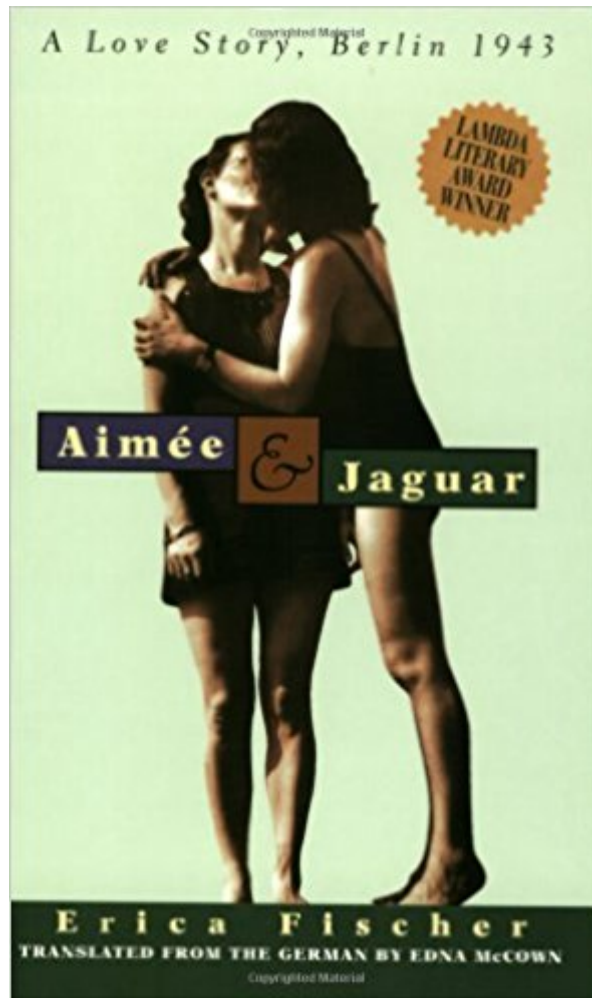




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Aimee & Jaguar: A Love Story, Berlin 1943



Synopsis

Excerpts
A letter from Lilly to Felice, March 31st, 1943
Felice, I love you! What a feeling it is to be able to say that! Oh, Felice, the nicest fate I could hope for is that of lasting happiness. I want to live with you for a long, a very long time, do you hear? And life is so beautiful, so wonderful. Felice, do you belong to me - without limit? To me only? Please say you do, at least for a very long time to come, please! Do you love me? I'm acting like a seventeen-year-old, aren't I? Be good to me, Felice, please? And yet please don't hold back. I wanted to lure you out of your hiding place. I am like a child playing with fire; will I get burned? A little? Totally? Felice, stop me! Isn't it just a little bit your fault that I'm so crazy, so totally crazy?
A poem from Felice to Lilly, Christmas 1943
That there was a time before you - I can't believe!
To me, we've forever been this way,
Together, side by side in life and in dreams,
Surrounded both by darkness and the light of day.
You belong to me! Since you arrived,
And slowly at first, then full of trust,
Placed your heart in my hands, I have strived
For the strength to build a life for us.
So I have hope for days yet to come,
As this year nods and slips into air,
Because before me, like some emblem,
I carry the copper gleam of your hair.
Extract: "The Vow"
January 30th, 1943, the tenth anniversary of Hitler's seizure of power, Hermann G  ring's speech to Berliners was delayed for two hours because British scout planes were flying over the city in broad daylight for the first time. Four days after G  ring declared his certainty of victory, the remaining German troops trapped in Stalingrad capitulated. Accompanied by funereal music, the defeat was announced on the radio. On February 18th Reichspropaganda minister Goebbels spurred the German people to make a greater effort. In a "Declaration of fanatical Will" at the Berlin Sportpalast he announced the "Salvation of Germany and the whole of civilisation" through "total war". In memory of the victims of the Russian campaign, a three minute traffic stoppage was declared. At the Zoo station, people stood stock

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Customer Reviews

Acclaimed in Germany and England, this tragic and remarkable real-life love story won a Lambda Literary Award when it was first published in America in 1995. Lilly Wust ("Aimee") was a conventional middle-class mother of four, estranged from her philandering husband, when she met Felice Schragenheim ("Jaguar") in 1941. Their passionate affair unfolded against the backdrop of the deportation of Jews from Berlin, but several months passed before Felice could even bring herself to tell Lilly that she was Jewish and living illegally on the streets. "I knew, of course, what it meant," Lilly recalled in old age. "Not for a moment did I think that I too could be in danger. On the contrary, all I wanted to do now was to save her." Lilly's heroic efforts to conceal and protect Felice through the next two years make for painful and inspiring reading. Felice was arrested in August 1944 and sent her last letter to Lilly four months later. In 1981 Lilly was awarded the German Federal Service Cross, though no one could read this as a happy ending. --Regina Marler

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 know 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. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Every film critic remarks of Aimee and Jaguar that the story is too strange for fiction: the Nazi housewife in love with the ultra-spunky Jewish lesbian journalist/underground resistance fighter. If, like me, you walked away from the film with an uneasy sense that some of the story's more astonishing turns and fantastic characters were merely the products of stellar film-making, this book is for you. Ms. Fischer treats her text as an honest-to-goodness historian should and provides a wealth of primary source documents -- interviews, letters, post cards, receipts -- to support every anecdote. It differs in from the film in that it is less a story of dramatic seduction (although that certainly figures in; you could hardly tell the story without it) and more about the larger narrative of how one short life and one long life intersected. The nuts and bolts of Lily's character remain a subject for valid debate, although it is worth noting that Ms. Fischer makes no secret of her intention to portray the troubled woman in a less than flattering light. Felice Schraggenheim continues to be the real too-colorful-to-be-true scene-stealer, as she was in the film and, apparently, in life. It is neither cinematic genius nor the flair of a novelist that exaggerate her character into something larger than life; primary source documents confirm that this remarkable young woman built that pedestal herself and unabashedly climbed on top of it. Up to the very last, her letters were eloquent, warm, loving, brave, and -- impossibly! -- funny. Caveat: if you are looking for an unblemished love story, you will have to willfully ignore a lot in order to find it here. Lily and Felice were real people, and they had accrued some serious psychological issues before they met. The film relies on viewers to infer that by 1944, both women -- like most Berliners -- were carrying far too much baggage to be genuinely well-adjusted. Ms. Fischer is more frank about it. For my ten bucks, that makes for a richer and more compelling tale in which two profoundly imperfect people find a dangerous and unsustainable comfort in each other's arms. But if you were looking for a romance so flawless that only the Holocaust could ruin it, best stick to fiction.

A Holocaust story that will take you into that hideous time in history but will give you hope because there were good Germans who cared. Such a deep, lasting love. Felt so sorry for Lilly, she was so lost without Felice from the time the Nazis taken Felice until Lilly's death decades later. Also showed the devastation that war brings during the fight and when the rebuilding begins.

Great read. I liked how the author took me into the conflicted complicated emotions of the characters.

I came to the book after seeing the film a few times since it's release. Erica Fischer is not a lesbian and indeed her angle on the book is more historical. There is a distance the author keeps in reporting their feelings for one another. I got the feeling from reading the book that to focus more on the passion would perhaps trivialize the plight of Jews for Erica Fischer. The letters and quotes held great interest for me. And after adjusting to the fact that the narrative would feel a little cold and dry, I also found the background information quite interesting. I did feel that there was a lack of objectivity on the authors part. But then we all have our particular perspective through which we see the world. Hers is as a Berlin heterosexual Jew. If you are a lesbian who has assumed the author is a lesbian and came to the book looking for a full bodied love story, there is an adjustment to make. You might want to skip the epilouge or at least brace yourself. This is the part of the book that I felt was inappropriate. Erica Fischer told me that more information has come forward since this English translation, and can be found in the later German version. This information helps further explain some of the obvious distaste she still holds for Lili. All said, this is a thought provoking book, though not a scintillating love story. I am thankful to the author for the enormous amount of research that went into this book and do recommend it.

The author captured the war in graphic personal terms and Lilly's diaries are amazing descriptions of her and Jagurs heroic lives! pray we learned some continuing lessons from their struggles.

Although the beginning was a little rough, the overall story is an interesting perspective on life in WWII Germany; especially as portrayed on all sides of the race issue: the victims, the perpetrators, and the non-participants who are forced to participate. I was not so impressed with the personal correspondence/love letters but I guess in hindsight, they did contribute to the circumstances of the moment. I would recommend this book to persons interested in the study of Nazi Germany.

Such an amazing story - a true one, too. About an incredible love affair during the dark Nazi days in Berlin between the awarded perfect German mother and a Jewish fugitive. Fantastic

I was relieved the book was so good, since the movie sadly wasn't. I first came across this story a few years ago through a documentary and then forgot about it. Recently I started thinking of it and after some googling I came upon this book and recognized the characters. The book is unusually "open" for being told by a few elderly people, but that is only refreshing. This love story is a true tragedy and true romance at the same time, and I wish for everyone with a bit of an open mind, to

enjoy it as much as I have. Certainly a piece of crucial and important history never to be forgotten.

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