



Where is Queer Love in the Shoah History?

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Holocaust studies have made an immense progress in the past thirty years. We know how important was gender and how pervasive sexual violence; we know about forced labor and cooperation of German businesses; we know about the frequent indifference and complicity of Gentile bystanders. However, historians have rarely asked about taboos in the history of the Holocaust. What are the “blind spots” in our knowledge, and why do we not know about them? My work addresses one such erased history: same sex desire among the Jewish Holocaust victims.

- Queer as a concept beyond identity
- Boundaries of what we can know, and archival work when studying marginalizes histories
- Nazi persecution of gays, lesbians, and trans people
- Jewish history of the Holocaust: centering on the perspective of the victims
- Anne Frank and traces of queerness in her diary
- Margot Heuman and queer first love in the camps
- Harry “Hambo” Heymann, “cross-dressing”, transness
- Hambo: discussion of sexualized violence and child molestation

Quotes:

Anne Frank, 6 January 1944

“Once when I was spending the night at Jacque’s [Jacqueline van Maarsen], I could no longer restrain my curiosity about her body, which she’d always kept hidden from me and which I’d never seen. I asked her whether, as proof of our friendship, we could touch each other’s breasts. Jacque refused. I also had a terrible desire to kiss her, which I did. Every time I see a female nude, such as the Venus in my art history book by Springer, I go into ecstasy. Sometimes I find them so exquisite I have to struggle to hold back my tears. If only I had a girlfriend!”

20 June 1942

“As soon as a boy asks if he can bicycle home with me [...] I can be sure he’ll become enamoured on the spot [...] Of course, there are those who blow you kisses or try to take hold of your arm, but they’re definitely knocking on the wrong door.”

Ralph Oppenheim’s diary, entry for 6 April 1944 (archive of the Danish Jewish Museum):

With mother in the café house, where we were invited by [Peter] Deutsch, who directed the orchestra. Met Hambo, who entertained us, much thinner, more sharp in his face, whatever can have caused that (according to the hearsay, he fornicates his soul out of his body). He however got more to eat more than most other people, a part earned by his performing, and a part he probably earned by lying down. How the fuck is this possible with this measly appearance, little one?”

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References and Further Reading

Hájková, Anna. *People without History Are Dust: Queer Desire in the Holocaust*, Toronto 2025.

Huneke, Samuel Clowes. *I Will Not Abandon You: Queer Women in Nazi Germany*, Toronto 2026.