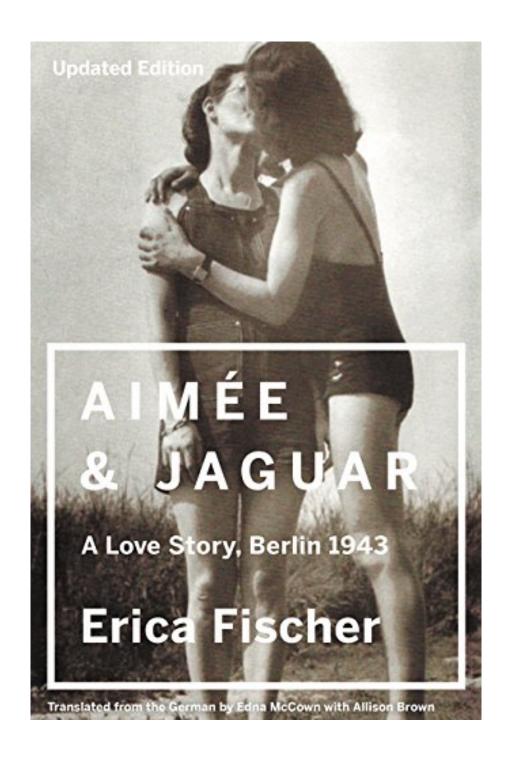


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From Publishers Weekly

This book doesn't seem to realize it is less about lesbianism and love than it is a jolting social history?achtung. It purports to be a tender wartime memoir of two Berlin lesbian lovers, one of whom turns out to be perhaps the most ordinary woman in Nazi Germany. It is hard to put down. Our sympathy is tapped because one of the lovers, Felice Schragenheim (Jaguar), is a U-boat?a Jew living underground. Fischer, a Viennese feminist and journalist, pieces together diaries, interviews, reminiscences?sometimes self-serving in the extreme on the part of their authors. For instance, 80-year-old Elisabeth Wust (Aimee) swears in interviews with the dubious Fischer that she didn't now what the Nazis were doing to the Jews, yet the instant Soviet troops tramped into Berlin, she passed off herself and her four kids as Jewish. Her husband, a Nazi officer, was swallowed up on the eastern front while Aimee dallied with every Heinz, Dick and Harry who crossed her threshold, as well as women lovers. The diary entries of Elisabeth reflect the unreflective, self-centered musings of a hausfrau that are in their own way as revealing of the Gotterdammerung of Nazi Germany as any report by a minister of state. Tumbling into obscurity in the postwar years, Elisabeth hangs on to her love for the lost Felice, and all that spent passion comes across as simply obsession.

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From Library Journal

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Berlin 1942. Lilly Wust, twenty-nine, married, four children, led a life as did millions of German women. But then she met the twenty-one-year-old Felice Schragenheim.

It was love almost at first sight. Aimée (Lilly) and Jaguar (Felice) started forging plans for the future. They composed poems and love letters to each other, and wrote their own marriage contract. When Jaguar admitted to her lover that she was Jewish, this dangerous secret drew the two women even closer to each other. But their luck didn't last. On August 21, 1944, Jaguar was arrested and deported.

At the age of eighty, Lilly Wust told her story to Erica Fischer, who turned it into a poignant testimony. After the book appeared in 1994 she was contacted by additional contemporaries of Aimée and Jaguar who offered new material that has been integrated into the present edition.

The book, translated into twenty languages, and the film based on it—directed by Max Färberböck, with Juliane Köhler and Maria Schrader in the leading roles—have made Aimée and Jaguar's story known around the world.

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Most helpful customer reviews

45 of 45 people found the following review helpful.

An amazing, piquant read

By A Customer

The most shocking-- and delightful-- aspect of this book is its refusal to sink into our notions of the conventional love story. While involving unconventional characters, I still expected it to be a 1943 Berlin version of _Love Story_. Thankfully, it is not. There are no happy endings in any sense, as Fischer does not deify either character and refuses to expunge parts of the story that sully either Lilly or Felice. There are problems, fights, questions of motivations. After reading this book, you will remain lost in a world of "why"s and "what if"s.

Fischer provides an historical account that, unlike many, is inhabited by multi-dimensional people that both intrigue and frustrate.

One of the best books I have ever read. I can not stop thinking about it.

47 of 48 people found the following review helpful.

An incredible experience

By Elissa Altman (ema153@aol.com)

In 1995 when I worked for HarperCollins (the hardcover publisher of Aimee & Jaguar), I had the amazing experience of co-editing Edna McCown's brilliant translation of this book from the original German. In an industry rife with commercialism, at a time when the reasons why I became an editor were becoming murky, I found myself working on this book that would remain an enormous part of who I am both personally and professionally. The story of Felice Schragenheim and Lilly Wust is a time-honored classic tale of a love that

defied all obstacles, from the horrific devastation of the Holocaust, to the proscribed confines of society, to the simple passage of time. I can think of no greater gift that any one lover can give another than to tell their story, the way Lilly Wust did, after more than half a century of silence. Although she died more than 50 years ago, Felice Schragenheim will always be alive in the hearts of readers of this book, and in the hearts of all those who see the movie when it comes out here in the US. Aimee & Jaguar is at once an inside look at "underground" life in Berlin during Nazi Germany, a look at two very different women who came together under the most bizarre of circumstances, and ultimately a testament to the strength of love in the face of adversity. And I'm sure that Lilly's "Rosenkavalier" is looking down, smiling at the fact that, as she predicted, they "would always be together." I hope this story moves other readers as much as it moved and continues to move me. There is nothing quite like it.

27 of 28 people found the following review helpful.

Recommended but with reservations

By A Customer

I'm not entirely sure what the author's purpose was in writing this book, because it certainly wasn't approached with any objectivity. The story is a touching one, very moving and ultimately heartbreaking, and the love Lili and Felice shared seemed to me intense and sincere. But in the epilogue the author admits she dislikes Lili, and feels she can more easily identify with Felice, basically because they are both Jewish. She feels somehow insulted that Lili aligned herself more closely with Jewish people after the war, and it is here that the author's attitude really left a bad taste in my mouth. In the book Lili relates that after the war other Germans distanced themselves from her because she had helped Felice and others. By looking askance on Lili because she was a German woman married to a Nazi and who could therefore never really have been a victim is showing exactly the same kind of prejudice, just in a different form. As far as Fischer self-righteously refusing to recognize Lili as a victim, all I can say to that is that Lili lost the woman she loved, so I'd have to disagree. Also, by taking Felice into her home, and later sheltering other Jewish women, Lili did much more than most people during that time, people who in most cases simply chose to look the other way. In sum I'd say this book is definitely worth seeking out - but I'd rather it had been written by someone without an obviously prejudicial axe to grind.

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