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**Shedding Light on Hidden Histories:  
A Review of Rodger Streitmatter's *Outlaw Marriages: The Hidden  
Histories of Fifteen Extraordinary Same-Sex Couples***

**Caroline Rule**

Rodger Streitmatter's *Outlaw Marriages: The Hidden Histories of Fifteen Extraordinary Same-Sex Couples* is a refreshingly honest account of the lives and accomplishments of fifteen same-sex couples who had a great impact on American and world history. These partners made strides in a variety of fields, including journalism, social justice, poetry, and music. The title, *Outlaw Marriages*, emphasizes the groundbreaking nature of these couple's unions, all without the support of church, state, or society. Streitmatter does not brush over the more difficult aspects of the couple's relationships, making the book realistic and forthright.

Streitmatter himself has been with his partner, Thomas Grooms, for over 35 years, and he is one of American University's most popular professors in the School of Communications. As a former journalist, he uses his experience to encourage students with a passion for writing to enter the field. He has written nine academic books, and American University even has named an award, "The Rodger Streitmatter Journalism Award for Excellence," after him. As a well-respected academic who is in a long term same-sex relationship, he is able to analyze the relationships in his book through a lens of personal experience that many scholars could not.

The book consists of fifteen biographies of influential same-sex couples with a short introduction and afterword from the author. The thesis of his book is unclear until the afterword, where Streitmatter delves into his own "outlaw marriage" to his husband, until the afterword. He tells the story of his partner encouraging him to do research, which Streitmatter adamantly opposes doing, for the sake of becoming a tenured professor. His partner puts the situation into perspective. In order to maintain his position and pursue his passion of teaching, he has to complete this task. In the end, he becomes as passionate about doing research as he is about his teaching and credits

these academic achievements to Grooms for giving him the motivation that he needed. He tells this story to illustrate the similarities between his own relationship and the ones in his book. For 28 years of his life, he and his partner—his greatest motivation and closest friend—were unable to legally marry under the laws of their country. The outlaw marriages and relationships that Streitmatter recounts were each met with similar institutionalized resistance and roadblocks to happiness. Many of the couples in the book had to keep their relationship a secret to the public for fear that it would destroy their reputation and career. Streitmatter's thesis and purpose in writing this book and researching the couples within it is to educate the public about influential relationships that were forced into the shadows despite being just as beautiful and valid as heterosexual relationships. This unique contribution to gay history emphasizes the prevalence of same-sex relationships in a time before they were societally acceptable and the accomplishments and works of art which came out of them.

Streitmatter utilizes a myriad of sources to supplement his research, which he organizes into sections at the end of the book based upon which couple the source addresses. Each of his sources are historical accounts or biographies of the couple's relationship or a biography of the more well-known partner's life and accomplishments. He also uses transcriptions of letters written by partners at the time of their relationship for several of the sections of his book. Altogether, I thought that Streitmatter's book was incredible. Throughout high school, I studied Walt Whitman's poetry in English classes, but we never discussed his sexuality or relationships. This continual erasure of homosexuality and queerness from history stems from deep-seeded discrimination, which can only be remedied if there is a concerted effort within the school system and our country as a whole to educate the public about relationships that do not fit the societal norm of heterosexuality. Streitmatter's book does a great job of informing readers about the value of same-sex relationships within the lives of figures throughout American history. The way that he organizes his book and the length of each section makes it easy to read, even if a reader is not particularly interested in history.