

No Way, They Were Gay? Hidden Lives and Secret Loves

Lee Wind

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People can't see what isn't culturally visible—that's why queer history is so necessary, not just as a one-off, but as a perennial part of a culture's story. In *No Way, They Were Gay?*, Lee Wind revisits famous figures of US and world history, delves into primary sources, and reassesses what's made legible about people's sexual and gender identities when the present and past are allowed to collide.

The book is divided into three categories: men who loved men, women who loved women, and people who lived outside of gender binaries. Wind provides one of the best explanations for the necessity of these expansive categories: while his system acknowledges the problems of applying modern terms to the past, it also encodes the complexity of human experience around gender and sexuality in ways that create continuity with the present, and that reverse queer historical erasure.

From Gandhi to Eleanor Roosevelt, Wind doesn't shy away from revealing his subjects in their full complexity. A fellow traveler and guide on a journey of discovery, Wind calls out the shadow sides of those profiled, as well as what's laudable. His book transmits rare facts and firsthand accounts with a sense of joyous wonder. It also encourages readers to come to their own conclusions about the facts provided. Each chapter closes with some iteration of the question, "What do you think?" Even in regards to his own book, Wind emphasizes that history is an interpretative place that requires critical thinking.

At a time where issues of social justice are often deemed either overinflated or "solved," Lee Wind makes a powerful case that queer historical erasure is an ongoing issue.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (March / April 2021)

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