

ANTICIPATORY LANGUAGE: A POTENTIAL, TRANSHISTORICAL VEHICLE FOR QUEERNESS

Laura DeLuca

Binghamton University

ldeluca2@binghamton.edu

Abstract

This article explores the epistolary form as a transhistorical medium for expressing queerness. Through examining letters sent to Hildegard of Bingen by numerous abbesses as well as the exchanges between Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok about eight centuries later, I demonstrate anticipatory language as a crucial vehicle for expressing queerness in both texts, despite these texts being centuries apart. For accompanying scholarship, I reference “LGBTQ+ Epistolary Rhetoric/Letter Writing” by Pamela Van Haitsma and ““The Burning of Letters Continues”: Elusive Identities and the Historical Construction of Sexuality” by Estelle Freedman, in order to discuss queer erasure in history and how it impacts the content and accessibility of these letters, demonstrating the overall need for the urgent language employed in both primary sources.

Key Words: transhistorical, queerness, history etc.

Introduction

Through the letters sent to Hildegard of Bingen by numerous abbesses as well as the exchanges between Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok about eight centuries later, the epistolary form proves to be a valuable point of study, particularly when examining queerness. This is shown to be true in “LGBTQ+ Epistolary Rhetoric/Letter Writing” by Pamela VanHaitsma and ““The Burning of Letters Continues”: Elusive Identities and the Historical Construction of Sexuality” by Estelle Freedman, where both VanHaitsma and Freedman discuss their individualistic reckoning with the erasure of queer history. I, too, in a sense, will also be dealing with an erasure of queer history, due to the historical stigmatization of queerness causing people to (perhaps unconsciously) bury it within

religious letters (like those sent to Hildegard) and burn it in their personal correspondence (like those between Roosevelt and Hickok); although this obstacle cannot be fully resolved, I can contribute to combatting it by demonstrating the use of anticipatory language as a potential vehicle for expressing queerness in both texts, despite these texts being centuries apart. In letters sent to Hildegard, which are found in *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, translated by Joseph Baird and Radd Erhman, this anticipatory language comes in terms of relief, as well as corporeal and spiritual desire. Contrastingly, in the surviving letters between Roosevelt and Hickok, which are compiled in *Empty Without You: The Intimate Letters of Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok*, edited by Roger Streitmatter, anticipatory language is also in terms of desire, but is ultimately used differently: here, anticipatory language reflects a hankering to see each other (which is a form of bodily desire), and write each other again soon, as well as a passionate longing for a happy life together in the future.

Scholarship: The Queer, Epistolary Form and “Critical Fabulation”

In “LGBTQ+ Epistolary Rhetoric/Letter Writing” by Pamela VanHaitsma, VanHaitsma underscores the importance of viewing queer letter writing as a rhetorical practice. Through borrowing key ideas by Dana Cloud and Saidiya Hartman, VanHaitsma argues that one can and should queer texts, but should not place labels on historical figures; rather, instead of speculating what is unknown, she prescribes that one can instead create fiction to fill the gaps, which Hartman coins as “critical fabulation” (*Wayward Lives*, p.11). In ““The Burning of Letters Continues”: Elusive Identities and the Historical Construction of Sexuality” by Estelle Freedman, Freedman discusses her experience coping with the burning of letters as a form of erasure, and displays anxiety about reconstructing queer history, which I argue can be resolved by applying VanHaitsma’s pithy use of Saidiya Hartman’s notion of “critical fabulation” (*Wayward Lives*, p.11).

In “LGBTQ+ Epistolary Rhetoric/Letter Writing,” VanHaitsma demonstrates the importance of viewing LGBTQ+ letters as a rhetorical practice, as opposed to merely just structures housing rhetorical practices. VanHaitsma argues that the epistolary form is a crucial mode of expression for people in queer relationships, perhaps more than those in normative relationships (“LGBTQ+ Epistolary...” p.1). VanHaitsma contends that this is in part because histories of queer relations are likely not in standard public records, like those of “birth,

marriage, and death” (“LGBTQ+ Epistolary...” p.2). Although there is contestation about whether to treat LGBTQ+ letters as a rhetorical practice in and of themselves, or as merely a prime location to find information on the history of LGBTQ+ rhetorical practices, VanHaitsma calls for viewing the form of LGBTQ+ letters as a rhetorical practice itself, to both reconstruct an erased queer past, and contribute to scholarly conversations about LGBTQ+ communicative forms (“LGBTQ+ Epistolary...” p.2). Thus, VanHaitsma calls for the analysis of the form of LGBTQ+ letters as a rhetorical practice, as opposed to merely studying the content, to better study LGBTQ+ history and communication.

In the study of the form of LGBTQ+ letters as a rhetorical practice, VanHaitsma cautions about labelling the sexuality of historical figures. To support her argument, VanHaitsma references Dana Cloud’s “The First Lady’s privates: Queering Eleanor Roosevelt for Public Address Studies.” In particular, VanHaitsma references Cloud’s argument that one can and should queer texts, but should not try and label peoples’ sexualities: “We may out the texts of Eleanor Roosevelt, but we may not out Eleanor” (“The first lady’s...” p. 39) (“LGBTQ+ Epistolary...” p.4). Moreover, VanHaitsma poses combatting the erasure of queer history through “critical fabulation,” which was a term coined by Saidiya Hartman in *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (2019) (*Wayward Lives*, p.11) (“LGBTQ+ Epistolary...” p.7). Hartman asks, ““What stories were shared in all the letters lost and disappeared, the things whispered, and never disclosed? Is it possible to conjure the sentences and paragraphs and poems contained in the lost archive?” (*Wayward Lives*, p.75) (“LGBTQ+ Epistolary...” p.7). This is with regard to the reconstructing of slave narratives; VanHaitsma applies this to queer stories and contexts that have been destroyed, arguing that “critical fabulation,” or the creation of fictional stories, should be used to repair erased, queer narratives, instead of trying to hypothesize information under the guise of the truth, which can never be confirmed (*Wayward Lives*, p.11) (“LGBTQ+ Epistolary...” p.7). Through the method of “critical fabulation,” (*Wayward Lives*, p.11) VanHaitsma reveals a potential work around for avoiding making unverifiable claims about historical figures.

In ““The Burning of Letters Continues”: Elusive Identities and the Historical Construction of Sexuality,” Freedman discusses her experience coping with the destruction of

letters as an erasure of queer history. In this article, Freedman is examining her biographical findings on a prison reformer named Miriam Van Waters. With regard to Van Waters burning her love letters with another woman, Freedman responds by stating that she is both saddened and angered that Van Waters felt compelled to burn these letters because of the society in which she was living, yet Freedman claims she is able to take this burning of letters as a “smoking gun” of sorts, to prove the intimacy of the relationship between Van Waters and her lover, Geraldine Thompson (“The Burning...” p.182). The burning of letters is also committed by Lorena Hickok regarding her exchanges with Eleanor Roosevelt; Hickok is said to have “...burned the most explicit of the letters, dramatically dropping them, one by one, into the flames of a fireplace” (*Empty Without You*, p.32). The burning of letters, which is evidently used by multiple women in relationships with other women during the twentieth century, works as a self-induced queer erasure, which can be difficult for historians to reckon with.

In order to cope with the erasure of queer history, the notion of “critical fabulation” (*Wayward Lives*, p.11) explored in “LGBTQ+ Epistolary Rhetoric/Letter Writing” can be applied to the problem of queer erasure that Estelle Freedman poses in ““The Burning of Letters Continues”: Elusive Identities and the Historical Construction of Sexuality.” Freedman tells the story of the time in which she asked a librarian if Van Waters was a lesbian, and the librarian stated that this claim could not be made without evidence; regarding this experience, Freedman writes: “The implication, in tone and words, was that I was making an unpleasant accusation. In retrospect, I realized that both my penchant for naming and the library’s reluctance to do so were equally problematic” (“The Burning...” p.183). Moreover, Freedman argues for treating both stories and the absence or erasure of stories as legible, while avoiding conclusively placing modern identity labels on deceased subjects: “...we [historians] must read for past constructions [of identity], and consider where they originated, how they changed, and how multiple layers of meaning—intellectual, emotional, and political—could influence individual identity” (“The Burning...” p.195). However, to further explore those silences caused by erasure (which can evidently be self-induced), “critical fabulation” (*Wayward Lives*, p.11) can be a useful tool in exploring the possible avenues of employing constructions of sexual identity on historical figures without

definitively labelling people as such. This technique can help reconstruct queer history, while allowing modern scholars to circumvent the issue of definitively labelling historical figures who are not willing and/or able to confirm or deny these impositions.

Hildegard of Bingen: Relief in Anticipatory Language

In letters sent to Hildegard's by various abbesses, anticipation is conveyed through both the enthusiastic way in which these abbesses crave Hildegard's response as well as the yearning for relief by the abbesses with regard to their anxiety, spiritual weakness, and grief. This functions as but one common thread of anticipatory language, which could be interpreted as queer, because of the sensual passion behind these inquiries.

Through a letter from Hazzecha of Krauftal to Hildegard around 1161, it is clear that Hazzecha feels hope and anticipation for Hildegard's prayers, so that Hildegard may cure her worries. More specifically, Hazzecha sent this letter to Hildegard seeking consolation regarding her extreme anxiety caused by stress in her office position (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.108). The letter begins with Hazzecha referring to Hildegard affectionately and respectfully; Hazzecha longs for Hildegard to pray for her: "To the most loving lady Hildegard, effulgent with the sacred gift of divine and true visions, Hazzecha of Krauftal, abbess (in name only), with a prayer that she receive the overflowing gift of perfect love" (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.108). Here, Hazzecha depicts Hildegard as radiating with a pure, godly love. Hazzecha goes on to preface her more blatant conveyance of anticipation by first showering Hildegard in more affection: Hazzecha then creates beautiful imagery, complimenting Hildegard, describing Hildegard's soul as "flow[ing] down from the height of [her] contemplation as from the tops of the eternal hills, down into the deepest valley of other souls" and causing thornless, fragrant flowers, which are "living shoots of celestial desire" to sprout and grow so tall that they can reach God's throne (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.108). This vivid, natural language appeals to Hildegard's power as a religious authority, while also being intimate in nature; this then allows Hazzecha to politely convey her anticipatory desires. Hazzecha then claims that all of her "hope and security...refuge and safety" is controlled by Hildegard (second to God); Hazzecha claims to "entrust [her]self to [Hildegard's] advice and aid... [she] humbly entreat[s] [Hildegard] again, and implore[s] [Hildegard], in [her] compassion, to pray to God on [Hazzecha's own]"

behalf" (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.108). This places all trust and power in Hildegard, portraying an intense desire for Hildegard to pray for Hazzecha. Hazzecha also anticipates Hildegard informing her of how she can repent for her sins of "excess," which Hazzecha believes is causing her anxiety, due to God's wrath (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.108). Hazzecha therefore both craves and anticipates Hildegard's prayers and advice, to relieve her anxiety about her office position; this desire can be read as queer, because of the imagery of beauty and love used to describe Hildegard, as well as the deep longing communicated.

About a decade later, an abbess in Obermunster at Regensburg sent a similar letter to Hildegard that also displays an anticipatory relief from anxiety through simply communicating with Hildegard. Although the abbess does not specify, she is requesting Hildegard's consolation regarding something that is causing her anxiety; she is also inquiring about being able to quit her office position (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.149). The abbess expresses a longing to see Hildegard, and an anticipation for her reply, since Hildegard has not responded to her other letters in the past: "Because of my great desire, I have on occasion greeted you in a letter, saintly lady, but I have never received a response. Humbly cast down at your feet, therefore, I beseech you to deign to respond to two questions of mine through the present messenger" (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.149). The passionate wish for a response from Hildegard is an emotional longing that can be interpreted as conveying more passion than a mere request to be answered to solely be prayed for. The abbess describing her positionality as "cast down at [Hildegard's] feet," and repeats the term "humbly" throughout the letter, (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.149) underscoring the abbess' desperation and anticipation for a response from Hildegard. The abbess goes on to question if there is legitimate peril in what is causing her anxiety, and asks how she can "be relieved of this burden" (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.149). The abbess ends the letter by begging to be healed from her worry: "...please take the trouble to send a letter to relieve the great anxiety threatening my heart" (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.149). This letter functions as an additional example of an abbess anticipating Hildegard's response in terms of being desperate for relief from her worry. The urgency of the need for Hildegard

to relieve the abbess of her worry is conveyed through passionate, eager language, which can be read as queer-coded.

Other letters from abbesses show a desire to be relieved of negative emotions besides anxiety, namely a general spiritual weakness and grief. After Hazzecha sends the aforementioned letter praying and anticipating relief from anxiety by Hildegard, Hazzecha sends another letter to Hildegard, in which she communicates that she is suffering from a general spiritual frailty; in spite of this, she expresses that Hildegard's long-anticipated visit allowed her to rest for a bit: "After your friendly visit, which I had desired such a long time, I merited, God helping, to be relieved from my weakness of spirit and my earlier tribulations, and managed to rest a little" (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.107). The yearning for this visit and the calmness felt after demonstrates the loving emotional bond that Hazzecha feels she has with Hildegard. Moreover, about a decade later, an abbess from St. Ursula, Cologne, anticipates Hildegard's response because she is desperate for consolation for her grief; the abbess puts all faith in Hildegard, awaiting her compassion: "I place all my hope in you, after God, and I desire to be consoled and made joyous by you from this point forward. Therefore, let the tears and sighs of a grieving daughter move you" (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.104). This anticipates Hildegard's response to bring the abbess solace and happiness, as though Hildegard is responsible and capable of emotionally managing her. Thus, these abbesses eagerly await Hildegard's response to their letters as they anticipate Hildegard's ability as a religious authority to relieve them of their struggles, spiritual fragility and sorrow; this anticipation can be queered with ease, due to its passionate urgency.

Hildegard of Bingen: Corporeal and Spiritual Desire in Anticipatory Language

In the letters that multiple abbesses sent to Hildegard, anticipation is conveyed through the inquiry for relief felt by abbesses with regard to their anxiety, spiritual weakness, and grief. Within this anticipation lies sentiments that an intimacy that is ubiquitous, which seem to relay a passion beyond the scope of the Church felt toward Hildegard.

In the aforementioned letter of an abbess in Obermunster at Regensburg to Hildegard that expresses desire for relief from anxiety, the abbess also conveys an anticipatory desire to see Hildegard in person. The abbess writes: "Beloved lady, my spirit greatly longs to see your face, and my ears have long desired to hear the words of your mouth" (*The Letters of*

Hildegard of Bingen, p.149). This focus on Hildegard's face, mouth, and voice is sensual, and almost romantic in tone. The abbess says that this desire to see Hildegard in person has caused her to write Hildegard multiple letters, but she has not gotten a response (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.149). The writing of multiple letters portrays an eager anticipation to see Hildegard in person; the desire of the abbess to see Hildegard in person as opposed to continuing a relationship through letter writing conveys that in-person communication functions differently than through letters; in this letter, face-to-face interaction and the audibility of Hildegard's voice is deemed ideal. This anticipatory desire to be together in person can be queered as romantic, due to the sensual sentiments and deep longing conveyed.

With regard to corporeal desire, in a letter thought to be sent from an abbess in Herkenrode in 1173 (this is not confirmed), this abbess expresses a passionate desire to see Hildegard in person, as opposed to solely communicating via letters, even though she fears that she will not be able to travel to see Hildegard. The abbess writes: "I earnestly desire to see your face, holy lady, and to hear the divine words from your own mouth" (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.62). This sensual depiction again focuses on Hildegard's face, mouth, and voice, similar to the abbess in Regensburg's letter, conveying an intimate desire to be with Hildegard. Furthermore, a letter from an abbess named Adelheid to Hildegard from around the same time puts forth a desire to see Hildegard in person; like the abbesses from Regensburg and Herkenrode, Adelheid makes face-to-face communication seem wholly superior to and distinct from other forms of communication, namely letter writing or connection through prayer: "I myself, God willing, will not delay a visit to you when the time becomes available, so that we may speak face-to-face, and, hand in hand, do what is good. In this way, our ancient friendship will be strengthened" (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.15). The lack of hesitation in committing to visiting Hildegard reveals the deep love the abbess has for her, which, in conversation with the physical intimacy described in the quotation, is queer-coded in nature. Thus, the anticipatory, corporeal desire of abbesses expressed toward Hildegard can be read as queer.

In terms of a more spiritual desire, in the same letter the abbess Adelheid sent to Hildegard reflecting corporeal desire, Adelheid also conveys an anticipatory desire to be connected with Hildegard spiritually. For example, Adelheid states that Hildegard is

permanently within her heart: “And so, unsullied dove of Christ, great and pure in spirit, just as good does not create evil, nor light bring forth darkness, nor sweet produce bitterness, so too you never depart from my heart” (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.15). This flowery imagery depicts Hildegard as naturally perfect and intrinsically good because of Christ. This imagery can be interpreted as romantic in tone, comparable to the language in a love poem; the notion of Hildegard never leaving Adelheid’s heart is a statement that is romantic in nature. Adelheid goes on to ask for prayers for her fellow abbesses, and expresses a desire to be in Hildegard’s thoughts: “Likewise, you ought to keep me frequently in mind, since, as is well known, I am joined to you in intimate closeness of love and devotion” (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.15). Adelheid’s desire to be in Hildegard’s thoughts functions as a craving for an emotional intimacy that is perhaps beyond the context of religion, as Adelheid does not solely express wishing to be in Hildegard’s prayers, but Hildegard’s thoughts more broadly. Thus, Adelheid yearns for a spiritual connection with Hildegard that is intimate in nature.

An anticipatory desire to be with Hildegard spiritually is also conveyed in a letter from an abbess to Hildegard written before 1173; the abbess states that, if she cannot serve Hildegard in person, letters will confirm Hildegard’s wellbeing (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.148). The abbess claims that, “although steep mountains, chasms, and floods keep me from your presence, my heart is fully joined to you in the benevolence of perfect faith and love” (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.148). This natural imagery demonstrates that the abbess feels a deep spiritual bond with Hildegard, despite their distance apart. The abbess goes on to say that her desire to be emotionally connected to Hildegard is one granted by God (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.148). The abbess therefore depicts God as supporting this long-distance emotional bonding. The abbess ends the paragraph desiring the same sort of spiritual closeness, but within Hildegard’s mind: “In the name of the consolation of that love, I ask you to let me know by letter in accordance with my petition whether you will bear me in your memory” (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.148). The use of the term “petition” (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.148) conveys an active push to be in Hildegard’s memory, which functions as an additional layer of anticipation; like the letter from Adelheid, this is a yearning to be in Hildegard’s thoughts more broadly, as opposed to

her prayers. Thus, like Adelheid, this abbess conveys a passionate affinity for Hildegard that seems to go beyond the context of religion.

Although perhaps on a smaller scale, other moments of anticipation for a spiritual closeness with Hildegard also permeate the text of letters written to her. For example, in the aforementioned letter written by Hazzecha to Hildegard between 1160 and 1161, after stating that an in-person visit with Hildegard aided Hazzecha in her spiritual weakness, she goes on to say that, even though they cannot be together in person, Hazzecha remains close to Hildegard emotionally: “I want you to know, my lady and dearest sister, that just as I greatly desired to see you—and still do—I always cling to you in my heart, even though I cannot be with you in person” (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.107). Like the letter from Adelheid, Hazzecha claims that Hildegard is always in her heart, which is an inherently romantic sentiment. Furthermore, a thread that is ubiquitous in letters to Hildegard is the desire of women to be kept in Hildegard’s prayers; this operates as a widespread desire of many women to be spiritually connected with Hildegard. This is bluntly seen in a letter from an abbess in Gerbstadt from before 1173, who is affected by “the fragrance” of Hildegard’s rectitude from a distance (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.50). This abbess states that she can feel “the fragrance of [Hildegard’s] virtues throughout the whole Church” (*The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, p.50). This emotional impact of Hildegard on the abbess, even from miles away, reveals the intimate connection that the abbess feels she shares with Hildegard. Thus, the letters from both Hazzecha and the abbess from Gerbstadt reveal a desire for spiritual closeness, which is queer-coded.

Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok: Planning Future Lines of Communication as Anticipatory Language

In the letter exchanges between Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok, anticipation is conveyed through the obsessive planning of both women regarding their future lines of communication, particularly when they are going to see each other in person, and write to each other next. This functions as a fascinating parallel to the urgent corporeal and spiritual desire conveyed in letters to Hildegard. Unlike the queerness perhaps more deeply embedded in the letters to Hildegard, there is relatively minimal contestation about the fact that Roosevelt and Hickok were in an intimate relationship, particularly because of Roosevelt’s

granddaughter, Eleanor Seagraves, confirming it (*Empty Without You*, p.566-567); therefore, although the queerness in these letters is more apparent on the surface than in the letters to Hildegard, anticipatory language is being used as a vehicle for expressing queer desires nevertheless.

Roosevelt and Hickok's ritualistic writing patterns demonstrate an anticipatory desire to communicate. According to Roger Streitmatter in *Empty Without You: The Intimate Letters of Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok*, Roosevelt and Hickok spent several weeks together at a time, and, because of this, "obviously had no reason to write letters" (*Empty Without You*, p.32). In spite of constantly seeing each other, they incessantly wrote letters to one another for thirty years (*Empty Without You*, p.75). And, through these letters, provided one another with a "offering constant support and reassurance" (*Empty Without You*, p.45). These letters were so incessant, that Roosevelt had a set, three-part structure she strictly followed in every letter to Hickok, repeating it "hundreds of times": "First came personal words to Lorena. Then came a recitation of the events that had occurred that particular day, almost as though she were copying them straight from her engagement calendar. And last came more personal words to Lorena" (*Empty Without You*, p.73). This rigid structure demonstrates how routinely Roosevelt wrote comprehensive letters to Hickok about her day, as Roosevelt developed a ritualistic, established mode of letter writing, which she strictly adhered to. Despite working 12-14 hour days, Roosevelt and Hickok wrote to each other daily, like clockwork (*Empty Without You*, p.158). It is therefore clear that these letters were written obsessively, demonstrating an anticipation to tell one another every minute detail of their day, when they could not spend time together.

In their letter exchanges, Roosevelt's letters to Hickok perpetually reference an anticipatory desire to receive letters by Hickok, and write to her next. For example, when Roosevelt discusses her plans to travel to Boston with a woman named Betsey, she writes: "I'm glad I'm not motoring. I'd miss you too much! No letter from you today so I hope for one tomorrow" (*Empty Without You*, p.123). Here, Roosevelt is relieved that she is taking a plane, to quicken her travels to and from Boston, which will allow her to be in contact with Hickok sooner; in the absence of a letter, Roosevelt is anticipating one the next day, to make up for it. This is demonstrative of the normalcy of their exchange of letters on a daily basis.

Hickok also fails to write a letter to Roosevelt about one month later, and Roosevelt lets Hickok know that, to cope, she will just read the letters Hickok had sent the day before: “No letter today, but I was spoiled yesterday so I will just read over all those I had yesterday!” (*Empty Without You*, p.151). This reflects Roosevelt’s refusal to go a day without reading Hickok’s letters; her longing to connect with Hickok runs so deeply that, if one day of communication is missed, she is willing to re-read letters that she has presumably already read as a source of comfort. Similarly, Roosevelt expresses her longing, while openly trying to avoid greed: “I can’t help wondering if my pencil note will reach you which I sent off last night! No letter from you today but I had two yesterday so I am just expressing a longing not a complaint!” (*Empty Without You*, p.165-166). The first half of the quotation also expresses a unique kind of anticipation, in which Roosevelt is wondering if Hickok received a note that Roosevelt sent the night before. The latter reveals Roosevelt desiring a letter from Hickok, despite receiving two the previous day, which speaks to Roosevelt’s want of daily communication. Thus, the letters Roosevelt sent Hickok disclose an anticipation to both receive letters from her, and write letters to her.

The letters between Roosevelt and Hickok also demonstrate anticipatory language in the form of being eager to see each other in person; one way this manifests is through counting down the days until they can see each other again, which occurs at least seven times in their exchanges (*Empty Without You*, p.125; 148; 152; 158; 164-165; 183-184; 210). For example, Hickok writes: “Good night, dear one. I want to put my arms around you and kiss you at the corner of your mouth. And in a little more than a week now—I shall!” (*Empty Without You*, p.158). This communicates both a deep desire to physically touch Roosevelt and an exact awareness as to when the next time they will see each other in person is. Likewise, Roosevelt writes: “Every day you are one day nearer, the 20th is only 2 weeks and 1 day off now! A world of love and I do put my arms around you in my dreams dear one” (*Empty Without You*, p.210). This also expresses an anticipatory, precise counting of the days until they can see each other in person, as well as a similar longing to physical touch Hickok. Lastly, Hickok writes: “Oh, my dear—I can hardly wait to see you! Day after tomorrow, Minneapolis and letters from you. A week from now—right this minute—I’ll be with you a week from now—right this minute—I’ll be with you!” (*Empty Without You*, p.164-165).

Here, Hickok is anticipating both the letters she knows she will receive from Roosevelt the day after tomorrow and seeing Roosevelt in exactly a week, to the minute; this anticipation is almost childlike, as though Hickok is counting down until Christmas morning. Through these letter excerpts, one can see an anticipatory desire to see each other in person through the meticulous counting of days until Roosevelt and Hickok can be together again.

Anticipatory language in these letter exchanges also expresses a more general longing to see each other in person, reflected in desiring for time to pass, and in terms of lacking. For example, Roosevelt writes that knowing that each day that goes by means that she is one day closer to being with Hickok: “Darling, I feel very happy because every day brings you nearer. I love you deeply and tenderly...” (*Empty Without You*, p.134). Here, Roosevelt’s understanding of time is centered around Hickok: Roosevelt is happy with the passage of time because it brings her closer to the next time she can see Hickok in person again. Similarly, Roosevelt also talks about her longing for Hickok in terms of emptiness, while still anticipating being with her in person: ““I love you deeply and tenderly and my arms feel very empty, but it won’t be so long” (*Empty Without You*, p.180). Like the previous quotation, the phrase “I love you deeply and tenderly” is repeated, which works to demonstrate the extent of Roosevelt’s love for Hickok; it is clear that the latter half of this quotation functions as Roosevelt almost consoling herself regarding desperately wanting to see her. Finally, Roosevelt also discusses her anticipation to see Hickok in terms of hunger and aching, writing: “I’m getting so hungry to see you,” “Darling, I ache for you and wish I could be expecting you later,” and “At times life becomes just one long, dreary ache for you” (*Empty Without You*, p.124;234;322). Thus, an anticipatory, bodily desire is expressed through wishing time away, and in language of emptiness and hunger.

Perhaps most despondently, the most desperate, anticipatory longing in letters from Roosevelt to Hickok occurs in more negative contexts, namely when they are forced to separate, or when their relationship deteriorates. For example, when they are forced to separate, Roosevelt writes: “...I believe it gets harder to let you go each time, but that is because you grow closer. It seems as though you belonged near me, but even if we lived together we would have to separate sometimes...” (*Empty Without You*, p.233). Here, the reality of living in an American society with a partner is realized: even though one is bound

to have to separate from their significant other due to mundane, daily life, Roosevelt seems to not be willing to accept this when it comes to Hickok. Roosevelt also expresses not wanting to separate, even though she has to see a woman name Anna, who she wants to meet with: “Hick darling, I’ve thought of you so much all day and I wish I had not had to leave you last night, tho’ of course I wanted to come and see Anna”(Empty Without You, p.351). This reveals how Roosevelt’s desire to be with Hickok is so strong that she wishes she could prioritize it over the other things that she wants to do. Through Roosevelt’s letters to Hickok, one can see how she anticipates being with Hickok in person, and does not want to separate, even for short periods.

Although their relationship begins to deteriorate, Roosevelt still feels corporeal desire for Hickok. For example, Roosevelt writes: “Oh! dear one I love you and long to be with you when things go wrong. Bless you and a warm kiss to you” (Empty Without You, p.268). The phrase “a warm kiss to you” (Empty Without You, p.268) is one of the many phrases littered throughout Roosevelt’s letters to Hickok conveying how she would like to show affection to Hickok if they were together in person. Furthermore, when Roosevelt and Hickok’s relationship loses its sturdiness, Roosevelt continues to desire to give Hickok physical care: “Oh! dear one, what wouldn’t I give to have you here with me tonight and know just how you are and be able to take care of you”(Empty Without You, p.327). This proves the depth of their relationship: even though it was deteriorating, and coming to an end, Roosevelt still wanted to tend to Hickok. Lastly, Roosevelt writes: “Darling, I hated to leave you this morning, how I wish we could get back to being happy together”(Empty Without You, p.374). This shows a simultaneous longing to be together with an acknowledgement that they are not happy in their relationship. Although this may seem masochistic, because Roosevelt knows that they are not happy together yet wants to be with Hickok, it reveals how Roosevelt’s anticipatory desires have become so deeply ingrained within her that the state of their relationship does not matter, because, with Roosevelt’s logic, being unhappy together is better than being unhappy apart. It is therefore clear that Roosevelt’s anticipatory, corporeal desire for Hickok transcended rationality, because even when their relationship was unstable, and approaching its end, Roosevelt still wanted to be with Hickok.

Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok: Dreaming of an Alternate Future Through Anticipatory Language

In the letter exchanges between Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok, anticipation is conveyed through the two women dreaming about their future together. Although their current circumstances do not lend themselves to this future life, predominantly because Eleanor Roosevelt is married to Franklin D. Roosevelt and lives in the White House, Eleanor Roosevelt and Hickok still fantasize about a future together as a couple.

Roosevelt and Hickok both muse about building a romantic life together in the future. For example, Roosevelt writes a comment about the setting and furniture of their future home together: “One corner cupboard I long to have for our camp or cottage or house, which is it to be? I’ve always thought of it in the country but I don’t think we ever decided on the variety of abode nor the furniture. We probably won’t argue!” (*Empty Without You*, p.30). This anticipation is so acute that Roosevelt is already discussing a cupboard that she wants to be in their future home. Likewise, Roosevelt dreams about “fate” allowing them to live this fantasized life, where they share a home together by themselves, as a couple: “Dearest, we are happy together and strong relationships have to grow deep roots. We’re growing them now, partly because we are separated, the foliage & the flowers will come, somehow I’m sure of it” (*Empty Without You*, p.209-210). This natural imagery is reminiscent of the queer-coded natural imagery in the previously analyzed letters to Hildegard; here, this works to poetically express affection to Hickok, and hope for their future. Likewise, Hickok later discusses how, in time, she hopes that they will be a “happy family” together: “Well—never mind, darling! The time will come when it won’t matter to me that there are so many others who have priority rights to your interest and affection. Then I daresay we’ll all be one nice big happy family” (*Empty Without You*, p.364). This yearning for a family with Roosevelt reveals an anticipation for the time when Hickok and Roosevelt can be together openly, as a couple. Roosevelt and Hickok therefore dream about what their future life will look like, living in a home together with a family.

Lastly, in addition to fantasizing about the logistics of a future home and life together, Roosevelt and Hickok also write about anticipating having years of happiness together. For example, when apologizing for being volatile, Roosevelt writes: “Darling I love you dearly

and I am sorry for letting my foolish temperament make you unhappy... but we'll have years of happy times so bad times will be forgotten. July is a long way off but when it comes we'll be together" (*Empty Without You*, p.270). This displays a certainty for the future of happiness that they both long for, even though, at this point in time, in 1934, they were struggling to be happy in their relationship. Furthermore, during the same year, when discussing the challenging time it has been for Hickok, Roosevelt anticipates their future happiness together: "Your telegram today was grand too and dear one I do hope the worst is over for you and many happy days are in store this coming year for us together" (*Empty Without You*, p.340). This consolation that their future good times will compensate for their more challenging periods is also repeated throughout Roosevelt's letters to Hickok, where she writes: "We'll have years of happy times so bad times will be forgotten" and "You are right that your bad times when we are together are hard on us both but oh! dear, why do you have to feel in a way which makes you have bad times, we ought to have such good and happy times together. Perhaps we will some day when I am no longer driven..." (*Empty Without You*, p.31-32;427). In these excerpts, Roosevelt is fantasizing about having years of happiness with Hickok to compensate for the difficult times that they have been through together; Roosevelt expresses hope that she will become more mellow in her career ambitions, so that her and Hickok can enjoy more time together. It is therefore evident that Roosevelt and Hickok fantasize about constructing a happy future together, despite their challenges.

Conclusion

In the letter exchanges of abbesses to Hildegard as well as those between Roosevelt and Hickok, anticipatory language proves to be a transhistorical vehicle for potential queerness. The anticipatory language in the letters to Hildegard, which comes in the form of relief, as well as corporeal and spiritual desire, interestingly parallels the anticipatory language in the letters between Roosevelt and Hickok, although here it is conveyed through anticipation to see each other (which is a form of bodily desire) and write each other next, as well as craft a happy future together. Although these letters are eight centuries apart, the acknowledgement of anticipatory language of desire is a fascinating and useful tool for to help scholars queer historical texts, to combat the erasure of queer history. Although this cannot be the only tool used to definitively make claims about queer desire, it is valuable

nonetheless, as it still can work to contribute to the restoration of queer history. Additionally, since this is a pattern in real letters that can be interpreted as queer, this tool can also be utilized in the reconstruction of queer(ed) texts, through “critical fabulation,” (*Wayward*, p.11) in order to fill in the gaps of what was lost in queer history, such as those perhaps created by the burial of queer desires in religious letters (such as those sent to Hildegard) and the enormous gap created as the result of the burning of letters (like those between Roosevelt and Hickok).

Works Cited

- Baird, Joseph L., and Erhman, Radd K. *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*. II, Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Cloud, Dana. *The first lady's privates: Queering Eleanor Roosevelt for public address studies*. In C. E. Morris (Ed.), *Queering public address: Sexualities in American historical discourse*. University of South Carolina Press, 2007, pp.23-44.
- Freedman, Estelle B. ““The Burning of Letters Continues”: Elusive Identities and the Historical Construction of Sexuality.” *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 9, no 4. 1998. pp.181 - 200.
- Hartman, S. *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval*. W. W. Norton, 2019.
- Streitmatter, Roger. *Empty without You: The Intimate Letters of Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok*. Da Capo Press, 2000.
- VanHaitsma, Pamela. “LGBTQ+ Epistolary Rhetoric/Letter Writing.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*, 2021.
<https://oxfordre.com/communication/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-1181>.