forcing of such relationships into dissimulation and their disintegration under intense pressure have meant an incalculable loss to the power of all women *to change the social relations of the sexes, to liberate ourselves and each other*. (34, emphases original)

Through women-bonding, Eleanor too finds her liberation, bypassing heterosexual dependency and its constraints. Additionally, these are not isolated, self-serving actions, but network-building and resource-sharing activities. They foreshadow her future dedication to increasingly nontraditional positions and extensive connections. For instance, with Hick, she proliferates her and women's presence nationwide through rhizomatic offshoots such as making appearances and hosting radio shows, which can be argued as a catalyst for more and more visible becoming-woman: "*Why can't a woman think, be practical and a good business woman and still have a mind of her own?*" (Albert 213, emphases original) queries Eleanor, explicitly challenging the 1930s bourgeois domesticity that confined even aristocratic women. As Maurine Beasley also observes: "Through her own ability to gain attention, [Eleanor Roosevelt] was able to put women as a group before the public. Trapped in routines that limited their aspirations and experiences, it was essential for women to maintain contact with others and to place their issues on the agenda for public discussion" (73). Hick further recounts how Eleanor's public engagement manifested as "an infinite succession of things [that] pulled [her] in hundreds of different directions, and it was hard to imagine a future when she would no longer be a national celebrity [...] Eleanor was [...] a dervish, whirling, whirling,

whirling away" (Albert 233). Eleanor's becoming-woman is the antithesis of immobility, self-curtailment, and ornamental existence.

As the fictional memoir progresses, we encounter a more private Eleanor, hence other dimension of her becoming-woman, through her intimacy with Earl Miller, her bodyguard, which suggests an attitude beyond traditional marriage norms. In the presence of Miller, Hick observes a palpable change in the air, a sense of something brewing between them: "He sat on the sofa beside Mrs. Roosevelt. Her fingers carelessly brushed his knee, his arm lay across the sofa back behind her shoulders, and the warmth and unaffected familiarity between them was unmistakable" (63). Eleanor's casual touch enacts what Deleuze and Guattari celebrate: "Go across, get out, break through, make a beeline, don't get stuck on a point. Find the line of separation, follow it or create it, to the point of treachery" (186–87). Namely, her unruly closeness signals her resistance to the rigid decorum expected of a woman in her position.

Later, amidst FDR's 1932 presidential campaign, she enacts becoming-woman more fully by becoming-queer through her passionate bond with Hick who covered her during FDR's presidential campaign (Albert 68). During their train ride, they confide in each other about their childhood experiences of being unloved and unwanted. Similar to Hick, Eleanor did not have a trouble-free childhood, neither was her life free of struggle (80-82). The shared history of struggle and feeling unloved draws them closer. Their emotions continue to grow stronger until they develop romantic feelings for each other. At that time ER was 48. Hick notes that "somehow we had stepped into the next improbable chapter of our story. On that first day, our glances caught often and held long enough—over heads, across crowded rooms, through the soft blue haze of cigarette smoke—to make me believe that she was remembering our time on the train" (85). The statement confirms their queer desire and affectionate tie and validates Rachel Adams's argument that "Heterosexuality and its institutions are always threatened by the polymorphous nature of desire itself" (556).

The two women embark on several escapades together. During the summer of 1933, they had an "entirely alone and utterly anonymous" "romantic escape" (Albert 158, 156) across various destinations, including New Hampshire, Vermont, Quebec, and the Gaspé Peninsula (156). The following year, they visit Puerto Rico (207) before exploring the western region of the United States (217). The couple express affection by gentle cheek caresses and soft kisses (87–88). Hick narrates: "With only our hearts as witness, we lay together, the length of our bodies measuring our passion as we taught each other to become the lovers neither of us had never had, the lovers both of us had only imagined" (100). They exchange letters which contain sensual and promiscuous content. Eleanor writes: "*Hick darling, Oh! how good it was to hear your voice, it was so inadequate to try and tell you what it meant, Jimmy was near and I couldn't say 'je t'aime et je t'adore' as I longed to do.*" In another letter, she affectionately expresses: "*My pictures are nearly all up and I have you in my sitting room where I can look at you most of my waking hours! I can't kiss you so I kiss your picture good-night and good-morning*" (139, emphases original). However, their romantic bond does not last forever; it transforms into a profound friendship. Thus, Albert displays ER's same-sex intimacy as an artificial and slippery aspect of her sexuality, which aligns perfectly with queer theoretical understandings of queerness.

Following her sensual involvement with Hick, Eleanor develops another significant bond. This time it is Joseph Lash, a young Jewish man, who held the position of Executive Secretary of the American Student Union. She meets him in 1939, who is the same age as her son Elliott (253), thus making him 30 years old and her 55 at that time. Hick observes that Eleanor's infatuation with him is evident in her actions and gestures towards him. She recounts:

When Joe moved into an apartment in Manhattan, Eleanor sent him an expensive armchair from Wanamaker's. For his birthday, she gave him a new Pontiac convertible. When he was at the White House,

she didn't make any secret of her affection, and he seemed to enjoy telling everyone about their friendship. Anyway, it wasn't long before Washington society was buzzing about Eleanor and her young man. (254)

ER's pattern of deep connections that break social rules about age, gender roles, and social expectations matches exactly what Margrit Shildrick writes about sexuality: "Rather than being goal-driven and singular, sexuality [is] a network of flows, energies and capacities that are always open to transformation, and so cannot be determined in advance" (121).

Hence, even later in her life, her fluid Deleuzo-Guattarian becoming-woman persists. In "A Biographical Afterword" of her fictional memoir, Albert notes that Eleanor also develops a passionate attachment to David Gurewitsch, who is her doctor, travel companion, and with whom she shares her New York residence (291). While this relationship is only touched upon as an afterword, Gurewitsch's wife, Edna P. Gurewitsch, provides more detail in her 2002 memoir, *Kindred Souls: The Friendship of Eleanor Roosevelt and David Gurewitsch*. She claims that ER expressed to her husband in 1955, "You know without my telling you that I love you as I love and have never loved anyone else" (qtd. in *Publishers Weekly* n.p.). This final significant bond completes the pattern of ER's "unconventional intimacies" coexisting with her public roles as First Lady and mother (Reed, "Queering" 9). Crucially, these are overlapping layers of becoming rather than successive phases. Her last relationship, similar to her bonds with Hick, Lash, and earlier lesbian couples, demonstrates the "antiseparatist as [much as] antiassimilationist" energy of queerness (xii) which Sedgwick describes. ER refuses to be predictable: to follow heteronormative paradigms or establish a permanent lesbian identity, instead she lives within the "open mesh of possibilities" (8) that Sedgwick notes.

Eleanor's rhizomatic connections, becomings—woman or lesbian—involve her becoming-minoritarian as well. She develops a minoritarian stance by connecting herself with people from diverse walks of life, finding a line of flight from her segmented life she was born into, a life that, as Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider note, expected her to "marry well, raise a family, and shine in society" (230). ER is also reluctant to conform to the expectations placed upon her as a First Lady. She disrupts the tradition of First Ladies who, as *The People Profiles* biographical documentary notes, had to abandon their occupations and ambitions when their husbands became president (24:58–25:06). Determined to avoid being "a hostess for social functions" or "a prisoner of the White House" (Albert 111), "forced onto the treadmill of receptions and official dinners and dedications" (67–68), Eleanor continually expands her activities beyond these traditional roles, as previously discussed. In alignment with the notion that becoming-minoritarian "necessitates a labor of power (*puissance*), an active micropolitics" (Deleuze and Guattari 292, emphasis original), ER is dedicated to disadvantaged communities. She assists impoverished individuals during the Great Depression, through projects like the experimental homestead community of Arthurdale (Albert 168) and Camp Tera, one of the first federal camps established to provide employment training for jobless and homeless women (185); supports Jewish refugees escaping Nazi Germany, and advocates for the rights of Black residents in Washington (191). These endeavors embody what Reed terms "a queer methodology," which rejects both discrete categories and understands the human experience's inherent contradictions (*Queer Cultural Work* 86). As Reed clarifies: "Roosevelt's threat to dominance, based on gender, race, and class or nationalism, was made accessible to her through her queer orientation that allowed her to look outside of the privilege that might have swallowed her up" ("Queering" 18). Thus, ER's queer way of becoming-minoritarian reconfigures power as an alliance not as hierarchy.

Conclusions

The strength of ER in *Loving Eleanor* comes from her refusal to be contained: she rejects the ceremonial and decorative aspects of the First Lady role, uses desire both as a counter-heteronormative pleasure, and channels her aristocratic advantages into revolutionary solidarity. The ER Albert portrays goes beyond

being a queer historical figure who merely challenges norms, but she emerges as a vital queer embodiment of Deleuzo-Guattari's becomings, rhizomatic entanglements, and minoritarian politics. Albert presents her as a living proof of their declaration: "Make rhizomes, not roots, never plant! Don't sow, grow offshoots! Don't be one or multiple, be multiplicities! Run lines, never plot a point! Speed turns the point into a line! Be quick, even when standing still!" (24). Eleanor uses her body and intellect together with political alliances to escape from the fixed points of identity to instead "run lines" across the regimented times and spaces of her lifetime. She, most importantly, is depicted as someone who understands the essence of loving, exemplifying the following statement of Deleuze and Guattari: "Knowing how to love does not mean remaining a man or a woman; it means extracting from one's sex the particles, the speeds and slownesses, the flows, the *n* sexes that constitute the girl of *that* sexuality" (277, emphases original). The reader, ultimately, sees ER in a new light; that is, as a queer rhizomatic subject who dynamically unlocks vitalities, energies, desires, lovings, and relentlessly defies the pull of fixed identities.

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