

Jeffrey Merrick and Michael Sibalis, eds. *Homosexuality in French History and Culture; Journal of Homosexuality* vol. 41, nos. 3/4. New York: Haworth Press; Harrington Park Press, 2001. 293pp. US\$59.95; US\$24.95. ISBN 1-56023-263-3; 1-56023-262-5.

JOHN STOUT (McMaster University)

This substantial volume of essays provides a wealth of material on queer histories in France, from the Renaissance to the present. The articles were written mostly by men and focus mainly on gay male history, although a few female contributors, and a few essays on lesbian history, are included. The contributors are both French and non-French specialists in history and culture. All the essays in the book appear in English.

In their introduction, editors Jeffrey Merrick and Michael Sibalis point out that most of the current research on queer French history is being conducted by non-French scholars. They note an apparent lack of interest in LGBTQ history in France: “gay and lesbian history has ... entered the academic mainstream in many countries, although not in France, or at least not until very recently” (2). Indeed, in France, lesbian and gay identities tend to be relegated to the domain of “la vie privée.” This problem — the French closet — is an obstacle facing Queer Studies in France.

All of the articles included in Sibalis and Merrick’s book are informative and worth reading, and a few of them seem to me to be outstanding examples of scholarship that will help change the field of French Studies. In particular, Marc Schachter’s article on Montaigne’s love for Étienne de la Boétie, Lewis Seifert’s “Masculinity and Satires of ‘Sodomites’ in France, 1660-1715,” and Susan Lanser’s “‘Au sein de vos pareilles’: Sapphic Separation in Late-Eighteenth-Century France” deserve high praise.

The diversity of topics and historical periods covered in this volume is impressive. Clearly, there is substantial material here for scholars in the field of French Studies to explore and incorporate into their own research and teaching. Although an increasing number of colloquia and publications on LGBTQ literature and culture in France have been happening in recent years, French Studies in general has been slower to recognize the importance of such research and teaching than have many other fields in the Humanities and

Social Sciences. One hopes that the publication of volumes of essays such as *Homosexuality in French History and Culture* will act as a catalyst to increased interest in queer French Studies, both in Canada and elsewhere.

Erica Fischer. *Aimée & Jaguar: A Love Story, Berlin 1943*. Translated from the German by Edna McCown. Los Angeles and New York: Alyson Books, 1998. 274 pp. Ill. US\$12.95. ISBN 1-55583-450-7.

ANGELES ESPINACO-VIRSEDA (University of Alberta)

On one level, *Aimée & Jaguar* recounts the “Love Story” of two women in a troubled time. Lilly Wust (Aimée), a German mother of four boys and the wife of a Nazi, and Felice Schragenheim (Jaguar), a young German-Jewish woman trying to hide her identity from the Nazis, fall in love in Germany in 1943. But readers looking for straightforward lesbian romance will be surprised. Journalist-author Fischer adds another dimension to the story by incorporating many of the protagonists’ documents, letters, poetry, and diaries and the recollections of friends and family. Fischer’s work thus crosses the boundaries between biography, history, and fiction and frames the lovers’ perspective between multiple voices. It is the resulting ambiguities that question the nature of sexuality, oral history, the truth of memory, and the lovers’ story itself that make *Aimée & Jaguar* so interesting.

Pivotal to the story is Jaguar’s arrest, incarceration, and forced labor in a series of Nazi prisons and concentration camps, and Aimée’s impassioned efforts to help her. Their correspondence, often smuggled through the prisons by various people won over by Jaguar’s warm personality, is extremely moving. It conveys the women’s love and commitment to each other as well as the desperation and torment suffered by prisoners and their loved ones on the ‘outside.’ When Jaguar is captured and sent to Theresienstadt the author conveys a love that seems to transcend the limitations of physical separation. In this way, *Aimée & Jaguar* resembles a universal love story. In