

title

# Kay, or a Case for Intensity

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type

**PhD in Artistic Research**

place

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date of submission

**20. 4. 2022**

content

This PhD project in Artistic Research by Cordula Daus (s11733005) consists of an ensemble of artistic works —  
a.) the novel SEHR by the literary figure Kay;  
b.) three audio-graphic pieces;  
c.) and a live lecture performance —  
as well as of this reflexive documentation.

*Für die,  
die schnell mutig sind,  
die ganz liebhaben.*

*Malik, 4 Jahre*

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# Foreword

*Kay, or a Case for Intensity* is artistic research that explores the concept of intensity as a reciprocity of body and language. It focuses on emotional states such as “fucking”, “loving”, and “grieving”. It attempts to answer questions such as: What is intensity? Where does intensity take place in the body, in language? How can I write or speak about intensity? How do emotion and language influence each other? To what extent can words capture, trigger, emphasize, or mitigate emotions? What kind of cultural codes are implied in feeling words? Can I invent new feelings, new subjectivities in, and through, writing? Is there such a thing as an intensity of meaning? How can meaning be modulated through different language and performance practices? *How abstract must this text be to be called “abstract”?*

Clearly, concepts such as intensity, pleasure, or pain are highly subjective experiences, and thus non-empirical. This work takes a ficto-critical approach: I, Cordula Daus, propose a female literary character – the eponymous Kay, “a middle aged, white woman from the European middle classes”, to speak from and about her as a protagonist and a research ficto-subject. Intensity will thus not be approached as a problem of representation of a real feeling, but as a metric, the eponymous *Intensity of Kay*, practiced through literary writing, lecture performances, and other artistic forms. I investigate this subject as a female writer-artist.

My dissertation is situated at the intersection of artistic research, literature, and a general study of feelings. It consists of an ensemble of artistic works including the novel *SEHR*, and this reflexive documentation. As in previous works, I appropriate and translocate vocabulary and methods from other sciences and disciplines such as seismology, sociology, phenomenology, and linguistics.

Broadly speaking, my artistic practices fall under five categories: theory as material; semi-fictionality; writing as research; questionology; and lecture performance. Those practices include intertwined methodologies and mutating micro-practices that include in-depth reading, excerpting, re-sensing, online-dating, interviewing, auto-ethnography, phenomenology, co-fabulation, role play, performative writing, site-writing, live writing, free writing, fictocriticism, vocalization, mixing, and sound experiments.

*Kay, or a Case for Intensity* develops artistic research practices that critically investigate feelings and their symbolic forms. It offers different degrees of proximity for observing heterosexual relations. By subjecting not only words but cultural codifications to a scale, Kay fabricates new feelings such as *meaning lesser sex* or *Higher Love*. Kay’s raging-grieving challenges the “woman” as general format. As an unresolved form, the novel *SEHR* opens up a space for another work, another woman to come.

In this text I’m speaking to you as a writer-artist that has found her place in artistic research. I am also speaking to you as a lover, as a queer mother, as a female fucking-loving-grieving person. I try to stay on good terms with all my different selves. Not to lose ground. To take you, the reader, into consideration. To be patient. If I go

into theories that are not mine, I will lay out why and for what purpose. I will combat high levels of abstraction with examples.

For example: “For example” – it makes a difference to write these two words, or to speak them to you. It makes a difference to write them in English, to “do the English”, a language that is not really mine. Or to write this thesis in Hessian, the dialect of my grandfather (“*Kellena, des wär was, gell?*”). Each language comes with its own tone, humor, and imaginary audience. In order to find an appropriate tone for this reflection, I started to write in German, then auto-translated myself. For a long time, I could not begin as the format was unclear to me. Initially, I had planned a journal of theory-fiction to accompany my novel and ended up with this book. It is not without a certain sense of horror and surprise that I look at it now: A thesis, after all! My research was partly rooted in the fact that I was aware of the looming dangers that came with the task of reflection, of a certain tendency in artistic research to confound an analysis of forms with self-eulogy or interpretation of one’s work. Also, at first it seemed problematic to me to reflect on a language-based artistic work in writing, in language again. The role of writing in relation to artistic research has been debated over the last years.<sup>1</sup> In this documentation I have tried to reference, even circumscribe artistic works but not *explain* them.<sup>2</sup> As suggested by Salomé Voegelin I resonate with the idea of the literary “as a modest collaborator to the artistic investigation: aiding its articulation without erasing its processes and speechlessness.” The subject of my inquiry is contained in the novel *SEHR*. It will demand from time to time that I speak about myself as a medium. At some points I will need to move out of this text (see video on *Intensity in Language*). The recursive nature of art and artistic research are implied in this formulation of a thesis, it being an object within an artistic research, formatted as a book, rather than plain linear research paper.

1 Borgdorff: p. 58.

2 Voegelin: p. 99.

### Disclaimer: Qualia and the Mind-Body Problem

To consider intensity from a philosophical perspective is nothing new, and it inherently relates to the questions of qualia, the Cartesian mind/body distinction, or more generally, monism/dualism. This is a discourse that has a long history in Western thought. Feminist writers such as Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and many others have contested this thinking. My work does not attempt to address nor solve the mind-body problem. Firstly, I do not believe in dualism, secondly, I try to stay away from abstract abstraction. I approach intensity as a *topos*: a (search-) place in the body and in language. As something individuated and embodied that can't be thought independent from the instruments and languages that try to prove it, the experimental systems that define it as a set of ordered differences. Intensity in this work serves as a frame to look at the complex relation between body and language, the intricate processes of wording and worlding. Ancient rhetoric already contained instructions about how one should practice self-observation in conversations, reading, and meditation. The writing systems and formats, with which human bodily sensations are articulated, be it in poetry, a novel, a doctor's report, letters, or diary entries, must themselves be taken into consideration as mediums and means for affect-regulation. Intensity is thus not only a passive category, it can be modulated in sexual, culinary, meditative, narrative practices, and so on. I sympathize with Deleuze/Guattari's approach to consider intensity within an ontology of becoming – not as an essence, a quantity, but as an intensive change in quality.<sup>3</sup> Intensity is rather to be found in verbs or in gerunds than in nouns. In this reflexive documentation I mostly use the word *feeling* instead of emotion. This is less motivated by a categorical distinction as by an aesthetic choice and elective affinity to authors who developed a poetology and theory of feeling of their own, such as: Ann Boyer, Ann Cotten, Alfred North Whitehead, Albert Heim, and Susanne K. Langer.



Figurine, ca 3.100-2.500 BC, Skara Brae

3 Marxism and dualism in Deleuze, Jameson, Fredric. *The South Atlantic Quarterly*; Durham Vol. 96, Iss. 3, (Summer 1997): 393-416.

# Why Intensity?

If I had to reconstruct the beginning of this research, I would date it back to a particular moment in a car, three months after the death of my mother. I have described this in *Toponymisches Heft N° 3*:<sup>4</sup>

We drove south for eight hours, three months after Mother's death. The Panamericana stretched out ahead of us. Animitas, araucarias, ñandús, pudús. My eyes fell shut. Keep your eyes open, said María. We're very close now. We stopped, María took a piss. I was awake for a whole 45 minutes. The Panamericana stretched out ahead of us. My eyes fell shut. You slept through the volcano, María said.

In January 2008 a volcano erupted while I was traveling through Chile in a car with a friend, but I was too tired, too sad, to see it. Witnessing death, accompanying someone during the process of dying had impacted me with a type of grieving unknown for me until that moment. I lost my ground. In hindsight it seems no coincidence that I felt drawn to a field that studies shifting continental plates, tremors, and earthquakes – phenomena that go beyond what can be grasped by humans. Geology, and in particular seismology, spoke to me. It provided an approach of how to perceive events that transcend language. This led to a book, a new kind of writing but also to my self-transformation as a literary writer.

"We Need a Dead(wo)man to Begin," says Hélène Cixous, in *The Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*. This was certainly true in my case: "To begin (writing, living) we must have death. (...) Writing is learning to die. It's learning not to be afraid, in other words to live at the extremity of life, which is what the dead, death, give us. (...) So it gives us everything, it gives us the end of the world. We need to lose the world; to be human we need to experience the end of the world. (...) and to discover that there is more than one world and that the world isn't what we think it is. Without that, we know nothing about the mortality and immortality we carry. We don't know we're alive as long as we haven't encountered death: these are banalities that have been erased. And it is an act of grace."<sup>5</sup>

In 2015 I traveled back to Chile. I studied the histories of seismology. How to assess the strength of a shaking in words and numbers. How to use one's own body as a sensor. How to use writing as a form to contain and transform intensity. In *Toponymisches Heft Nr. 3*, I've assembled historical seismic documents, letters, interviews with scientists as well as literary texts. In the short story *Trying To, Dying Too* I interweave the accounts of three events – the crash of an airplane, the death of a seismologist and death of my mother:<sup>6</sup>

Three years before the crash, Bock writes about the greatest challenge for seismology in the third millennium: making predictions in the short term, "i.e., within the space of hours or days." To be successful, it must be able

4 Daus: *Toponymisches Heft N° 3 – Seismology*, p. 3.

5 Cixous: p. 9-10.

6 Daus: "Trying to, dying too". In *Toponymisches Heft No. 3*, p. 96.



to reliably pin down the place, time and strength of a future quake. Which it is not currently possible to do “with sufficient precision.” Writes Bock and I calculate the difference between his crash and today, the moment when Bock wrote that phrase. How much precision has been achieved since then. Today, on this Wednesday as it leans into the third millennium.

Four nights before her death Mother suddenly recovered the ability to speak and said: “Now I’ll sleep for another three nights, and on the fourth it’ll carry me off.” With this statement she both achieved and exceeded precision, but it still didn’t stretch to making us understand. The day before that night my father asked the doctor at her bedside. Because I, her daughter, needed to leave, whether it was possible or not to predict. And the doctor said it wasn’t. So I went almost too late. Came just in time, at the moment when precision and her end said goodnight. No, she didn’t fall asleep, it wasn’t peaceful. Death murdered her, cut off her breath supply. And when I see a picture of Mother today, I think, were you blind. Isn’t it enough of a prediction to have a face like that.

*Toponymisches Heft Nr. 3* was published at the end of October 2016. On the same day I learned that I was pregnant again. Only a few weeks before I had accompanied a friend during the process of an unhappy abortion. Unforeseeably, I entered into a quandary myself and decided to abort, too. “Each of us, individually and freely, must do the work that consists of rethinking what is your death and my death, which are inseparable. Writing originates in this relationship,” states Hélène Cixous.<sup>7</sup> Feminist writing, my own female condition, had not been of any relevance to my works before. I was doing the Hanna Arendt<sup>8</sup> (and give me a break from the “*Frauenfrage*”, “women’s issues”, period problems, mother’s that feel they’re not good enough, “family planning”, *that kind of shit*). This changed drastically. The experience of death, of giving birth, not giving birth confronted me with illusions regarding my autonomous self. With my privileges and superiority complexes. After all, I realized that I did belong to a “biological class”. That I had a body that was not always my own. That my womb contained histories, intensities, that transcended myself. Something larger than my own pain, my own knowing and choosing. I had entered a new flight and fight zone. A necessity for new alliances, new art forms arose. In 2016, I published a love story,<sup>9</sup> structured along a fictional scale from I-X. The protagonist becomes a case for emotional extremes, a state that she embodies and struggles to contain, to overcome with words:

Various forms of relief offered themselves up. Report, essay, novel. Dora wished for a fever, a good old mercurial fever, the red 37 pushing its way up past all other numbers. A temperature that didn’t stop, that grew with her heat. Her personal, immeasurable state of exception. Dr. Sonntag held her upside down, above the development. Look, she’s lost it! As a child she had once smashed a thermometer because she wanted to know what fever was

7 Cixous: p. 12/13.

8 For a feminist reflection on Hanna Arendt’s take on the “*Frauenfrage*” see also: <http://www.antjeschrupp.de/hannah-arendt-vortrag>, last viewed on 16.1.2022

9 Daus: “Dora, or a case for intensity”, p. 111-120. The original German title of the text is “Dora – oder eine Form der Heraussteigerung”. Here I was merging the term for superlative (Steigerung) with the gerund “sich hineinsteigern” (to get worked up about something), creating a new fictional antonym or exlative, “die Heraussteigerung”.

made of. Leaden pearls rolled out from it, nothing like water, retaining their form. She had cut her brother's hand with a razor blade because she wanted to know what brother was made of.

The initial motivation for my dissertation was to take up Dora's story as a blueprint to go further into writing as research. For the first time I did not depart from a geographical place but from a woman, Kay. I assume the states of "fucking", "loving", and "grieving" as states in the body and in language. All in all, my own meandering experience has taught me to understand those states as a precondition for a literary writing that not only questions the "I" but proposes different beings.



Mummie bundle, ca. 650-1000 AD, Peru

# Research Questions

## Fucking

What is sex? How do sex and meaning relate to each other? Where does fucking start and end? What kinds of cultural meanings are being attributed to “fucking”? And how do they influence our non-relations? Why can sex be qualified as “meaningless” but not “love”? How does the degree of knowing another person relate to sexual intensity? How is sex initiated in-and-through language? How do “fucking” and “talking” relate to each other? How can we increase or decrease the intensity of fucking through talking? Is there such a thing as an intensity of meaning? If so, how can it be triggered, dosed, augmented, or suspended? Can meaning be suspended in-and-through sex? How does that feel? How does meaningless sex feel? How does *meaning lesser sex* feel? Do humans with wombs need more meaning? Could sex be a practice during which we can experience a suspension of meaning? Of purpose? If so, how can this state be reached and cultivated?

## Loving

How does “loving” feel? (Euripides) Where does “liking” start and where does it end? What kinds of cultural meanings are being attributed to love? How do they influence our non-relations? How does this phenomenon love operate? Do we want to get rid of love? (Shulamith Firestone) How high must a loving be to be called love? Is there a *Higher Love*? (Whitney Houston) What does “I love you” mean? Why can’t I say “I love you”? What does “I love you” produce? How can we imagine forms of loving beyond the I/You formula? How do narrative forms - literature, poetry, lyrics – inform our loving? How can I narrate a state called post-love? Is it possible to step out the biologically determined cycle of “fucking, loving, grieving”? What do we need in order to do that in fiction and in reality? How to invent new feelings in-and-through writing? How strong must a novel be to be called “*The Novel that Coined a Feeling Called Kay*”?

## Grieving

How much meaning resides in a name? How much can a name contend? Does your name contain you? Does the container name you? How much grief can a person contain? How much grief can Kay contain? How to write grieving? How to write the intensity of fucking, loving, grieving? How to re-write it? How to break through this cycle? Does Kay have the choice? What kind of choice would she have if she had the choice? Why procreate at all? How do grieving and the need to create relate to each other? How are desires being produced? What does Kay desire? What do we desire when we desire someone?

## Method

How does it feel to question something/someone? How does it feel to be questioned? What does a question do? How can asking a question enable to bring forth an idea? How can we ask each other? How many questions does it need to dilute the idea?

How does the very form of questioning inform that idea? (For example: How high must an elevation be to be called “hill”?) How often must a practice be to be called “method”? How practical must a method be to call “knowledge”? How to call a knowing into being? How musty is your being? Must a method be called? How feels knowing? Can I call you when it comes to “my method”? Can you please focus on one research question only?

→ See Practices: Theory as material

In *Kay, or a Case* I appropriate theory as material. Existing models of intensity — scientific theories and scales in medicine, psychology and sociology — inspired me to fabricate my own intensity model, the literary character Kay. What follows tries to kill three birds with one stone: I will present scales that have been relevant for my research, how they have conceptually informed my research subject, and how I speak (about) them.



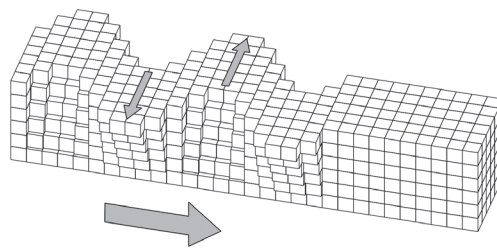
Bottle, ca. 1-800 AD, Peru

# Scales

Imagine a *love wave*. It could look like this:

[Image]

Or like this:



[Caption]

In 1911 Augustus Edward Hough Love mathematically estimated a wave that was later observed in reality. Love waves are what most people feel during an earthquake. Love waves can travel around the globe several times, before they dissipate (for a long-time people believed that some animals, like dogs or snakes, can see into the future and predict earthquakes. Most probably, animals can indeed pre-sense what is going to happen. They can feel the subtle body waves that precede love waves). They have a highly destructive effect. Of course, love waves have been felt long before Augustus Edward Hough Love was born. Only they existed as tremors without names.

*Love wave*: Some words are able to give birth to phenomena. Some words create a perceptibility that allows us to sense something that supposedly hasn't been there before. And by doing so, words in/form our perception of the world. Think of *Fahrvergnügen*. *Fremdscham*. *Meaningless sex*. *Migrationshintergrund*. Each word is able to convey something that might have not existed, or rather, not yet, which formulated something that was "in the noösphere", or collectively sensed to be coming. La Rouchefoucauld claims this has been the case with the feeling of being in love: "There are some people who would never have fallen in love if they had not heard there was such a thing." (*"Il y a des gens qui n'auraient jamais été amoureux s'ils n'avaient entendu parler de l'amour"*).

# Seismic Intensity Scales

Why would an author, if it comes to write about emotional states such as love, turn to a scale devised to assess the strength of an earthquake? With Nietzsche I share the disgust of German inwardness (*Innerlichkeit*).<sup>10</sup> I'm drawn to objectivist approaches. To write for me also means to make myself available for systems that surround me. I like to approach difficult things uncreatively. To appropriate what already exists and render it new by combining it differently.

Consider the earthquake.

Peter Nikolaus Caspar Egen was one of the first geologists to use intensity in the assessment of an earthquake that occurred in Belgium in 1828. He created a map.

Imagine a map that looks like this:

The localities of a quake underlined with specific colors. Each color corresponds to a grade from 1–2 (yellow), to grades 3–4 (blue) and grades 5–6 (red) for a strong impact.<sup>11</sup> Place and intensity. Colors, numbers, and words.

Quantitative attempts to note earthquakes date back to the 18th century yet the systematic use of scales and of the term intensity became only widespread after 1883 with the first internationally used Rossi-Forel Scale. “Historically,” Roger W. Musson writes, “the use of intensity scales is important because no instrumentation is necessary, and useful measurements of an earthquake can be made by an unequipped observer.”<sup>12</sup> Two different pathways emerged within seismology. One was the geological or descriptive direction, involving “quake effects that are visible and tangible for human beings”, as August Sieberg writes, also known as macroseismology. The other was a physical direction which was interested in the “mechanics of earthquakes” and captured seismic waves in the form of images using sensitive measuring instruments.<sup>13</sup>

Seismic intensity hinges upon the figure of the unequipped observer to note the felt impact of an earthquake without instruments. In that way it fundamentally differs from the definition of magnitude.<sup>14</sup> Seismic intensity can be captured anywhere and by anyone without further technical help. All we need is a body. And some know-how. In the year 1880 the geologist Albert Heim wrote an article for the

10 Among other things, Nietzsche criticizes den “merkwürdigen Gegensatz eines Inneren, dem kein Äußeres, eines Äußeren, dem kein Inneres entspricht, ein Gegensatz, den die alten Völker nicht kennen. Das Wissen (...) wirkt jetzt nicht mehr als umgestaltendes, nach außen treibendes Motiv und bleibt in einer gewissen chaotischen Innenwelt verborgen, die jener moderne Mensch mit seltsamem Stolz als die ihm eigenthümliche “Innerlichkeit” bezeichnet.” Friedrich Nietzsche: Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben, 1874, p. 45.

11 [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Egen-1828-macroseismic-map-of-the-23-February-1828-earthquake-First-map-worldwide-with\\_fig2\\_348924971](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Egen-1828-macroseismic-map-of-the-23-February-1828-earthquake-First-map-worldwide-with_fig2_348924971)

12 Musson and Cčić: p. 1

13 Daus: Toponymisches Heft N°3, p. 7. Quotes from August Sieberg: Geologische, physikalische und angewandte Erdkunde, Jena 1923, p. 3.

14 The intensity scale classifies shakings or shocks at an arbitrary place, it departs from the type of perception those shakings have on the human, as well as on the degree of damages caused through them. It is not to be mistaken with the magnitude scale, also Richter-scale, as proposed 1935 by Prof. Richter in California, which exists in many different variants. The magnitude is a measurement for the amount of vibrational energy set free during a quake. In difference to the intensity, it excludes subjective perceptions and reports from humans and can only be determined through technical instruments that measure the factual velocity of ground vibration. For more see: <http://media.gfz-potsdam.de/gfz/wv/doc/infothek/MagnitudeIntensitaetErdbeben.pdf>

earthquake-Commission of the Swiss *Naturforschende Gesellschaft* that can be regarded as a didactic text in this regard:<sup>15</sup>

Earthquake observation is not easy, due to the slightly disturbing agitation this mysterious phenomenon can cause, which usually takes possession of the observer's clarity of view. A certain tensivity of the sensual organs should be maintained, not giving way in to excitation, which exaggerates the perception. If the informant is not quite certain of his observation, he shouldn't withhold his observation from us, but declare idem in his report as uncertain. If the amount of incoming reports is substantial, then it is usually not difficult for he who studies them to recognize the local deceptions through the correlations with neighboring areas and eliminate them from the reliable, which would not be possible for the individual observer. Therefore: observe conscientiously, and have no timidity towards us on the communication of the observed. All that has actually been observed is welcome, even the uncertainly perceived, as long as it is referred to as such.

Albert Heim became a secret idol for my research. He was a hyphenated being: Not only a geologist but also a kynologist-abolitionist-draughtsman, and advocate for true citizen science. Most of Heim's publications and lectures aim at a general re-education of the senses towards a form of an impersonal scientific feeling. According to him, humans have to learn how to see and observe again. His text *Seeing and Drawing* contains the term *Holding Capacity* (*Fassungsvermögen*), which ever since has kept on coming back to me: How much can a specific body hold or contain? Think of alcohol, pain, or imagination. How much can a word contain?

During my research of the archives of the seismological service in Chile, I got in touch with hundreds of handwritten letters and documents from all over the world. The collective euphoria about a science-in-the-making infected me: In the 19th century geologists and lay(wo)men all over the world began to note seismic intensities. Up to the year 1880 twenty-seven scales circulated internationally. The Mercalli-Cancani-Sieberg Scale that later became the basis for the agreed upon Modified Mercalli Scale.<sup>16</sup>

The protagonist of my novel does not only write about states of fucking, loving, or grieving; she attempts to develop a new scale of what can be felt at all. A writing system of intensity. Kay is not entirely successful. One of the many reasons might be that she belongs to a culture that has assigned certain feelings to meanings. Unfortunately, feeling is not yet being taught in schools.<sup>17</sup>

15 Heim: Die Erdbeben und deren Beobachtung, chap. 3 and 4.

16 Who could have been able to memorize an even longer name? A multiple hyphenated and history-in-a-nutshell-name that, like in the game "Mother went shopping", forces us to take all those researchers onboard, including the unpaid assistants, that have been involved but never mentioned? It would be a monstrous name, for sure, but a fair one.

17 In *Formulary for a New Feeling* the poet Anne Boyer proposes a research community consisting of "girls, poets, sensitive publics" occupied with the central task to "test-feel, engender new feelings through just feeling". In a lecture given at HKW in Berlin, the writer Ann Cotten comes to the conclusion that Western Society would be well off to institute a "school of feeling" in order to train the practice of global emotional relativity: "Jedenfalls ähnlich wie die Psychologen der Adlerschule, die krankhafte Ich-Bezogenheit der Affekte und Leiden mit einem allgemeineren Denken heilen wollten, in dem das Selbst als ein Teil der interdependenten Menschheit gesehen und gefühlt wird, bräuchte es hier eine Art Schule oder Allgemeinbildung der Empfindung in Bezug auf die Welt." Transkribiert aus Ann Cotten, *Now is the Time of Monsters*, What comes after Nations, HKW/Berlin, 23-25. März 2017, <https://soundcloud.com/hkw/now-is-the-time-of-monsters-14>



Seismic models inspired me to think of a general study of feeling.<sup>18</sup> Would it be possible to note and write about feelings from an outward perspective? What if *feeling something* didn't mean anything? If we'd be able to observe feelings as impersonal states, just like the earthquake observers? Seismic intensity scales give us an idea how this could work.

— EMS-98

This is how the European Macroseismic Scale looks like:

EMS intensity	Definition	Description of typical observed effects (abstracted)
I	Not felt	Not felt
II	Scarcely felt	Felt only by very few individual people at rest in houses.
III	Weak	Felt indoors by a few people. People at rest feel a swaying or light trembling.
IV	Largely observed	Felt indoors by many people, outdoors by very few. A few people are awakened. Windows, doors and dishes rattle.
V	Strong	Felt indoors by most, outdoors by few. Many sleeping people awake. A few are frightened. Buildings tremble throughout. Hanging objects swing considerably. Small objects are shifted. Doors and windows swing open or shut.
VI	Slightly damaging	Many people are frightened and run outdoors. Some objects fall. Many houses suffer slight non-structural damage like hair-line cracks and fall of small pieces of plaster.
VII	Damaging	Most people are frightened and run outdoors. Furniture is shifted and objects fall from shelves in large numbers. Many well built ordinary buildings suffer moderate damage: small cracks in walls, fall of plaster, parts of chimneys fall down; older buildings may show large cracks in walls and failure of fill-in walls
VIII	Heavily damaging	Many people find it difficult to stand. Many houses have large cracks in walls. A few well built ordinary buildings show serious failure of walls, while weak older structures may collapse.

18 See also my proposal for tremor studies, Erschütterungskunde in Toponymisches Heft N° 3, p. 8.



IX	Destructive	General panic. Many weak constructions collapse. Even well built ordinary buildings show very heavy damage: serious failure of walls and partial structural failure.
X	Very destructive	Many ordinary well built buildings collapse.
XI	Devastating	Most ordinary well built buildings collapse, even some with good earthquake resistant design are destroyed.
XII	Completely devastating	Almost all buildings are destroyed.

The Geophysical GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences warns us “not to use this scale for actual intensity assignments”.<sup>19</sup> The ground is stable at the moment. I’ll look at it as a writer: The description column strikes me at first. The adjectives and adverbs slide between different categories: the realm of senses, feeling, and sight; the realm of quantity, numbers of observers and of observed events; and the realm of strength, assigned both to the quake and the capacity of the observing subject.

- I addresses something yet unfelt. Something that does not yet reach the resolution of the human sensory apparatus (who is able to sense it then? Some kind of extra-sensorial being, an animal? Immanuel Kant? Does this degree refer to the anticipation of a perception?)
- II corresponds to something that is scarcely felt. Maybe not by everyone, maybe just by some very sensitive beings, some snakes, and dogs.
- III relates to something that the observer denotes with adjectives such as “weak” or “strong”.
- VI addresses a tipping point, the language changes: the quake is addressed as an afflicting force, a force that does something *to* people and objects, that ranges from slightly damaging, to damaging to “very destructive”. People are mentioned but the adjectives refer rather to objects. (Can a person be “damaged”? From whence on is a person “destroyed”? There is panic but no mention of physical injury).
- X Sentient beings are left out of the description. The unnamed ones that have scarcely noticed, which were frightened, that started to run and feel panic, “that can’t stand it anymore” are out of consideration. There are only “things” left. “Almost all buildings are destroyed.” The scale ends in describing a degree in which those that are needed to assign intensities cannot report anything anymore. But people do not figure here anymore. Death is irrelevant for the discipline we’re in.<sup>20</sup>

19 Abstracted from the Core Part of the EMS Scale it intends to give a simplified and generalized view that can be used for educational purposes.

20 I forgot to mention that Heim was an acknowledged expert in the field of Near-death studies. In his article “Notizen über den Tod durch Absturz” (Jahrbuch des Schweizer Alpenclubs, 1882) he analyzes his own accident in the mountains and collected many other reports from fellow mountaineers.”

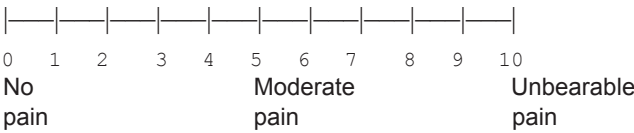
The seismic scale offers a formalization of sentience, that desists from individual feeling. The earthquake observers dedicate their feelings to science (imagine a group of love sick people reporting worldwide to the Institute of General Feeling Studies!).

# Medical Intensity Scales

In *Kay or a Case* I appropriate numerical and verbal rating scales from the medical field to conceptualize the space of a novel. In the following I'll show some of the material that has proven useful to me (see also *Semifictional Scales*).

Scientific scales typically mathematize what can only be captured through experience. They are a symbolic reduction of the world. A sensation gets ordered, sorted, named. The transformation from a sensation to data allows to compare and predict an emotion. Curiously yet, and I only realized in this reflexive documentation, I had not investigated what might seem most obvious: scales of emotional intensity.<sup>21</sup> Why? My reasons were purely stylistic and functional: I felt drawn to simple ordering systems. To the aesthetics of graphic scales.

## — Numerical Rating Scale

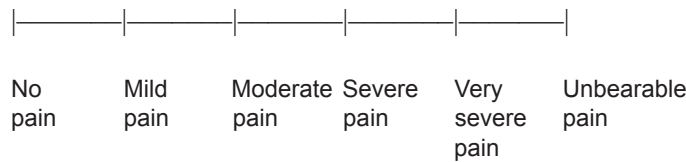


In medicine and psychology, “intensity” is used as an attribution metaphor for a physical or psychic force. Rating scales are used to comprehend the “frequency” or “magnitude” of a depressive disposition, of pain or joy.<sup>22</sup> The same terms as in seismology, but in an entirely different context. Those can be of numeric, verbal or visual form (see *Appendix B*).

21 Research on emotional intensity has gained empirical and theoretical attention during the 1990s. One example is the Emotional Intensity Scale (EIS) that comes in the form of a questionnaire, see: Bachorowski/Braaten: p. 191-199.

22 According to Aaron Ben-Ze’ev the most important variables that define emotional intensity, the perceived impact of an event, are magnitude, the degree of reality and the relevance of the event, its expectability, a person’s responsibility and willingness with regard to the event. See: Aaron Ben-Ze’ev, p. 92-107.

— Verbal Rating Scale



Both scales from: Wang, L., Xiao, Y., Urman, R.D. et al.

Another type of scale that has proven interesting to me is used in psychology. It comes as a multiple-choice inventory or questionnaire to assess the intensity of a depression:<sup>23</sup>

- (0) I do not feel sad.
- (1) I feel sad.
- (2) I am sad all the time and I can't snap out of it.
- (3) I am so sad or unhappy that I can't stand it.

The highest state of depression is being expressed through a physical metaphor: Not being able to “stand it” (or, as Samuel Beckett put it in *The Unnamable*: “You must go on. I can’t go on. I’ll go on”). The physical and the psychological can’t be taken apart. As a writer I look at the medical scales as a professional idiot. For me they exemplify the low resolution of language, or in the words of Deleuze and Guattari: “the problem of writing: in order to designate something exactly, an exact expression is utterly unavoidable.”<sup>24</sup> Intensity drives empirical procedures to their limits. Pain can cause a meltdown of language, of all senses. It even exceeds the holding capacity (*Fassungsvermögen*) of a person. This is why we need seismologists. And poets. Kathy Acker, Elaine Scarry and many other writers have investigated how physical or mental pain challenges the category of the person as such.<sup>25</sup> “To experience intensity is to not know how things will end”, writes Chris Kraus in *I love Dick*.

23 The Beck Depression Inventory, see: <https://www.ismanet.org/doctoryourspirit/pdfs/Beck-Depression-Inventory-BDI.pdf>, last visited 12.4.2022

24 Deleuze and Parnet, p. 3

25 Johanna Hedva writes: “I want to make a defence of de-persons”. According to the American Psychiatric Association, I am one. That is, I have been diagnosed with depersonalization/derealization disorder (DP/DR for short), which means that I have “significant, persistent, or recurrent depersonalization (i.e., experiences of unreality or detachment from one’s mind, self, or body).” What that means is that, at various times, my body, self, environment, and the world itself do not feel real. Hedva: In Defence of De-persons, <http://gutsmagazine.ca/in/>, accessed 3 September 2021

The **ModifiedMercalli**IntensityScale  
The **Facebook**IntensityScale  
The **Grief**IntensityScale  
The **Dream**IntensityScale  
The **Supports**IntensityScale  
The **WaterEvent**IntensityScale  
The **Pain**IntensityScale  
The **Labor**IntensityScale  
The **Symptom**IntensityScale  
The **PureTaste**IntensityScale  
The **Depression**IntensityScale  
The **NewTsunami**IntensityScale  
**K** **a** **y**

Typography: Vasilis Marmatakis, Cordula Daus: Research Envelope #2, 2018

# Conceptual Scales

As an applied toponymist I'm drawn to names. To find out how names relate to places and how meaning comes into being through the act of naming. Consider *Las Indias*, the Indians. I read etymologies or conceptual histories to retrace the morphology of certain words back in time. At the beginning of this research, I wanted to understand what a "concept" is. Perhaps this is because I have a syndrome of taking concepts too seriously. To fall in love with them and prioritize them over experience. Hans Blumenberg has been one of the first theorists that I read for this research. I will call him by his first name – a simple trick so we can get into a closer dialogue with him. A series of other names will follow that have helped me to conceptualize Kay and her world.

## — Hans

"The concept is not capable of doing all what reason demands", Hans writes.<sup>26</sup> Or in other words: Beware of concepts! Some concepts may lead to hubris or even worse, they can make us sick ("*Begriffe schleppen Anmaßungen mit sich herum*"). Hans' writings contain some fine anthropological arguments for this hypothesis. In his *Theory of Nonconceptuality* he develops an evolutionary history of the concept that is related to the development of the human sense organs. According to Hans, concepts emerged in a specific moment of the life of human hunters and gatherers.<sup>27</sup> He compares the concept with the trap, a device that aims to catch something that is not immediately present. Traps are laid out because of a need, hunger for example. The trapper knows that his need cannot be fulfilled immediately. The trap as well as the concept emerge at the end of a long evolution of the human senses:<sup>28</sup>

The concept stands in relation to the absence of its object. This may also mean it relates to the lack of a developed imagination of the object. This relation has been compared with different sense organs: seeing represents the possibility of touch, of feeling and therefore that of owing. Optical presence anticipates a tactile presence, even if it can do without the latter. Sight (*Sichtbarkeit*) – because of the distance to the object – correlates to a lack of touch (*Fühlbarkeit*). If one imagines that the distance increases – both spatially and temporally – only the concept remains, which in itself represents the whole scale of sensual reachability (*Erreichbarkeit*).

26 "Der Begriff vermag nicht alles, was die Vernunft verlangt." Blumenberg: *Theorie der Unbegrifflichkeit*, p. 9 (My own translation from German).

27 "Der Mensch, das Wesen, das sich aufrichtet und den Nahbereich der Wahrnehmung verlässt, den Horizont seiner Sinne überschreitet, ist das Wesen der *actio per distans*. Er handelt an Gegenständen, die er nicht wahrnimmt, in den Höhlen, die seine erste Unterkunft sind, zeichnet er die Gegenstände seines Begehrens und seines Kampfes ums Dasein an die Wände. Der Begriff entsteht im Leben von Wesen, die Jäger und Nomaden sind." Blumenberg, p. 10.

28 "Der Begriff hat etwas zu tun mit der Abwesenheit seines Gegenstandes. Das kann auch heißen mit dem Fehlen der abgeschlossenen Vorstellung des Gegenstandes. Dieses Verhältnis ist verglichen worden mit dem zwischen verschiedenen Sinnesorganen: das Sehen vertritt nur die Möglichkeit einer Berührung, des Fühlens, damit des Besitzens. Die optische Präsenz nimmt die taktile vorweg, auch wenn sie sich ohne diese begnügt. Die Sichtbarkeit ist der Mangel der Fühlbarkeit wegen der Distanz zum Gegenstand. Stellt man sich vor, die Distanz würde weiter vergrößert – räumlich und zeitlich –, so bleibt nur noch der Begriff, der seinerseits die ganze Skala der sinnlichen Erreichbarkeit vertritt." Blumenberg: p. 9 (My own translation from German).

A rough sketch:

to feel	0–100 cm	here/now
to see	> 100 m	there/a while ago
to conceptualize	> somewhere/in an imaginary time ( <i>vor- oder nachgestellt</i> )	

Like the trap the concept is oriented towards or aims at what it hopes to catch. For all those engaged in the creation of words this is a highly interesting insight: How do our concepts relate to what we imagine them doing? We cannot catch tigers with eagle creels, birds with big-looped fishing nets or poor white men with tennis rackets. Or maybe we can? Still, if we don't have a clear idea of the "being" we seek to catch we cannot conceive an appropriate trap. Here imagination bites into its own tail. The form of the trap will determine the body of the animal and vice versa. Whatever word we fabricate, it will be made out of letters and each of them, the very Gestalt of that word will attract different meanings. The concept allows us to perceive what is not there, to map out gaps in our experiential context. It allows us to relate to absence.<sup>29</sup>

## — Niklas

I	L
II	O
III	V
IV	E

How strong must a feeling be to be called "love"? The scale above is very abstract. The reader may bear with me. For now, I'd like to keep it as a placeholder to speak about the relation between concepts and feelings. I enjoy reading scientific texts just for its terminology and special vocabulary. In *Kay or a Case*, I most specifically enjoyed to read Niklas Luhmann's German. So much wit. Freeze-dried emotions. Undercover social criticism.

Love, according to Niklas, is not a feeling but a cultural code: a set of rules that allows one to express, simulate or presume feelings in another person. Person feels what has been instructed as feeling. Concepts, systems of signs and institutions fundamentally mediate this feeling and the ritualized signs of feeling. Niklas describes a specific love code evolved in the Western 17th century: Love as passion. This mainly happened through novels. Novels spread and instituted a specific narrative, through which the idea of romantic love could unfold. "*J'avais lu quelques romans, et je me crus amoureux*", says the protagonist in *Les confessions du Comte de \*\*\**, written in 1741 by Charles Duclos.<sup>30</sup> Reading – learning the code – naming a feeling according to the code – re-sensing what is! Reading Niklas made me consider the function of novels as emotional programs. Or to put it in other words, to think about the genres that have contributed to the making of "love".

In place of traditional criteria that conditioned the marriage markets in times before,

<sup>29</sup> Blumenberg: p. 79.

<sup>30</sup> Duclos: p. 9

such as personal status, class, economic status, or ethnic background there's a new category that enters stage: emotional intensity. Or to put it into another equation: True love is what is being personally perceived as intensive (i.e., "strong"). A classic expression of that feeling can be found in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*:<sup>31</sup>

This sweetness of sensation pierced through her old desires, and these,  
like grains of sand under a gust of wind, eddied to and fro in the subtle  
breath of the perfume which suffused her soul.

Around 1700 a new imperative crept into the concept of love. Almost as if someone had implemented a scale into the word (see my clunky attempt at the beginning of this chapter). In order to love, feelings had to be maximized. The modern subject more and more came into a position to choose their love object. Or at least to desire this. The criteria of choice had multiplied. And with them a paradox arose: The allegedly free power of decision to choose a love object seemed to be an obstacle to surrendering to it and thus feeling emotional intensity. To put it bluntly: Comparison deadens passion. For instance:

*Kay loves Wolf but not as much as Ran or Sal.*  
*Kay doesn't love that much anymore as she can love Wolf, Ran and Sal*  
*at once.*

The modern individual tries to navigate between two needs that are hard to reconcile: The need for safety and the need for passion and adventure. Person cannot have it all. Two diverging needs that over the course of Western history blew up the marriage as a form or liaison that was once agreed upon by the social network, the family etc. Love and marriage not only began to mean something else but demanded to be backed up with intense emotions. This "semantic of immoderateness", Niklas argues, "put new freedoms into force that now needed to be respected and certified through the history of serial love, not through society itself".

Niklas explains how a widened range of personal possibilities and relations could not lead to a sheer extension, an increase in numbers and varieties of successfully developable communicative relations. Such an extension was doomed to lead to an excessive demand felt by each individual: "The personal moment in social relations cannot be extensified, only intensified."<sup>32</sup> Niklas locates this problem in an "inflated degree of individualization." He explains how marriage or any intimate relationship is thus put in danger because it must respond to hard to fulfill demands.<sup>33</sup> In a capitalist society built upon the concept of "freedom" those demands and expectations apply both to the self and the other. "I" wants it all. As in Kay's case:<sup>34</sup>

[Kay] is high. Her legs shake. She stands by the window. Under these  
circumstances she can imagine anything.

— A L L E S

31 Flaubert: Part 2, chapt. 3. Translated from the French by Eleanor Marx-Aveling.

32 Luhmann: S. 14.

33 Luhmann: S. 46.

34 Daus: *SEHR*, chapt. "Preislied".

Anything or everything? Jens wants to know what she means by that: a) triple penetration, b) family and kids. c) an artwork.

None of that. Kay takes a breath. She is the author of this show. It might be trivial, but seen from a historical perspective, it is a sensation! This woman, there, standing by the window.

Niklas' theory of love as passion leads to a model of subjectivity – a self that by default only seems to be able to find itself through a negotiation of inner feelings. Feelings that are being locked in the self but can hardly be contained by it any more.

### Degrees of Self

In his book *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, Julian Jaynes argues that the self and consciousness of the self, as we know it, is a relatively young development in the history of the human mind. According to him, some 3000 years ago, near the end of the Mediterranean bronze age, there was a time in which the “I” as we know it did not exist. Departing from the “original *Iliad*”, Jaynes speculates how extensive and intensive sensations first made themselves noticeable in literature. During that time, the “bicameral époque”, sensations were solely things that could be observed in the outer world: One part of the brain appeared to be speaking, the other part appeared to be listening and obeying. According to Jaynes, a general change in mentality occurred only slowly. First psychological expressions of a self-awareness appear, so-called “preconscious hypostases”, which later would become metaphors for consciousness. Departing from the *Iliad*, Jaynes gives the following interesting examples of these metaphors: Thymos, the container for the surging of inner sensations that appear as a reaction to a critical environmental state; Phrenes, the originally lung, breathing organ, which, as a sensory organ, has gradually been assigned the function of recognition and remembrance; Kradie, originally heart, which becomes a “chamber”, where the “deepest convictions, thoughts and feelings are kept”. All these words might be remnants, possible proofs how language can function as a tool to carve out inner places in the being, in the body. Places where self-awareness could accumulate, be felt but also be expressed. Degrees of individualization with a solitary “I” at the end. A self-conscious enlightened “I” condemned to seek feelings in the inner self.



I first read Eva Illouz' book *Love Hurts* during a phase of lovesickness and it has proven useful to me as a source of comfort. Later, when I decided to research the sexual field, I realized many of my experiences correlated with Eva's sociological analysis. At the same time, I struggled with her defeatist view with regards to the cis heterosexual woman and her crypto-romantic take on love. I became heated up with and against Eva to construct a post-love-warrior, someone that was more than a woman.

We have arrived in the more or less now. In the age of smartphones and platforms such as Tinder, OkCupid, and Parship. "Long-term" is over. Long-term job contracts are over. Long-term relationships are over. Connection is everything.<sup>35</sup> Anything and anyone can be double clicked on a pop-up menu: Demi-; sapio; pan-; casual; cis; bi-; tri-; poly. *What are you into?* Never in history have people of different class, gender, color, or kind has been potentially been able to connect with each other. Theoretically.

My research in the field of online dating has made me think specifically about emotions under digital conditions. One of my first striking observations was how the use of online dating apps leads to the production of what Eva Illouz calls "fictional feelings".

The first "match" on Tinder had an instant effect on me. I "fell in love" with a person that I had never seen and that I would never see. It was only after a few days and obsessive messaging that I was able to feel intense physical symptoms of stomach ache, longing, arousal, shaking, and heat waves. After a week I had the impression of knowing the person. I had no other desire than to instantly sleep with that person. People have been sending each other letters for centuries – but instantaneous digital messaging produces unparalleled intensity.

Despite three months of texting, voice messaging, sending each other images, and scripting our encounter in excessive detail – we still had not seen each other. Illness and traveling led to a constant postponement. We had come to project so much onto each other, that the tension had risen to an unbearable height. When we were finally able to meet – the person that I had "fallen in love with" chickened out. I had learned my first lesson.

One imagines feelings and anticipates feelings that have been triggered through media contents, Eva says. Distance is key here:<sup>36</sup>

Precisely because feelings will more easily emerge if they can interact with clearly contoured (esthetic) forms, distance enables more intense sensations – sensations that are more intense because they are structured through clearly definable patterns and contours.

35 Here I borrow from Hannah Black's analysis in the article *You are too Much*: "This is the age of intensity and not of duration. (...) Monogamy is over, long-term job contracts are over, mortgages are over, cinema is over (kind of), novels are over (pretty much), content is compressed into a single fleeting moment: the meme. Everything you need to understand you need to understand immediately. One date, one kiss, one glimpse is enough."

36 Illouz: p. 503.

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→ See Practices: Online-Dating

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From 2018 to 2021 I conducted a self-experiment in the field of online dating gathering data of different kinds. I literally started a new life on the Internet by creating profiles on the dating apps OkCupid and Tinder. I observed the actors and behaviors within the sexual field – including my own. I studied codes of dating, specifically in sexual scripts and how those can be interrupted or simply put into play in-and-through writing and semifictional dialogues.

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My experience has shown me that fictional feelings can feel very real. Fiction becomes real as soon as it enters the body. As a language-sensible being the very structure of text-based technology made me susceptible to all kinds of imagined relations. It also made me aware how far the cognitive reality of online dating is structured like a fiction. Eva describes this techno-imaginary as follows:<sup>37</sup>

One of the most interesting transformations in the institutionalization of the mass cultural imaginary is based on its in-formation: Technologies and cultural genres inform desire and lust, they generate anticipatory feelings (feelings prompted in the anticipation of future feelings) as well as cognitive scripts on how those feelings will feel like, how they should look like and will be represented.

A clash is preprogrammed when the imaginary and real feelings need to come to terms with each other. In my research I have strategically subjected myself to those clashes and to the tensions produced in and through cognitive scripting and sexting. Mobile online dating apps served as tools to jump into realities that before would have been out of my reach. I met people that I would have never had the chance to meet under analogue conditions and within my limited time. Messaging apps enabled me to establish instant contacts to strangers, test different forms of co-fabulation or *ficktioning*. Here is an example from *SEHR*:

Kay: This is a preparatory session.  
Rek: We need a strong connection.  
Kay: Understanding.  
Rek: Trust.  
Kay: 3G.  
Kay: We will only script the very first five minutes  
of our meeting.  
Rek: I'll wait outside.  
Rek: Walk up to me and stare at my face.  
Rek: I need your eyes.  
Rek: I want to see your eyes lock on mine.  
Rek: Look at me and say something.

37 Illouz: p. 465. My own translation from German.

Kay: I will be looking at your eyes.  
 Kay: I look at you and say something.  
 Kay: Something.  
 Kay: Olympiastadium. Spielfeld für Rekorde  
 und Emotionen.<sup>38</sup>

Kay and Rek are busy writing to each other. The liveness of writing produces an intensity that a real encounter cannot live up to. Kay and Rek try out different prepositions and positions, the increasing intensity of their *ficktioning* leads to an increasing anxiety to meet for real.

During my field research I read countless online profiles of other people, self-summaries, best-of lists, anecdotes, and stories. The typical dating software usually comes with a structure that feeds an algorithm – questionnaires to fill in, predetermined menus that offer adjectives how to self-define. Out in the field I met mostly “heterosexual”, “bisexual”, or “gender fluid” men. In the field I also met sociologists, sexologists and tinder experts that where on a double mission like me. I read about sexual script theory, about gay dating rituals, party and play and online hook-up devices.<sup>39</sup> Slowly but surely, I zoomed into the realities of a particular subject – the contemporary Western heterosexual woman of the middle class.

For this particular social actor, let’s call her “FULIMO woman”, with the acronym FULIMO standing for *Fuck, I’d Like to Mother*. Eva comes to a disastrous conclusion:<sup>40</sup>

The heterosexual women of the middle class find themselves in [...] the peculiar position, to confidently dispose over their own bodies as never before in history and to be - at the same time – dominated by men in a novel and unprecedented way.

Browsing through *Love Hurts* I gathered a chain of arguments that grounds Eva’s central argument – the “emotional hegemony” of men over women in “emotional capitalism”.

FULIMO woman can only get pregnant in a certain time window. She thus experiences more pressure in finding the *right* partner. What makes her situation even more difficult is that she is “hypergamous” – she desires a person of a superior sociological or educational background. According to gender statistics, there are more educated women than men of the same class on the marriage market.<sup>41</sup> Men achieve a sense of self-worth through their public status or a successful career. Instead, romantic love

38 Cordula Daus: *SEHR*, Vierter Dienst, Berlin 2022.

39 A basic premise of sexual script theory is that sexuality is learned from culturally available messages that set norms regarding sexual behavior and activities. Sexual scripts are embedded in a cultural context in which cultural norms provide guidelines for appropriate behaviors, emotions, and cognitions for men and women in sexual experiences. See Simon W, Gagnon JH: Sexual scripts: permanence and change. *Arch Sex Behav*. 1986 Apr; 15(2):97-120, or: Frith H, Kitzinger C. Reformulating sexual script theory: Developing a discursive psychology of sexual negotiation. *Theory & Psychology*. 2001;11:209–232. doi: 10.1177/0959354301112004. Illouz: p. 537

41 Quick fact check: In 2019 this gender gap was -10.5 percentage points (p.p.) in the EU-27, meaning that the proportion of women aged 30-34 that had attained tertiary education exceeded that for men by 10.5 p.p. See: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender\\_statistics#Education](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender_statistics#Education)

remains “a social foundation for the self” for FULIMO woman.<sup>42</sup> She identifies to a higher degree with the quest of finding true love, precisely because Western culture tells her this is the way to find herself.

According to Eva promiscuous women can’t accumulate social prestige or sexual capital as much as promiscuous men can do. They merely copy “a masculine strategy”.<sup>43</sup> Her sad sociological summary is: The marriage markets demonstrate an over-supply of highly educated, highly demanding, wanting-to-mate-and-reproduce, but by trend love maimed and frustrated women. Under the aforementioned conditions men simply have more choice. The current capitalist conditions disguise a “new form of emotional hegemony of men over women” that expresses itself in the availability of women and the hesitation of men to commit themselves.<sup>44</sup> The heteronormative concept of modern love seemed to have turned into a trap. FULIMO woman got stuck between freedom and necessity, between free choice and her own biological condition.<sup>45</sup>

As long as the conditions of economy and biological reproduction institutionalize gender inequity within the heterosexual family, sexual freedom will be a burden for women.

If we wanted to mathematize Eva’s equations – time would be a crucial parameter. There is no intensity without biological time!<sup>46</sup> This correlates with my own experience: In relation to male friends of the same age (50 +/- 5) my female friends seem to experience time more intensively. Often this seems intrinsically connected with the privilege and burden of being pregnant. And strangely this has nothing to do with the actual wish to reproduce. It rather has to do with the loss of an ability, or a kind of superpower. Eva says the conditions and economies of the existing order of reproduction in combination with the existing narratives about love put women under pressure.

Must heterosexual love by definition lead to babies and/or grief? What if we do not want to buy this definition? What kind of superpowers would we need?

While reading *Love Hurts*, I sometimes felt like Montezuma who eliminated the messengers that brought the bad news from the Spaniard’s arrival. I wanted to get rid of Eva together with her *love hurts* diagnostic. If things are so miserable “love” and “sex” must be reworked. In the following, you see some conceptual scales that I have come up in the first year of my research. Scales have helped me to map the space of the novel, to order my thoughts and to equip my lecture performances with “facts”.

42 Illouz: p. 247

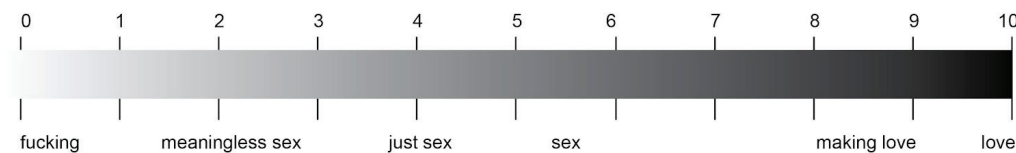
43 Virginie Despentes writes about the promiscuity for females but from a totally different angle: “I am a girl; the world of sex outside the couple doesn’t belong to me. Occasional prostitution with free choice of client and scenario is also a way to dip into sex without sentiment, to try things out, without having to pretend you’re doing it out of pure pleasure, and without expecting the societal collateral advantages. When you are a whore you know why and for how much you are doing this, and when you enjoy doing it on top of that and when you satisfy your curiosity, even the better. When you are a girl that has the choice it is all much more complicated and serious.” Despentes: p. 60.

44 Illouz: p. 247.

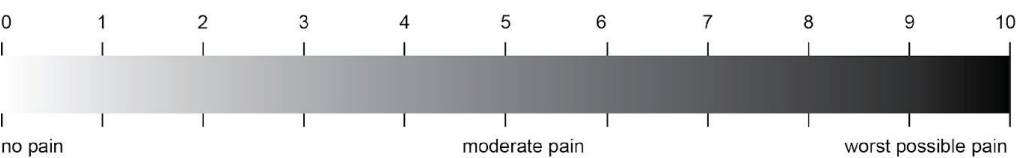
45 Illouz: p. 555.

46 Clearly this relates to a long history of gendered roles and tasks. Most women are used to being confronted with the question about “wanting children” from an early age. Of being pressured to respond to a “desire” (German: Kinderwunsch) that is being projected into them by default. Ideally you produce two children with the same partner. If you have one child “only”, you’re being asked why. If you have more than two children, you will be asked why, too.

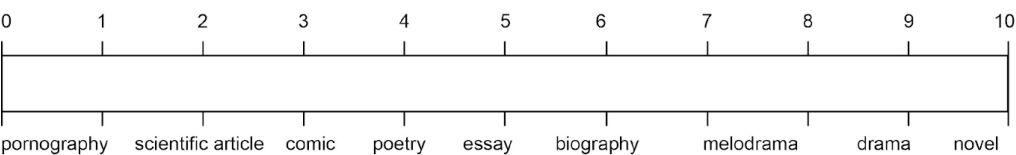
# Semifictional Scales



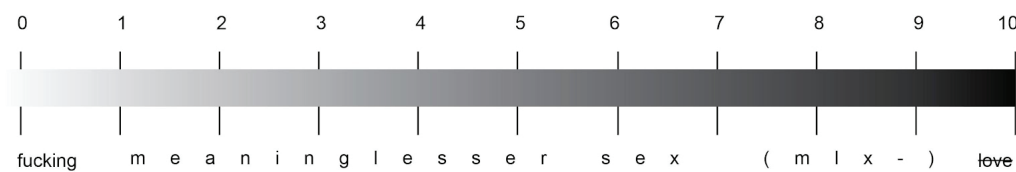
*Words ordered by intensity of meaning attributed to them in the conventional use of language. Most meaning (10) is being attributed to the signifier “love”, whereas “fucking” can be found on the opposite side (0).*



*Intensity of pain related to scale above. “Fucking” (0) usually does not hurt so much – “love” is supposed to hurt very much (10).*



*Genres ordered by cultural value (from 0 being not important to 10 being very important). In combination with the two previous scales “love” can be seen as related to the genres through which it is being conveyed.<sup>47</sup>*



*Towards a new love order: meaning lesser sex (mlx–) helps not to feel too little, but also not to feel too much. Mlx–functions like a scale within the scale, a metric and a relation between feeling something and its meaning.*

47 A more updated scale would have to include media such as Tiktok, Instagram, Twitter, facebook, WhatsApp, Email, etc.

# Kay

*A life, any life, may make an agreeable narrative so long as the author takes care to make no extraordinary claims for her subject. Until I met Kay, I never knew that such a woman existed and whilst I do not pretend to profound analysis and am not without a feeling of ineptitude, I shall, however, attempt to discover whether there is any correlation between her general characteristics and their subsequent affect upon my emotions; always of course assuming that she would not dismiss my treatise as a farrago of shibboleths or so much over-pretentious conventionalized romanticism. She, the abolitionist of love, may hopefully have found it tolerably amusing, if not intellectually fastidious.*

*Kay has been dead for almost two years now. And it was not until very recently that I could approach her material again and look at this phenomenon of a woman with the dispassion and detachment which is supposed to be proper to impartial criticism; the intense experience of knowing her is still too immediate and overwhelming. Perhaps it would thus be appropriate to continue with few observations on her character.*

*Kay was head-strong, impulsive and overdetermined in will. There was a certain inexpressibly spiritual and bewitching magic about her face. Her asymmetrical and raw chiseled features registered only very few expressions, but each in an expanded range. She was blessed with a rare beauty which did not diminish by erosion of time or distortion of media. Even dead, she will be okay. Throughout her lifetime refused to have a last name.<sup>48</sup>*

The three letters *Kay* stand for a fictional author and character that I invented, as well as for a semifictional method: To write from and about Kay as “a heterosexual, white, middle-aged woman from the middle class living in the Center of Europe, sometimes close to now”. As mentioned before, Kay is also the fictional author of the novel *SEHR*. Here’s a blurb:<sup>49</sup>

In her 45th year of life Kay decides to put herself at the service of free love. In exercises with Ran, Wolf, Sef, etc. she searches to feel new feelings. Whatever positions Kay and her body partners take, they work hard on a new erotic style: meaning lesser sex! Unfortunately things are not that easy. Among other obstacles, female nature (the womb) proves to be an intractable factor. In the rest of the world reproduction goes on as usual. Children are born out of women. But not in Kay any more! There must be Higher Love!

48 Cordula Daus: THE HEFT, foreword, never published, Berlin 2040 (Citing out of the wastebin).

49 One of the many blurbs that I have written for the novel *SEHR*. The definition of Higher Love came to me in a “Eureka!” moment while I was driving a rental car, and heard Whitney Houston singing; to be concrete the 2019 DJ Kygo remix of the Steve Winwood song “Higher Love” from the 1986 album, “Back in the High Life”, was playing. I’ve de-contextualized the meaning and went on with it.

Kay cultivates a serial sexuality, a tendentially self-determined pleasure. She strives to feel as much as necessary but not to feel too much. As Luhmann has analyzed, any move in the erotic field, “requires cold blood and strategic course of action. The threshold towards love can be passed anytime, and then the tragedy takes its course”.<sup>50</sup> Kay meets the painter Ran for sporadic only-sex. They work hard on keeping their practice casual.

KAY

What are we doing here?

RAN

I'd like to keep it as concrete as possible.

KAY

I'm trying hard to keep myself out of you.

RAN

It's like with the colors, I can't tie them down either. When I'm painting I'm constantly trying to equilibrate. I call this “Gewühl” (meeling).

KAY

Yes exactly, taking the other person as climatic influence. The only problem is that if I'm too far out, I do not sense anything anymore. Is there anything on me that you can refer to. Like my knees, for example. I know that you've been drawing my knees! You could say you like my knees, for example. You know, just so I feel minimally meant.

# Meaning and Sex

What would we see if we looked human relationships from another planet? A satellite image of Earth can give us an idea of the magnitude of anthropogenic damages on our planet based on the visible light pollution. Sexual reproduction is about 550 billion years old.<sup>51</sup> The possibility to separate sex and reproduction – more or less safely – exists only since the introduction of contraceptive pill around 1960. Only slightly older is the realization that love and sex do not necessarily belong together. Nevertheless, biological reproduction seems to still affect us in the 2020s. The majority of the species is still longing for romantic love, while the other part is forced to get married. The concept of *meaning lesser sex* as introduced by the stylist Kay offers a new outlook. Anatomy luckily is not destiny. And homo sapiens sapiens is not the last word in evolution.

*SEHR* is an episodic novel structured by a series of duets. The protagonist Kay has meaning lesser sex. She goes to a place that does not need to lead to love, not to babies, not even to joy. The narration focusses on Kay's encounters, her relations with a series of men or man-like creatures: Kay in relation to Ran, Rek, Wolf, Sef, Sal, Nyam, Umut, et al. Sex is depicted as a prepositional activity: As something she does for, on, in, because of, despite of, instead of, with-out someone. Here is a preliminary definition of this fictional practice that I came up with in one, two, three steps:

51

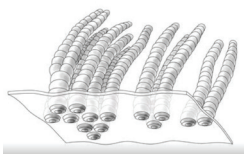


Illustration of the (to date) oldest sexual being as discovered by Mary Droser in 2008. The tubular *Funisia dorothea* on a shallow, sandy lake bed. The name comes from the Latin name *funisia* for “rope” – Dorothea was the name of the scientist’s mother. Droser commented, “She’s [Dorothea] come with me on digs and done all the cooking and taken care of the kids. It seemed the right thing to do.” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sex-idUSN2040405820080321?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews>



### Meaningless sex

also called “casual”, “occasional” or “random sex”, “sex without emotional attachment”.

Expression that implies a moral scale of human emotions in which “fucking” is at the bottom and “love” at the top. Whoever uses this word combination, is suggesting that sex should better mean something, lead to something, e.g., reproduction, love, orgasm, marriage, God, good, health, etc. Let’s have a break! Let’s mean less!

### Meaning lesser sex (mlx–)

a fictional comparative of second degree.

Derailed from “meaningless sex” (see above), mlx– takes the word at its word and makes a move towards sensual justness. m l x– has no other assigned function than to mean less. Save sex against love! Just fuck, not more! Separation between state and church, sex, sense, woman, and womb! When we have mlx– we go somewhere we don’t know yet.

Meanwhile:

1. Fuck, whatever that means.
2. Stay strangers to each other.
3. Invent new feeling games.
4. Extend the liking scale.
5. Forget and forgive.

### Meaning least sex

a fictional comparative of third degree.

The prospect of uniform advancement towards the state of “meaning least sex” seems possible for those who have already practiced “meaning lesser sex”, yet the theoretical problems relating to the transition from one state to the other acquire major importance. The scientific problem of scalable feeling will only be resolved in practice, in the creative activity of tens and hundreds of millions of fucking people. In this higher degree, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of sex, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labor has vanished; after labor has become not only a means of producing life but life’s prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly. A paradoxical state, a suspension of sense is achieved, in which nothing seems to have changed but everything is put into question, waiting to become possible.

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→ See Practices: Writing as Research

The above definitions are one example of how I use writing as research. Inspired by existing terms, I create a new term and write a dictionary-type definition. Similar like in the work of Jorge Luis Borges, my artist books have made use of fictional etymologies, glossaries and self-fabricated etymologies to establish a subject matter. The need to further define what was “invented” before, what came into being in letter form, drives my research. I can hardly think without writing, re-writing, reformulating. Language thinks, searches, stumbles. I strategically seek ambiguity, glitches in meaning. Generally speaking, my writing as research is interested in openness. The definitions above exemplify this: Here “meaning” can relate to different spheres, such as:

- a) purport/import: what is intended to be represented by language
- b) aim: something meant or intended (“this is what I meant to do”)
- c) recognition: the act of noticing, recognizing someone (“I mean you”)
- d) attribute: assigning a significant quality to something (“meaningful”)
- e) purpose, fulfillment: (“the meaning of life”)

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## Conversation with a Reader

Sebastian: In the novel *SEHR* we learn that Kay seeks intensity and tries to stay away from “conventional love” (*land-läufige Liebe*). But what does that mean?

Cordula: Conventional love as leading to a heterosexual family for example. The adjective *land-läufig* introduces a word game: It means both common but also to be “in heat”.

Sebastian: It seems comprehensible that a woman like Kay is interested in physical intensity as a surrogate for an emotional intensity that has ever since been connoted with femininity. Still, the simple inversion of moral preferences for deep emotional binds (and dependency) against superficial physical lust does not take us anywhere. It simply keeps up the dichotomy. I mean we are not in the 1980s or in a Bret Easton Ellis novel – *SEHR* is set in the 2020s!

Cordula: True. Nowadays, random fucking with random people, casual or meaningless sex is pretty much standard style. At least in the Western hemisphere. I guess Kay’s fucking, loving, grieving wouldn’t make sense at all if she was gay. For heterosexual people like her the problem of pregnancy is just more or less medically fixed. Sex can be separated from its

reproductive function. Psychosexually though – to use a Freudian expression – and from an ontological perspective it is as disturbing as ever.

Sebastian: I see that Kay has real troubles to step out of the heterosexual hermeneutic sex-circle. We have to beware of the fact that MEANING – if we do not watch out – IS in the last heterosexual instance, the BABY: personified dependence and manipulation.

Cordula: So true! No wonder Kay wishes to be gay.

Sebastian: Gay sex for heterosexual women seems a way to disarm on a semantic and hermeneutic level. Which does not necessarily mean to mobilize pornographically. (This is the trap that most homos step into! On the other hand, porn of course opens a lot of spaces). Where is the heterosexual place then, the metaphor or the practice between porn and baby?

*Daus/Bark, Email from 14. November 2021*

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→ See Practices: Lecture Performance

The lecture-performance is central to my artistic practice as it allows me to try out different perspectives on a subject matter as well as different subjectivities. I often depart from the attitude of a seemingly sovereign academic lecturer to slowly deconstruct or put this position into question. Glitches in believability are being emphasized through shifts in modality: Seamless shifts from reading to saying to singing; from telling to showing. The lecture is not an end, or a product in itself but a research practice itself that allows me to embody or physically test different forms of knowing.

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Cordula Daus: Kay, Lecture, 15.1.2020

# Performing Kay

During a lecture performance given in January 2020, see images above, I used a bi-lateral strategy to speak as as Kay to the audience (dorsal) and about Kay as Cordula Daus (frontal). Responding to the context of the lecture series I referenced feminist speculative writers such as Ursula Le Guin, Marge Piercy and Joanna Russ, and their fictions as important influences that inspired my re-writing of the biological and reproductive order. Kay appears in this context, almost like a comic in a pop-up scene. A big hyphen constitutes Kay's mouth. Her eyes are stickers glued to my hair.

Here's an excerpt of the script that shows how I transitioned from Cordula Daus to Kay:

I'd like to introduce Kay to you:

Kay at the airport, for example, just before the body check.

*[Cordula steps forward, puts the lights on.]*

It's her turn now. She stands on the marked spot. The laser scans her body. The backscattering reconstructs an image. This is how she looks like:

*[Turns around. Crosses her arms.]*

Towards the end of the lecture, Kay has a solo. She turns to the microphone and gives a speech in a low-pitched voice. It ends with the sentence: Ich sag dem Alter. Alter, *ich* bin die Zeit. (I tell age. Alter, I *am* time).

Through the use of a mixing board – the Launch Control XL – I applied sound effects such as pitch, reverb and volume to my live voice. For the first time I employed the mixer as a modulator of feelings testing singular sentences. In hindsight I must say that the complexity of using a software such as Ableton Live has challenged me – on the other hand, these technical obstacles have proven productive for me to come up with (naïve) performative solutions. In *Intensity in Language* I go further into this, playing with the technical device as a fictional object.

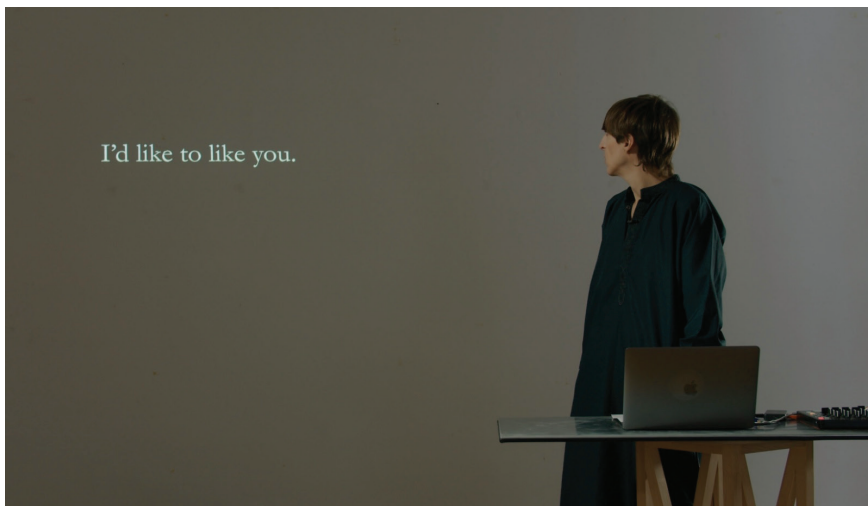
# Intensity in Language

*In this video lecture Cordula Daus presents four categories of intensity in language: meaning, form, voice, context, plus an extra feature. Specific sentences are being analyzed, different tools are being tested to increase or decrease their force. As the lecture continues the boundaries between the four categories become more and more blurry. Personal constraints of the lecturer come to the foreground (“I can’t say this sentence”). Yet a solution can be found in a technical device. Daus introduces an apparatus that can be used by anyone to adjust and extend their relational and emotional capacities (“We only need electricity”).*



**VIDEO**

**ON**



**INTENSITY IN LANGUAGE**

Cordula Daus, *Intensity in Language*, video, 18:56 min, 2022

*SEHR*



# SEHR

Roman

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Kay

**D**ie historia  
der **KAY**, so sie aufbrach,  
die intensitas der liebe zu erkunden,  
deren art, sitten und gebräuche zu erfahren.

welch abenteuer sie mit ihrem leibe gestanden, wie  
die heldin sich in den dienst der freiheit stellte, am  
männlichen geslechte freute und dabei unversehens  
in einen hinderhalt geriet. von einem scharmützel  
bei uterus zu berlin, dem KAY bösz unterlieget.  
wie die heldin sehr weinet, fast umkommet  
und was noch zu tun wäre in der ära des  
mittleren alters als frau zu überleben,  
die sich erstreckt vom vierzigsten  
lebensjahre bis auf den heutigen  
tage. von KAY selbst persönlich  
beschrieben, sehr kurz-  
weilig zu lesen.



# Metanarrative

The novel *SEHR* begins with a summary written in a neo-medieval language by an unnamed narrator. Kay's "historia" is introduced as an adventurous quest for love, during which "the heroine puts herself at the service of freedom". The reader is being transported to a strange temporality where chronological time merges with biological time, the "era of the middle age that stretches from the 40th year of life until today".

Long before the novel actually existed, I have written many blurbs (*Klappentexte*) or announcements similar to those that we find on the sleeve of a book cover. In hindsight I realized that those abstracts or fictional summaries were necessary for me to sense the novel's possible form (see *Appendix D*). They were, in Queneau's terms, *exercices de style* that allowed me to test different narrative tones and frames. Only late in the writing process I was reminded of a historical book that I had read years ago, Nikolaus Federmann's *Indianische Historia*,<sup>52</sup> and all of a sudden, things fell into place. I decided to frame Kay's story as an epic adventure of a heroine that goes out to explore the "intensitas of love, to explore its nature, mores and customs". The tone was set.

Once I had gotten into the lingo of the chivalric romance, I suddenly realized who's voice this was: The *Minne* was speaking, a personification of Love itself! *Minne* is a Middle High German word for "loving remembrance". The *Minnesang* ("love song") also relates to a tradition of lyric- and song-writing in Germany and Austria that flourished between the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. I started to read about epic poetry and discovered another, even older book: *Frauendienst*, written in 1255, from Ulrich von Liechtenstein. *Frauendienst* inspired me to introduce the term of services in the table of contents. The services came to structure the novel. In medieval times men usually wrote and performed *Minnesang* as *Minnesänger* to "serve" a woman of their choice. In *SEHR* this relation is being inverted. The heroine Kay is being portrayed as someone who serves not only men, but the idea of freedom. Each service is introduced by a narrator that speaks in a quirky pseudo-historic German; the episodes themselves are written in contemporary style German. Together with the typographer and artist Till Gathmann, I worked on finding a typographical correspondence, an embodiment of the different voices in *SEHR* and the shifts between voices. Typographically speaking, the *Minne* is embodied by the font *Alte Schwabacher*, an old blackletter typeface dating from the 15th century commonly used in Germany. In the epigraph it meets *Comic Sans*, a sans-serif casual script typeface released in 1994 by Microsoft Corporation often used for informal texts and children's materials. These clashes are further taken up by the layout – WhatsApp meets Shakespeare. The stage of typesetting is seminal for me as an author. It is only then that I see a text *in form*, that I can understand the body of a work. Sometimes it is only in this late stage that I detect passages that do not belong to a specific character, I edit them out or re-write the text.

52 Nikolaus Federmann (1505, Ulm – 1542, Valladolid) was a German adventurer and conquistador. Acting as an agent of the Welser family of Augsburg, Federmann became responsible for the colony of "Little Venice" (Klein Venedig) in Venezuela. In 1530 Federmann undertook an unauthorized expedition to the northern river basin of the Orinoco, searching for the "South Sea" (the Pacific), with 110-foot soldiers, 16 mounted soldiers, and 100 natives. Upon his return he was banished to Europe for a period of four years and wrote *Indianische Historia. Ein schöne kurtzweilige Historia Niclaus Federmanns des Jüngern von Ulm erster raise* which was published in 1557. I had come across Federmann's book first during research on the Spanish/German Colonization of the Americas. See also Daus: *Toponymisches Heft Nr. 1 - The Trujillo Syndrome*.

## Text images

Most of the fifteen episodes of *SEHR* include texts in texts, specific language-based exercises, e.g., word images, descriptions or dialogues. Each of those text images are influenced by the very mediality of Kay's off-online encounters but also by the professions of her lovers. When Kay meets the painter Ran, she develops the desire to paint herself and to post big paintings on Instagram. This is what she finally does by describing Jens. Meeting Sef instead means to deal with silence, with the lack of communication. It might be farfetched, but I tend to think of those text images as a kind of ekphrasis – the attempt of invoking a thing, a person, a situation through words that are themselves inspired by another medium, a painting, a sound recording, or a film. Some examples:

**Erster  
dienst**

wie KAY den maler RAN will, ohne ihn zu  
sehr zu brauchen, wie RAN KAY für seine bilder  
braucht, dieselben von den kunstliebhabenden der  
hauptstadt empfangen, doch kaum gekauft werden,  
wie sich KAY und RAN im wackeren versuche halten,  
zu fühlen ohne sich zu bedeuten. von knien,  
terpentin und blauen hasen, die  
keine tiere sind.

*SEHR*, epigraph First Service

Es  
klingelt

weder bei ihm

noch bei ihr

Rans Hose öffnet sich

Ein Feld aus  
Kadmiumrot und Kremserweiß

Sie hängen sich aus

Girlande

—Hey Sef, das grüne Licht ist an.  
Ich sehe, Sie sind online!

—

—Wie fein Sie mich beschweigen!

— — —

—Es zieht mich zu dem  
Abstand hin, den Sie zwischen uns  
eingerrichtet haben.

Sef schreibt, dass er total busy ist.

—Zeitdruck erschwert gute Manieren.  
Und Schreiben bedeutet immer  
Nachfragen auslösen,  
Reibungsflächen erschaffen.

VIERTER DIENST

47

REK: I might burst.

KAY: Explode.

REK: I have a meeting in forty minutes.

REK: I beg you.

KAY: No. This is not about release.

REK: I beg you.

KAY: Hold this and use it for the script.

REK: I have a meeting in twenty minutes.

REK: I am going somewhere private or  
it'll be a disaster.

REK: Talk to me please please please.

KAY: I'm on the tram. It's full.

REK: I am a bit, um, full on. I'm gonna call you.

KAY: I can't take your call now.

REK: Damn.

REK: Gimme some script.

REK: I'm close.

REK: You're so cruel.

REK

KAY: 000007PHOTO-211062342-04-13-  
23-53-44.jpg.

KAY: Is this you?

REK: Believe it or not, this was me only  
three years ago.

KAY: What happened to that boy?

REK: Been a tough ride.

KAY: What kind of drugs.

REK: Why do you ask? You use?

KAY: No.

REK: Good.

KAY: I mean your face, then and now.

## Re-Framing

*SEHR* is structured through a set of frames, a series of episodes nested in different genres. The title *SEHR* (very) connects us, seismically speaking, to the epicenter of the novel. To the event, or non-event of an abortion. Kay describes her pain with the word “*sehr*” referring to its etymology. We learn, that “*sehr*” once meant “soar”. Perhaps we can understand etymologies as innermost word meanings. Condensed forms of history in language. In “the fifth service,” Kay falls in love. Hormones kick in. Kay gets pregnant. There it is, the ultimate meaning of heterosexuality: Procreation. To baby or not to be. Kay aborts. She is in great emotional pain. The doctor says all blood tests are okay, the thyroid is functioning well, the pain must be related to grief. Kay says no: her pain is not personal. The doctor refers her to a sociologist. The novel does not include any further information. Instead, the conversation with a sociologist—in this case Luc Boltanski—takes place outside the novel in a paratext. (See *Grieving*)



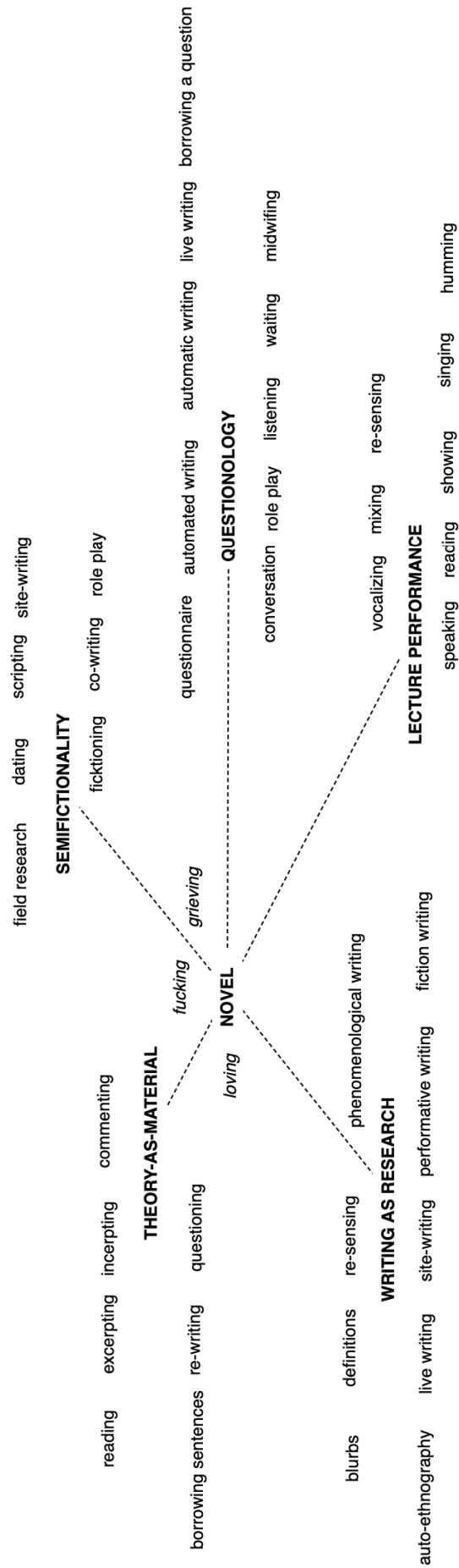
Think of fucking, loving, grieving as a sequence. In the English language, *fucking* can exist as a verb, as an intensifier, an interjection, and as a grammatical ejaculation at the same time. *Fucking* is able to cast doubt on *loving* and to imbue the *grieving* with its negatively refreshing effect. It depends on how we speak the words for them to act upon each other, how much space we leave between each word, how we pronounce a comma. In a voice-to-text program one can observe this very same re-framing, re-sensing effect. Sometimes a word that has already been written changes retroactively as the speaker moves on—the algorithm substitutes it for another more adequate word as it grasps the context of the language system as a whole.

Sometimes a very old story can be rendered new by telling it again. Sometimes a feeling felt by someone who died thousands of years ago can become alive again. During my research I discovered *Grief Lessons. Four Plays by Euripides* by the classicist and poet Anne Carson. In her book Carson does not only brilliantly translate Euripides, she has written the most compelling prefaces to four of his plays. Framing is everything, or, as Carson says herself: “Grief and rage—you need to contain that, to put a frame around it, where it can play itself out without you or your kin having to die. There is a theory that watching unbearable stories about other people lost in grief and rage is good for you—may cleanse you of your darkness. Do you want to go down to the pits of yourself all alone? Not much. What if an actor could do it for you? Isn’t that why they are called actors?”<sup>53</sup> Kay acts for us. By adding a preface around her, we can look at her fucking, loving, grieving from an ancient future.

53 Carson in the Preface of her book: *Grief Lessons’s. Euripides*. Translated by Anne Carson, p. 9.



# Practices



Sketch of interrelated practices

The sketch on the page before is an attempt of naming what has articulated itself as a doing that has mutated over time. In *Kay or a Case* I employ a series of interrelated practices or methods. *Methodos* comes from *meta* and *hodos*, way. This resonates with me. To re-search literally means to look back at/for something you do not have means. To be on a path. Still, if you had nothing you would have not started to look for it. The search is of dialectical nature, it is a process without a way where either there is no way (direct or pure), or there is a way (a dirty path, a paved street, a hollow lane). I have experienced that a method can also be in the way. I became attached to a title for aesthetic reasons while I had already moved on doing something entirely else. To research also means to constantly reconnect to what has once caused oneself to wonder in the beginning. To find new ways to go there. To ditch “the method”. The following looks at a series of practices relevant to his dissertation. As such they are intrinsically bound to the subject of intensity.

## Theory as material

Many of my works depart from in-depth reading and appropriation of theory. The chapter *Scales* gives an impression of this approach. I use theories and models not only to further theoretical reflection but as artistic material. I like to work with the *form of theory*. With the aesthetic and sound of *Fachsprache* (jargon).<sup>54</sup> For example: Consider the footnote of a footnote of a footnote. The believability of an academic text can be stressed by a footnote and undermined by it at the same time. How specific, how precise can a scientific article be? There is something I have called the involuntary poetics of scientific texts that happens when a non-initiated reader is confronted with specialist language. Often, I am fascinated by terms that I do not understand. This non-understanding leads to a vague idea, a context. To the making of a place in language. I like to take language too seriously or not seriously at all. My literary texts often emerge in dialogue with another voice that scrutinizes them. Within the format of my publication *Toponymisches Heft* I have played with the dialogic modality of play and replay: e.g. an author narrates a story which will be interpreted by another character, maybe the publisher or translator of the very same publication. There is the artefact and the interpretation of that artefact through a discourse, a theory. An erratic image and a lengthy caption. Theory and literature, original and comment get blurred. Interpretation may turn into poetry. The dialogue *On Higher Love* with [M] Dudeck is an example of how I lured another artist and thinker into the interpretation of my text, of abandoning authorship and authority over meaning and reclaiming it again. In such a semifictional dialogue snippets from the novel that are being hijacked into a theoretical context to play back into the novel. In other cases, bits of “theory” have directly entered into my lecture performances or into *SEHR* as I will show in the following.

54 The poet Ulf Stolterfoht has explored this potential in his eponymous series *fachsprachen*.

## — Physiognomy of Language

While reading Merleau Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, I discovered a source that allowed me to go further into the intensity of single words: Heinz Werner's *Grundfragen der Sprachphysiognomik* (*Basic Questions of Language Physiognomy*) from 1932. Werner was an Austrian-Jewish psychologist who conducted a series of experiments. Test persons were asked to describe their experiences with different word sensations presented to them on paper cards, in projected form or acoustically. Werner instructed them to focus on physiognomic and corporal sensation of singular letters, words and sentences. The experience was then self-protocolled by test persons afterwards. As he wrote:

If we show specific words to an appropriate test person (printed on little cards) or acoustically, we will find, that these words have a more optical for some and for others a more acoustical face, that they carry the meaning of the word in eye-obvious or ear-obvious form in them.

What attracted me to Werner's physiognomic approach is that he conceived the linguistic entity as a sensual object and that he developed a scientific practice of sensing words. According to Werner, the experience of the word (*Worterlebnis*) has to be understood within a synesthetic semantics that grasp the materiality and corporeality (*Leiblichkeit*) of a sign. For the psychologist language was both an object of scientific research and an affective object that allowed for an unprejudiced perception and poetic experience. This resonates with my own approach and re-sensings. At the end of his book Werner comes to the conclusion, that the experiments "have shown that something like a word-feeling exists [...] It is part of the poly-and synthetic character of language that the linguistic meaning is almost always incarnated and that a word only reaches its full and deepest physiognomy through its specification in the motorical, acoustic and optical circle of the image."

Meaning for Werner had to be understood within a "process of word formation" that occurs when the subjective experience and the objective concreteness, the word image and corporeal state are converging. Heinz Werner did not further mention nor analyze where the word associations of his test persons actually originated, from the material itself or its meaning. This has been criticized from a scientific point of view. It was precisely this ambiguity which has attracted me.

In 2019 I wrote a first script for a lecture performance called "Jens". After the performance I reworked it into my novel. In this text the proper name and the person "Jens" are deliberately being confused. There is a seminal passage which I borrowed directly from Werner's protocols.<sup>55</sup> His physiognomic method became part of the protocol of a date.

55 "Red, says a test person has its centre in the o. The whole word has a rotating dynamic, its center is the o. o in a way is the funnel of a crater, which sucks in the rotating movement and therefore tends to deepen spatially. The suction power of the environment is concentrated here." Werner: p. 87

—Fühl Dich wohl geleckt.

Er soll sofort aufhören.  
Das ist ihre Beschreibung.

Später wird sie zugeben, dass ihr Jens  
einen Tick zu hot geraten ist.

## BESCHREIBUNG 2

—Sag mal Rot.

—Rot.

—Nein, kleingeschrieben.

—rot.

*rot hat sein Zentrum im o, eine rotierende Dynamik,  
deren Mittelpunkt das o ist. o ist gewissermaßen der  
Trichter eines Kraters, der die kreisende Bewegung in sich  
saugt und drum dahin tendiert, sich räumlich zu vertiefen.  
In ihm ist die Saugkraft für die Umgebung konzentriert.*

*o schert sich nicht weiter darum, ob Jens noch da ist.  
Es rotiert, kreist, saugt in unvermeidlichen Spiralen  
auf sein Zentrum zu, es liegt auf der Zunge und in  
der Hand, wie es sich weitet, steht oder fällt, entgegen-  
kommt, o bäumt sich auf, und fließt dann über,  
mitten heraus, o, yours truly, o.*

Über eine Stunde ist vergangen. Jens ist eingeschlafen.

## — Excerpting

The act of ex-cerpting, from latin *excerpere*, denotes “cobbing”, “picking out”, “to abstract something”, and goes back to the Latin verb *carpere* “picking, pinch, select”. I like to “pinch” sentences as such from theoretical texts, abstract them or turn them into something very concrete. Excerpting is a metabolic activity, a physical form of writing-reading that is usually practiced to fully understand another text and reproduce its essence. As the language material has gone through different states of matter, from a printed text to a handwritten text, to a digital text it has literally passed through the writer, moved neurons and other parts of their body. Excerpting, the simple copying of a text in this sense can be understood as a re-enactment of another writer’s move. A way of making a thought liquid again, of thinking it from scratch by rewriting and recomposing it. The gleaner of language yet may pick the cherries only just for the sake of their color. For *Kay, or a Case* I have experimented with different forms of excerpts and excerpting. Most of them departed from a basic procedure consisting of the following micro-activities:

- Reading: Usually with a pencil in my hand.
- Underlining, marking according to a notation system of my own: circles for proper names, squares for concepts, wave lines for passages that I do not understand, straight lines for relevant passages, C° for notes to myself, usually at the bottom of the page.
- Re-titling: I add my own titles on the top of the page.
- Transcription of the underlined parts via hand into a notebook or digital file by just copying the text or using a voice program.
- Addition of commentaries: Underneath in italics.
- *Incerpting* or borrowing a sentence: Selecting sentences or passages of the text to become a structural environment for my own thought. The incerpt must not be mistaken with plagiarism, rather it can be compared to midwifing. To borrow someone’s sentence as a structure to support a yet unborn idea. In the participatory performance *Questionology* (with Charlotta Ruth) I have used this strategy to invite others to think and write with one another.

## Semifictionality

The invention of semifictional institutions and figures is a characteristic of my practice. Within experimental publications and magazines, websites or journals I experimented with presenting and performing those entities in public space as well as in an academic context. Fictional characters such as J.C. Duenkel allowed me, among other things, to speculate on alternative histories and methods in linguistics, archeology or seismology. I assumed the term “semifictional” a decade ago when to describe my practice. Only later I found out that Helene Cixous’ work has been framed as “semi-fiction” or “semi-fictional” by different authors. Mairéad Hanrahan has pointed out that:

Only in a writing that is, in a practice of language that dares to venture outside pre-existent categories, that doesn't feel the need to enclose what it names in the confines of the already-known, to translate what it names into terms it already recognizes – can the 'semi-' find its place, find a place.<sup>56</sup>

Semifictionality for me does not refer to a distinction between true or false, a missing or existing half (semi) but a practice of creating space in writing to connect with a dimension that is yet not present, invented or just claimed, a way of “doing *as if*”. In contrast to the hoax or fake, the kind of semifictionality I'm interested in instilling an alertness in the reader or viewer, a moment of suspense that allows to question the order of things.

Since the 2000s, fictiveness has emerged as an important category in contemporary visual art. Artists such as The Atlas Group, The Yes Men, Santiago Sierra, and others have strategically operated between the borders of something that could be true – their works among others have been important influences when I created the fictional corporate identity BCNova!<sup>57</sup> Carrie Lambert-Beatty has proposed the term “parafictional” as a category. Parafictions in general are performative, where that is understood to mean that they effect or produce something rather than describe or denote it. They are unhappy performatives as they, (...), are only “make-believe”. But insofar as they make someone believe, however temporarily or ambiguously, they trouble the distinction between happy and performativity.<sup>58</sup>

The graphic at the beginning of this chapter shows how the semifictional can be found: a) in the very constitution of an (online) reality e.g., in the use of aliases and fake names; b) in the writing process; c) the form of a text, d) in the form of collaboration, e.g., fictioning; d) in the montage or editing of a work.

## — Dating

*Over the course of four years I have dated 55 men between 21 and 55 years of age. I have fallen in love with 33, I have almost loved 23, I was walking hand-in-hand with two men. I had sex in 45 different positions with 54 men, I have been pregnant 9 times and had to abort 8 times.*<sup>59</sup>

In *Kay, or a Case* I practice dating as semifiction. It would be futile trying to identify where Kay begins and where Cordula Daus ends. In the introduction to her book *Feeling and Form* Susanne K. Langer writes: “The affliction of literature is its relation to fact, propositional truth; (...) I have battled against all these bogeys as best I could; (...)” The much more interesting question is: What differentiates the practice of a writer doing field research from the practice of an artistic researcher? In both

56 Hanrahan: p. 3.

57 <http://bcnova.org/>

58 Carrie Lambert-Beatty: pp. 51-84.

59 Daus: Statistical note, unpublished.

cases, life is being used for the sake of art. The difference lies in how the respective author will reflect on her experiences. This reflexive documentation makes the difference. My approach borrows methods from the literary field as well as from the social sciences oscillating between “autofiction”<sup>60</sup>, “autoethnography”<sup>61</sup> and what I call “semifiction”.

In the following I will briefly map out some aspects of the semifictional that I have encountered in the context of online/offline dating:

### Pseudonyms

In my research I used different names, never my own name. I did not use the name of Kay. The moment of disclosure of one’s real, proper name is one of the characteristic moments when meeting a person. Mostly this happens soon after a “match”, in the first chat or later. It is interesting to see it in relation to the degree of trust or to the type of relation desired. Usually, when both actors reconfirm their interest, this goes along with the exchange of the official name, a telephone number, etc. Sometimes this might only happen later during a meeting in flesh. Disclosing one’s identity, making oneself more real, comes with a price: You become googleable, traceable, you become attached to a biography available online, a profession, and so on. In a few cases I chose to stick to my pseudonym even after several meetings. The pseudonyms became so natural to me, that after a while it did not even feel like lying when the other person was referring to me by that name.

### Chatting, texting, sexting

As described before, semifiction is a common modality in the world of online dating. Facts (age/height/weight) are being tweaked here and there. Sexting does not care for facts as it is driven by desire. Chatting while being horny is a form of writing without someone. Kay’s story has not happened as such, nor was I interested to directly use lived encounters to devise a plot. The sexual field mainly served as a source of energy for me, as a way to keep up my lust for writing. Rather than following a specific script, I moved from one process into another, in and out of situations, working and living with texts. Often, I did not know where those texts lead, what to do with them. I create hundreds of documents, emails to myself, notes distilled from chats, dialogues, theoretical texts and pure spinning.

### Role play

When I started to go into the “sexual field” in 2017, I had already been initiated – I knew how to play the game. I knew the basic rules or lack of rules online, and I had come to invent my own online etiquette. I knew about the drastic divide between digital reality and real life (online portraits might be ten years old and more); about the timings of a first contact, the degrees of interest and allowing access (messaging, exchanging photos, disclosing the real name); I knew exactly how ghosting, gaslighting,

60 Or an auto-autofiction, in the case of *SEHR*.

61 The sociologist Carolyn Ellis defines autoethnography as an approach that, “strives to describe personal experience (auto) and to systematically analyze it (graphy), to understand a cultural experience (ethno). Canonical patterns, ways of doing research are being put into question. Research becomes a political and social act.” Researchers use elements of autobiography and ethnography to practice autoethnography. Therefore autoethnography both describes a method as well as a process.” Chang: p. 288.



fading out, not showing-up, and all other forms of “exiting” can make one feel. I had learned the vocabulary and acronyms for different sexual preferences, identities, and so on. In dating as semifiction one fabricates versions of oneself. Those selves enter into a game with others. For *Kay or a Case* I practiced dating as adventure. I used it to quickly “access”, to get into contact with people that I chose, or that had chosen me. I strongly perceived dating as an actual heterosexual role game. There is a variety of cultural and gendered scripts at play: Introduction, choice of meeting place, conversational patterns, patterns of behavior. And there is a more or less gendered script what a person should feel, or how these feelings should be expressed. This is why dating becomes an interesting site for artistic intervention. For *Kay, or a Case* I set out to observe the digital codes d’amour, to disrupt and intervene in them. I moved out of my own comfort zone and tried out different positionalities. I met people with special profiles and not so special profiles. I performed against the stereotype of the love-seeking heterosexual woman to study if I merely “copy male strategies”, or if I can come up with something else: Example sentence from my Tinder account:

*Only one-night stands, please. Thank you.*

The early Kay of my imagination still had supernatural powers similar to Wonder Woman. Over time, I realized that I could not really write her. If role play is part of a culturally informed sexual script in online dating – those scripts can be re-engineered in and through a literary script. Performing this literary script again in a semifictional role play became a strategy for me to make them real, to make myself believe in the fiction that I had created. See *On Higher Love*.

## — Fictocriticism

Attributing the novel *SEHR* to Kay allowed me to withdraw myself from the position of the author and to look at Kay from a different angle. As the title of my thesis suggests, Kay is approached as a case, a vessel for intensity (“woman”, “womb”) and as a specific case, a story of intensity. Kay’s intensity is characterized through a specific relation towards time and mortality. Here again the double move of speaking from a character and about a character, Kay, allows me to grasp intensity as a specific historic product: An intensity that is still bound to biologic reproduction. Initially I had planned to publish a whole journal to look at Kay and her oeuvre *SEHR* from the future. The journal is a medium which I have used for over a decade. In hindsight, I have come to understand that my tendency to work with fictional characters and the appropriation of genres can be attributed to “fictocriticism” or “ficto/critical writing”. The writers Chris Kraus and Mark von Schlegell have used the term to describe something they share in their works: “Our novels are very informed, in different ways, by research and concerns beyond the scope of “character” and “plot”.<sup>62</sup> The fictocritical plays with outside textual fields within a text. One example for this strategy are paratexts that recursively relate to other texts, e.g. like the conversation *On Higher Love* to the eighth episode in *SEHR*. According to Gerrit Haas it can be defined as a “peculiar textual conduct which inextricably intersects fictional with critical discourses as well as aesthetics with poetics and ethics.”<sup>63</sup>

62 Maggie Nelson’s “The Argonauts”, Chris Kraus’ “I love dick” and Monika Rinck’s “Ah, das Love Ding!” have been major literary influences for my work. <https://obieg.pl/en/125-beyond-fictocriticism>

63 Haas: back cover.



# Writing as Research

Form and content, intent and intensity cannot be separated. The researcher is often not conscious of the direction of their writing. The writer gets tempted by the material. He/she/they cannot help to write with and through specific forms (pronouns, prepositions, and so on). He/she/they become/s a medium of what wants to be written and vice versa. Writing as research and writing in the field of artistic research takes this reciprocity into account. In his essay *Phantom als Methode und vice versa (Phantom as a method and vice versa)*, Ferdinand Schmatz states:

While writing I imagine a form” [or: “I have a form in my head”] “which corresponds to the respective content or that has emerged during the writing. Although I’m convinced that I write according to rules or norms, it also writes in me: The method is a phantom and the phantom is the method. The transfer from contents into the material form of language is a reciprocal process. In language we do not have atoms like in physics or molecules like in chemistry, but we have letters. When I see letters, I see content that also can be totally surprising. I read the letters LEBEN (life) in the sense of an everyday and banal term, but all of a sudden, I see a palindrome or an anagram and I read NEBEL (fog).

The text is never ready and it can always be read differently. Wherever the text leads, it “must not forget its nature as language, and it is this which ultimately makes an encounter with writing inevitable.”<sup>64</sup>

## — Meaning

Generally, my works explore how meaning is made – literally, where and how meaning takes place (in a name, or in a body, for instance). Further, I set out how to shake the mechanism and structures of meaning making through re-writing, vocalising, and other language practices. Philosophically speaking, my take on “meaning” is based on a pragmatic, inferential understanding of language, as represented by Ludwig Wittgenstein and most recently by Robert B. Brandom. Furthermore, my writings have been influenced by phenomenological practices and a “literary primitivism” (see Heinz Werner) that emphasizes the unity between the signifier and the signified. I align myself with a semantic holism that considers the meaning of a sentence only to be understood if the context of a whole language, if the performative context of a speech act, is taken into consideration. Sense is not being produced through the relation to an object outside of language but will emerge through the relation among linguistic elements and its expressionist charge. The art philosopher Susanne K. Langer has analyzed the relation between feeling and form in music, literature, film, etc. According to her definition: “Art is the creation of symbolic forms of human feeling.”<sup>65</sup> In order to grasp this feeling, to elicit some knowledge from it, we must look at the symbolic forms, the specific structure of art.

64 Barthes, 1986, p. 316, In Van Manen: p. 364.

65 Langer: p. 40.

I search for moments of intensity in the context of a discursive game with terms, less in relation to their representative function. And it is in this sense that I seek to trigger tensions that occur in the making of meaning, to render visible how and where meaning surfaces.

## — Re-sensing

The concept of re-sensing (*EntSinnung*) first came to me during my research for the publication series *Toponymisches Heft*. The fictional linguist J.C. Duenkel practices re-sensing as a de-colonial cure. He speaks in and to the landscape to get rid of unwanted memories attached to specific place names. Sensing (“sich einfühlen”) into a specific place or object allows him to access a state of openness where new meanings can surface.



“P – abysses of a consonant.” J.C. Duenkel in Peru. *Toponymisches Heft* Nr. 2, p. 72.

In German *sich entsinnen* means “to remember”. The prefix *ent-* of this transitive verb cannot be entirely translated into English but shares some qualities of the prefixes *de-*, *re-*, or *dis-*.<sup>66</sup> *Ent-* takes off sense (*Sinn*) and gives new sense at the same time. I have for a long time felt attracted to the dialectics of *ent-*. My master thesis plays with the double sense of the term “*Ent-fernung*” (dis-tance).

66 I’m tempted to think of prefixes like antechambers. They generate a ‘*Stimmung*’, a word atmosphere, generating an anticipation of what might happen: Delusion. Decreation. Recreation. Disentanglement. Entartung, Entfernung, Entgleisung. Entsinnung.

In daily life re-sensing might just happen by coincidence. Suddenly a word or term appears different to us, we hear a nuance that we have not perceived before and this might suddenly give us a totally new understanding. Curiously, I had such an epiphany with the word “understanding” itself.<sup>67</sup> An unheard or unseen aspect surfaced in the word-Gestalt that induces an epistemological shift.<sup>68</sup>

Re-sensing allows simultaneous recalling and ridding of meaning within language. The concept has mutated and shapeshifted from the literary space into the real world. Duenkel’s de-colonialist technique and ritual of forgetting turned into a performative vocal practice. Since 2019 I have practiced *re-sensings* of single words (“gap”, “understanding”, “Jens”, “womb”, “lieben”) during my lecture performances. The procedure is simple: One starts off to say the word out loud to then repeat it over and over again. The word morphs into something else, the boundaries between the before and after get blurry. The repetition of this speech act or word-action, allows one to access the potential of repetition of its pure form, to forget even if it is only for a while the assigned meaning to that word. What is gained then is, to speak with Gertrude Stein an “open feeling (...) one can achieve difference precisely by remaining receptive to the possible effects emerging throughout the repetitive act.”<sup>69</sup> Re-sensing can be used as a critical spatial practice, at a particular site, or in daily life whenever one feels annoyed or threatened by a word/concept. I very much recommend it as a personal ritual as well as a means for inventing new words.<sup>70</sup>

## Lecture Performance

I usually use the sober term “lecture” or “Vortrag” to announce my lecture performances. This choice is related to how I have myself become an artist-performer as well as to my practice of over/understating what is expected to come. For over two decades I have been fascinated with the speech as a genre: I have studied political speeches, mundane speeches during family festivities and historical speeches such as during the Spanish Colonization of the Americas. The academic lecture as “expert speech” ever since served as a conceptual framework for my work and performative attitude. As exemplified in the video *Intensity in Language* the set up is minimal and non-theatrical – there is no overt costume, nor stage. I often assume the somewhat aloof attitude of an academic researcher that is on top of her material, to then seamlessly introduce moments of doubt, glitches in positionality. Often people have given me the feedback that they wondered *who* was speaking. I seek this ambiguity, this inconsistency of an identity and I have made use of it as a tension, an intensity of its own.

I gave my first undercover performances at university seminars. This is where I received my first training in how to quote, how to generate belief, how to use theory as

67 See also re-sensing in Cocker, Daus, Séraphin: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/618624/621036/588/136>

68 This touches upon what Wittgenstein has called “aspect change” and “aspect seeing”; on how meaning is experienced. In his *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein also elaborates on the relation between tone and meaning in reading. The artist and researcher Tine Melzer has published on this topic and initiated a Symposium on Aspect Change. See: Melzer: p. 145-158.

69 Stein: <https://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks16/1600671h.html>

70 Cordula Daus on re-sensing in <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/618624/621036/588/136>

a form of storytelling. I'm writing this while being fully aware that the lecture performance has of course its own genealogy in art history.<sup>71</sup> Over the last decades I have been following the works of artists, composers and performers Andrea Frazer, Tony Cokes, Sharon Hayes, Erick Beltrán, Dan Graham, Christine Meisner, Sonia Boyce, Jérôme Bel, Tim Etchells, Robert Ashley, Mark Leckey, Alessandro Bosetti, Simone Aughtterlony, Erik Bünger, just to name a few of my favorites. As a friend of the Berlin-based performance collectives She She Pop and Gob Squad, I have been in close exchange with internationally performing artists. My own lecture performances yet – I think – are more influenced by an appropriation of academic gestures and by the inbred flavor of my own institutions.

There was even a particular moment of revelation to this aesthetical choice: During a research trip in the summer 2008 I witnessed a linguist giving a lecture at the University of Seville. While showing a map of the Iberian Peninsula, he was elaborating in-depth on morphological changes of Spanish toponyms of Arabic origin. His speech was serious and highly specific, I could barely understand what he was talking about, yet it was precisely this non-understanding that I enjoyed the most. The experience has stuck with me and I have tried to emulate this spirit in my own lectures — to exhaust the serious work of meaning making, to over- or underdo the work of interpretation. From 2009 onwards, I have performed my books and its characters.<sup>72</sup> Footnotes, images of artefacts and other references to invented authors and quotations appear as seminal elements within my presentations/readings. Often my lectures are accompanied by a slide show. The modes of speaking, saying or demonstrating, reading, quoting seamlessly merge into singing, showing, and introduction of semi-fictional characters and worlds.

In *Kay, or a Case* I have for the first time not departed from a finished book. The lecture performance rather became a translational research practice for me, a form of making text come to life. Of finding and embodying different voices. And this practice commenced long before the actual event. I started to write with/for an audience. And during the writing I probed sentences with a microphone. Using live voice filters helped me to hear myself as someone else and thus to hear my own texts “from outside”. The voice effects have started to feedback, to affect the written text. Graphical elements, the slide show itself became an important element – I started to develop independent audio-graphical pieces as stand-alone encapsulated works within the lecture performance. In *Kay or a Case*, the script for a lecture becomes part of the novel and vice versa. Particles of lecture performances, such as graphics, have morphed into new independent works.

Over the last years I have learned not to overwork the script for a lecture, rather to develop it through several rehearsals. Since the beginning of our PhD research Charlotte Ruth and me have been the “outside eyes” for each and supported each other in this process. A good lecture performance might be scripted and rehearsed, yet, the challenge is to stay open to the very moment. I personally find it very exciting to witness when a thinking or decision process happens live. To see how a performer is implied. To allow for liveness. To allow things to go wrong.

71 Frank, p. 3

72 An invitation by Ellen Blumenstein and Tanja Schomaker was seminal here. I gave my first live lecture performance within the series *Performing Books* at Salon Populaire/Berlin in November 2010. See also: <https://www.salonpopulaire.de/>

# JENS

Hey. Do I like your voice?

This was a voice message from Jens.

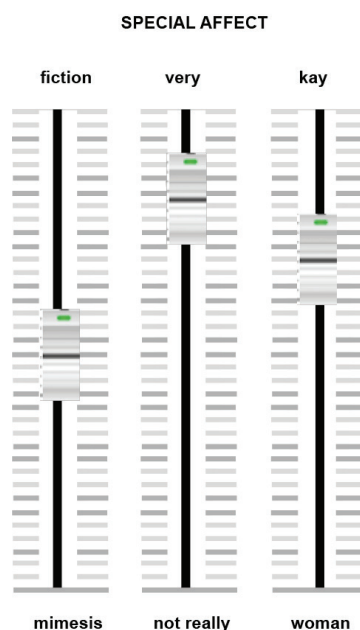
Jens lies on Kay's canapé playing a video game. He wears a dark-blue hoody, no trousers. Kay starts with his ankles, his calves, the inside of his thighs. She moves on to his forehead. Continues to describe the bridge of his nose.

I'm into writing. Actually, I just want to describe you.

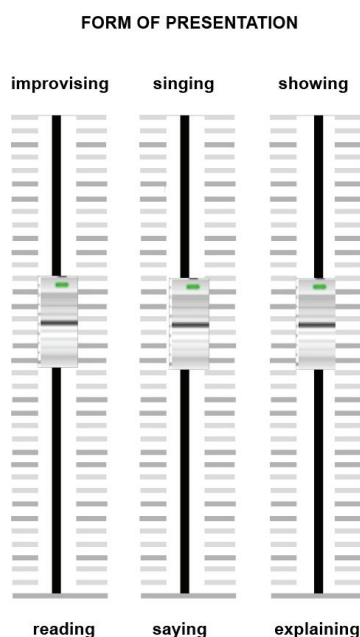
Stills from *Jens*, lecture, Angewandte, 28.5. 2019



## — Mixing

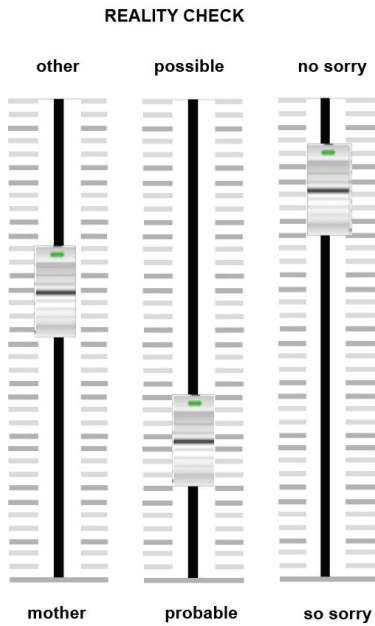


Some time ago, Charlotta Ruth recommended me to look at The Mixing Desk of LARP, which became an important inspiration (see *Appendix E*). I started to move from two dimensional horizontal scales to three dimensional vertical scales pertaining to the field of sound. Images and sketches of a mixing board turned into epistemic objects; the use of a real mixing board informed my vocal practice. In *Kay or a Case* I approach intensity as a fadable quality. Sentences, single words are being modulated, changed and mixed. Faders, the mixing desk is being explored as a place that regains control over intensity. Affects are treated like effects and vice versa.



I made many sketches of faders and used them in different contexts and situations. The helped me to think of feelings or specific states as variable parameters (e.g., Kay's fucking, loving, grieving) or to think of possible attitudes in relation to lecture performances.





The images became like mind-maps. Parallely, I started to use an actual mixing board to test my writing, in lecture performances or in collaborative works.



Inside the participatory performance *Questionology*, we used the mixer as “mood board” – a technomagical device that allowed the audience to adjust their inner settings. Shortly upon arrival the visitor was asked to see “whichdoctor”, a role that Charlotta Ruth and I developed in collaboration with the performer [M] Dudeck. They entered a tent-like structure protruding from the building where whichdoctor appeared on a screen. In a casual conversation whichdoctor asked the visitor to locate their actual mood (e.g., “How are you on a curiosity level?”). This could be done by moving specific faders of the mixer. A sound was emitted that changed in pitch, melody, frequency (and other modalities that could be interpreted as intensity in sound) according to the position of the slider. As a next step the visitor was encouraged to



self-manipulate this state/mood. Differently to the sketch above, there were no words attached. The visitor was only guided through three questions from whichdoctor and the attribution between sound and meaning happened on a rather intuitive level. Together with our collaborator, Simon Repp, who was responsible for the programming and sound design, we worked with site-specific sounds. Within Questionology the visit at the whichdoctor's resembles that of a rite de passage that helped the visitor to enter the magic realism of the performance. Whichdoctor's basic function was to secure this transition, to check upon the visitor's personal resistances and desires. In a final session their journey was discussed and whichdoctor issued a dream prescription to support the fabrication of a memory/story.

## Questionology

Questionology (2019 - ongoing),<sup>73</sup> is an art project by Charlotta Ruth and myself focusing on questioning supported by techniques deriving from language art, choreography, midwifery, neuro-science, phenomenology, witchcraft, and software engineering. The work is site and context specific and of participatory nature materializing as workshops, digital writing, participatory environments, lecture-performances, choreography and publications in different forms.

Dialogues, interviews and semifictional conversations had been an integral part of my artistic practice for a long time. Charlotta Ruth herself had worked with dialogical situations within the realm of instruction-based art, participatory performance and game art. In 2019 at the Research Pavilion #3 in Venice we initiated Questionology in the format of a live installation.

In the following I will give different examples from our collaborative practice and my literary work that show how the question as a linguistic form and questioning as a gesture and situation relate to my inquiries into intensity.

### — Borrowing a Question

How high must an elevation be to be called “hill”?

#### LEVEL 1

How high must a feeling be to be called “love”?

How wide must a feeling be to be called “love”?

How deep must a feeling be to be called “love”?

How often must a feeling be to be called “love”?

How long must a feeling be to be called “love”?

73 The practice of naming would have deserved a chapter of its own. The sound of names, here, science and quiz show...

## LEVEL 2

How long must a feeling be to be called “love”?  
How must a loving be to call “feeling”?  
How feels “longing” to call a love?  
How called must love feel to “a”?  
How feels musting a love call?  
How must calling feel to “loving”?  
How long must feeling “be” to call?  
How must a “longing” be to love?  
[...]  
How “feel” be?  
How be?

A couple of years ago I found a sentence on a German Wikipedia site.<sup>74</sup> It immediately spoke to me and ever since I have used it for my own writing and language-based artistic research. To work with the same sentence over a hundred times has provided deep insights into the functioning of language. (What does a sentence do? What is the language system? What happens when meaning becomes transported from one word, an image, a body to another? What happens when we delegate the process of making meaning?)

During the participatory performance *Questionology*, I/we invite the visitors to borrow this particular sentence to enter into a co-writing and co-thinking exercise. The goal is to fathom “a question of matter”, a question that matters to oneself. The material for this question might have emerged during the same day, or it could come from something that one has pondered upon for a longer time – in our case, it may have materialized during the journey of Questionology.

The procedure then works as follows: Small groups of three or four are formed. The raw question material is written down. Whatever comes to the mind is welcome. The next step consists in borrowing the ready-made question as a support structure for further thinking.

How \_\_\_\_\_ must a/n \_\_\_\_\_ be, to be called “\_\_\_\_\_”?

The task now consists in formatting the raw material from before into the structure of this sample question. The first gap asks for an adjective, the second for a noun. Both gaps stand in a relational dependency. They ask for the intensity of a “howness”. The last gap asks for another thing in quotation marks. The quotation marks are seminal here as they give each writer a kind of carte blanche in naming, “whatever you want to say”. Usually this is where a humorous element comes in. A new question is formed and written down. It is passed on to the co-writer on the right. The question will in total make three rounds before returning to the first writer. During each round the sentence is re-written and will change form. Each writer shapes the question in

74 “Wie hoch muss eine Erhebung sein, um ‘Berg’ genannt zu werden?” Unfortunately, the article has been re-written meanwhile and I can’t locate the original sentence anymore. See: Wikipedia, Berg, last visited on 28.2.2022

a way that seems most appropriate for them. New ideas are okay, but not needed. The co-writers may appropriate the given material, re-shuffle the order of verbs, turn verbs into nouns and vice versa. In the last step the question arrives to its original author. The participants are encouraged to now take response-ability of it again and shape it according to their needs.

“Questions that matter” are often personal and private. While instructing this exercise as a performer I witnessed the most astonishing discussions between complete strangers. The moment when a question “came back” to its authors after having circulated through two or three other minds, was usually experienced as rewarding. Some participants experienced it “like a gift”. A great part of the exercise consisted in learning how to overcome one’s perfectionism, how to unlearn to outsmart each other, how to co-think in a small collective thinking unit.

By delegating decisions to a system – here the structure of a ready-made sentence – the participant can’t be held responsible for the exact content that has been generated inside this automated or semi-automated writing/creation process. They are freed from the backside of response-ability which could be felt as a certain pressure to produce a perfect answer or solution.

## — Chatting

Rek: Where are you?  
Kay: BERLIN. Walking.  
Rek: I can’t think of anything else in this moment.  
Rek: Come back.  
Kay: Wait. I need to focus.  
Rek: Seriously. Let’s sit down for ten minutes and focus.  
Rek: Ten minutes, yes.  
Rek: I’ll make sure, I’m in private.  
Kay: Are you at work?  
Rek: I am.  
Kay: Where are you?  
Kay: What’s your profession?  
Rek: Music business. Like a consultant.  
Kay: Consulting whom.  
Kay: Record companies.  
Rek: No, artist side.  
Rek: What are you?  
Kay: Not now.  
Rek: I’m going to go down in the lockup.  
Kay: What?  
Rek: A storage unit that’s part of our building.  
Rek: I feel the blood.  
Kay: No touching.

Rek and Kay check each other out. Add the sounds or effects of a mobile app: Each message linked to a tone, a vibration, or a flash. Depending on the writers”

commitment and ability a duel like the one above might last a minute only. Text here works as a pacemaker. There is the intensity of frequency, of speed, and the intensity of content. Questions can be direct, too direct or beat around the bush. They immediately set a tone. The software of the app might have fabricated the match – still, the actors need to come to a kind of deal with each other.

During my research in the field of online dating I realized there was something in the act of questioning that went beyond its communicative function (the desire of wanting to know).

In the fourth service Jens asks:

- What are you into?
- At the moment I'm totally into writing, Kay says.
- I want to describe you. Nothing else.
- Do I have to be present for that?
- Yes.

Kay exercises the art of description comparable with nude drawing. Questions are used to prompt qualitative data from her object of desire:

- What kind of eye color is this?
- Greybrown.
- Can you say that again?
- Greybrown.

Kay gets hooked on Jens, the person in flesh, his voice. The act of asking-Jens, of writing-Jens generates an in-tension, a state of contemplation. Questioning here resembles a form of auto-affect. It is practiced as a form of fathoming and re-sensing the other.

Most interrogative sentences establish a relation even if there is none. Questions are directed. There is a call, a want. Someone, something is being convoked to respond. *What's the time?* (See also *Intensity in Language*). What if there is no response? In the third service, Kay engages in a strange monologue with herself, speaking without the light technician Sef. She avoids to ask him anything directly. Questions make the answerer vulnerable. As soon as they're expressed, they can be left alone, hovering in the air.

- Hey Sef, I see the green light. You're online again!
- 
- How beautiful is your silence!

— — —

—I'm attracted by the gap you have arranged between us.

There are other passages in *SEHR* where it is not clear who is speaking, who is asking whom. The gesture of questioning here acquires a more existential dimension — a state that touches upon what the philosopher Klaus Heinrich called *Ver-antwortung* (response-ability).<sup>75</sup>

Dr Samstag appeared, Samstag, that was really his name. She asked if it was normal, she was so very. Dr Samstag asked if she consented. And Kay nodded, shook her head. What should he say. Kay walked across the floor in her socks, you can leave them on, and lay down. Kay wished she wasn't there. The anesthetist had a name, Maria or something. She stroked her arm. A "Schnapps" for the nausea, don't you worry. Dora thought of. A last scrap of intention contorted her face, then she/it was gone, quite gone, just as desired.

Questions allow one to speak with-out the other, with-out oneself, with language (to borrow a preposition from Alenka Zupančič). In and through questioning one establishes a connection with a voice, with oneself — at the same time one is fabricating this connection, this self.

75 "Expressions like 'to put something' or 'someone' into question actually put the whole existence of the person in suspense. (...) After all, it will not be a coincidence that the answers, which are so closely related to the questions, refer to one or perhaps the central concept of ethics - 'response-ability' (...) they nevertheless indicate that questioning and the question have a certain ontological significance." Heinrich: p. 99.

.....

# On Higher Love (L)

## Cordula Daus in Conversation with [M] Dudeck

.....

Cordula Daus: I'm very happy that you accepted my invitation to engage in a close reading of a book which sparked controversy when it came out in the early 2020s: Kay's *SEHR*. I'd like to talk about a specific chapter with you, the "8th service". It has sparked my interest as it describes a very peculiar idea of love.

For all those who haven't read the book, I'll give a short summary. The "8th service" tells the lightning love story between the protagonist Kay and a man-like creature called Nyam. Kay and Nyam meet at a public swimming pool in Berlin. A few days later, they marry. The ceremony is conducted by La Mago, a character that, as far as we know, has been inspired by you. You're an artist and witch doctor and knew the author personally, didn't you?

[M] Dudeck: Yes, Kay was a close friend of my husband and me.

C I was wondering about the groom. In the introduction we learn that Nyam's face is made of foam. How do we have to picture this "man"? Is he a mere puppet or a human at all?

[M] To be precise, the German text says: "Fresse aus Schaumstoff, Augen so schwarz wie keine Kohle". So foamed material meets coal, metaphor meets matter. I personally do not think Nyam is a puppet, nor a cyborg. He is a being made of flesh, material and letters.

C In the courting scene on the lawn, Nyam reveals a sudden athleticism

which makes him attractive for Kay: He does a capoeira-style handstand and spontaneously carries her child on the back. Kay decides to marry him almost instantly. The crucial passage reads: “Kay is determined that Nyam will take her to the next level without passing the falling-in-love-field: higher love!” What is meant by higher love?

[M] That’s a complex question and we need to look at the novel as a whole to approach it. Kay developed a linguistic metric and erotic style of her own. The term higher love stands in relation to meaning lesser sex. Our protagonist has literally fucked herself to a heightened state of consciousness. She realizes that things do not work out with heterosexual men – and that, in a Lacanian sense, there is no relation – not even a so-called casual relation. The solution Kay comes up with is to marry someone outside of the human species. But to get there, she needs the help of La Mago, the witch doctor.

C Grammatically speaking, we’re dealing with a comparative of second degree: love – higher love – highest love. Still, it is unclear to me what is being compared to what.

[M] This has been a problem for me prior and remains one to this day. It aligns with my distaste for New Age plastic notions of a “higher self” which descend from Freud’s notion of the Superego (which itself descends from Jewish principles of abstract monotheism). The notion of “higher” in terms of transcendental theology is generally meant to describe the spiritual subtle plane lacking in sediment or polluted by base desire, the bodily, or the abject (Kristeva). This Higher Plane within the Abrahamic religions is typically performed by the androgynous angels – who lack bodies of flesh and are instead made of light, merging male and female in heavenly ether. I don’t think Kay was after this kind of dematerialization. She had no desire to ascend to Mount High and disintegrate. Rather, I felt that she longed for a liaison – part flesh, part fiction – a liaison, or an interdimensional consort.

C Why does Kay immediately upgrade the courting ritual to permanence? Why do you think she wants to marry at all?

[M] The story confronts us with a strange inversion of the culturally prescribed chronology of feelings. The love confession, expected to occur in an intimate setting before the marriage, is performed publicly at the center of the wedding ritual. As readers, we witness the production of love through its vocalization. We argue that through Kay’s realization that Nyam is fabricated aligns with the earlier signals that what she has been seeking all of this time is the hybrid – a being that is only partially sentient – and she wants not only to merge, but to build and grow and form an institution.

C If we look at the first edition of the book, “I love you” is written in superscript. How must we imagine the sound of this sentence?

[M] To grasp the full meaning, I suggest we read the scene out loud together.

LA MAGO

love  
a small word unable to hold  
while we stretch at its meaning  
after all, l o v i n g means  
to do this stretching together.  
Please repeat: I love you.

KAY/NYAM

I love you.

Kay sagt es gleich nochmal, um es sich einzuprägen.

KAY

I love you.  
Sie kann das aussprechen! Und zwar genauso. Es ist ihr erstes Mal.

LA MAGO

Beautiful. Don't forget to work out every day.

[M] As you just heard, "I love you" is being repeated, and sung – not only spoken. The musicality can be understood as a form of artifice seeping into the ritual. From another point of view, it is a simple mimicry of the way I used to say and still say "I love you" to my husband. The question is still why Kay has to learn to say "I love you".

C To be honest, I can totally identify with her. Only very seldom have I said "Ich liebe Dich" to a lover or partner. There is no way I can own this sentence. But putting my own psychological disablement aside – I think there is also a cultural dimension to that constraint. It seems to me as if the German language imposed a higher pressure of truth on the native Ich-liebe-Dich-Sayer. Deutsch seems to suggest: "Say it like you mean it, or shut the fuck up!"<sup>(O)</sup> But how does it sound when we really mean something? And – more importantly – could we get into loving just by saying "it"? Loving and the will to believe seem to be very much connected.

[M] Can we believe in something that we have invented, fabricated ourselves? This is one of my fundamental questions. A short answer is: of course. Do you believe in Justice? Do you believe in Morality? Do you believe in Love? Most of the things humans believe in are fabrications or constructions. But going deeper – the question whether a person can believe in an



overt fabrication, a fiction that is glaringly obvious, is far more interesting and theological. Belief is a matter of projection. When one goes to see a healer who does a ritual of transformation, it is not the healer who heals you, it is your belief projected onto that healer that enables you to heal yourself. Placebo effect is the essence of Religion. Higher love, in Kay's sense, might be about restoring the belief in one's capacity to create one's own reality.

C 32 years ago you began to create your own religion. That was at the same time you came out as a witch doctor, right?

[M] Yes, exactly. I have always preferred the notion of making Magick over Prayer. Prayer is passive whereas Magick is assertion. In prayer, one humbly asks for things to happen as one wishes them, in Magick one decides that what one seeks is already happening. The origin of the Hebrew word "Abarakadabara" literally translates to "I say it and therefore it is."

C If I wanted to marry tomorrow – how would we go about it?

[M] In my Religion as Art, literally everything in one's life must be created by oneself, or collaboratively in terms of collective living. This means that the holiest person is one who has created their own home and clothing, has grown, spiced and cooked their own meals, designed their own languages, created their own religious frameworks, their own rituals, their own codes and constructs. Therefore, if we wanted to get married tomorrow, we would have to build our house, build the temple for our marriage, draw the invitations<sup>(V)</sup>, design robes for all the guests, choreograph the ritual, make blueprints for our love-temple and design our intentions together.

C There is so much left to talk about<sup>(E)</sup>, yet I'm afraid we already hit the bottom of this page.

M Abarakadabara.

(L) This text has been generated throughout a series of recorded and live conversations with the artist [M] Dudeck. I asked [M] to comment on an episode of my novel that I translated for him into English. We exchanged several audio messages after that which I used as material to script a semifictional conversation. Our dialogue is set in the year 2040, two years after Kay's death. [M] acts as an expert of the text (and former friend of the fictional author) whilst I, the actual author, embody the role of an interviewer and editor. This role play enabled me to step out of my role as an author of *SEHR*, to re-contextualize and interpret the

novel. Other language-based artistic researchers have worked similarly – just to mention a few colleagues and their respective approaches: Emma Cocker (“conversation-as-material”); Goda Palekaitė (“co-writing with the historical other”), Rosie Heinrich (“writing through other people’s voices”), Nirav Christoph (“polyphonic creative writing”).

(O) Erik Bünger: It seems to you that in German there is a tighter relationship between the words and the feeling. Almost as if there existed an injunction against saying this unless you feel it first. The English phrase “I love you” appears to work precisely the other way around in your text. First comes the phrase, then comes the feeling. For Kay to be able to feel love she is advised to repeat the phrase “I love you” again and again. A little bit like Luther telling people to kneel and pray and belief will come. (...) So a possible answer to the question “Can we believe in something that we have fabricated ourselves?” might be: “Yes, we are doing this all the time. As soon as we stop doing it, we are screwed.”

(V) View: <https://vimeo.com/693448970/0194eca14c>

For the Public Colloquium of the PhD program, I recorded a video documentation in which [M] and I rehearse this interview, trying out statements, fabulating together. I then continued to work on the script. A first version of the text has been published originally in Research Envelope #4 by Zentrum Fokus Forschung. I have only made a few adaptations to it.

(E) About strawberries and entheogens, for example.



# KAY, ORA CASE

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FOR INTENSITY

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## Wonder Woman

8. März 2018

## Zupančič: *Was ist Sex?*

Sprechen und VögelThese: Die Befriedigung im Sprechen ist sexuell. Sie ist keine Ersatzbefriedigung. Das Sprechen selbst ist sexuell [...]

10. Dezember 2020

## Privat: Ex-Mutter e.V.

ExMutter e.V.i.d.Z ist ein eingetragener Verein in der Zukunft. Der Name wurde ca. 2020 von Kay ohne weitere [...]

26. Mai 2020

## Rilke: Über das Fragen leben

Brief Rilkes an seinen Protegé Franz Xaver Kappus: „Sie sind so jung, so vor allem Anfang, und ich [...]

29. April 2020

## Susanne K. Langer: Fühlen und Form

Eine Theorie der Kunst Form findet innerhalb von Symbolisierungsbeziehungen statt und liegt nicht einfach vor. 13 For meaning [...]

7. August 2021

## Foucault: Sexualität und Wahrheit

Erster Band Der Wille zum Wissen Histoire de la sexualité, 1: La volonté du savoir, 1976 Vorwort Grundfrage: [...]

2. Juni 2020

## Briefe von Rilke: Liebe und Einsamkeit

Brief 1 An Paula Becker-Modersohn Bremen, am 12. Febr. 1902 Liebe Frau Modersohn, erlauben Sie, daß ich einige [...]

6. Mai 2020

## Soliman: Ghosting

ghosting seit 2015 Eintrag im Collins, einem der wichtigsten englischen Wörterbücher: (ˈɡəʊstɪŋ) SUBSTANTIV informal the act or [...]

29. April 2020

## Brandom: Begründen und Begreifen

Eine Einführung in den Inferentialismus, Frankfurt am Main 2001 Inhalt 0. Einleitung Semantischer Inferentialismus und logischer Expressivismus Handlung [...]

10. Februar 2021

Bearbeiten

## Chunks of Acker: Best of interviews

Kay's exercises in the 2010s gave way to sometimes utopian fantasy, like the one she created in Nyam. [...]

26. Mai 2020

## Privat: Looking for authors:

Evolutionary biology Zuleyma Tang-Martinez Professor Emerita of Biology, University of Missouri-St. Louis <https://theconversation.com/data-should-smash-the-biological-myth-of-promiscuous-males-and-sexually-coy-females-59665> Anne Fausto Sterling \*1944 [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne\\_Fausto-Sterling](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne_Fausto-Sterling) [...]

26. Mai 2020

Screenshot from kay11.net

# Research Diary

In 2017, at the beginning of my PhD, I started a private blog. My aim was to collect inspiring material from books and films, as well as to document the experience of my inquiry. Basically, I wanted to establish a place to which I could come back whenever I lost the thread. The blog also allowed for a first – even if purely imaginary – audience of my texts. The following fragments are taken from a rubric of this blog that I exclusively shared with my dramatic advisor, Daniela Plügge (dp) and my supervisor, Ferdinand Schmatz (fs). To make it more accessible to the reader I have added titles as well as some retrospective notes in italics and a right column with keywords. Disclaimer: Editing a diary in retrospect is a tricky endeavor. The researcher is tempted to autocorrect herself, make herself appear smarter than she was at a given moment. I tried to avoid that.

2017

8.9. **Missing place**

The subject is so wide! The fear that this is leading where I don't want to go: into myself. I need a *place* from which I can write from. *beginnings*

My previous works had a clear framework; a geographical place; a discipline (toponymy, linguistics, archeology, seismology). And now? *positionality*

*I spent endless time searching for the right form!*

11.9. **A novel in body form**

I wish to write a 'novel.' A novel that evades the tyranny of the plot, the melodrama.

dp asks How does the body of the author relate to the character? The author places herself at disposal. Aim: To rehabilitate the body as measure of intensity, to develop a differentiated language. *theory fiction*

Addendum,  
17:35

Right now the novel seems to grow into the science, the science into the novel.  
Could body parts be connected to specific knowledges?  
The tongue – Freudian analysis  
The skin – Literature  
The heart – Seismology  
The womb – Feminism  
The knee – Movement

2.10. **A general feeling studies**

Writing towards a general feeling studies. Like a seismologist or meteorologist. Each feeling is based on an event. There is no evaluation, no judgment.

*It rains.* *grammar of feeling*

What rains? "Was this where the name of a God used to be?" (Blumenberg) Using the impersonal. Re-engineering the existing scales of feeling. Den Lust- und Leidfaden der Figur erschreiben.

3.10. **Exercises in Relaxation**

I started an experiment that I call ‘writing without focus’ which I carry out for one hour per day. Reduce the production pressure. Reduce the intensity of intention. *free writing*

*Academic and research-based projects are often overdetermined and can gain from this method. It takes time to free oneself from a project description, an initial intention as expressed in an application or alike.*

This experiment runs parallel to the research and self-experiment in the field of online-dating. *parallelity*

17.10. **Expanded History**

The conceptual history of intensity can be found in dictionaries. Coup: cd develops a new history of the concept departing from her own sources, conducts a search for new sources. She loves to excerpt and takes off in between. *excerpting*

A conversation under the influence of Luce Irigaray’s book *Sexual difference* and her quest for a female form of speech and sexuality. cd speaks about giving birth. And about not giving birth. Also an experience that tips death. dp has never shared her body but reckons that this experience has not yet been radically enough explored. Women can be two, can restart with every new cycle. Terms are missing, or the images. *reproduction vs. creation*

What if the female body was taken (more) serious(ly) as basis of experience. *You can’t have it all*. What do we mean by all and how far is this all an important, feminist demand *and* at the same time connected to a liberal logic? How would this “all” look like in terms of Kay? *all*

Maggie Nelson in *The Argonauts* has a and+and+and-approach. Example: The sodomitical mother! dp aks: Could the bodily be separated from the biographical (in view of the bigger intersection?)

## NOVEL: FORM

### 23.10. **A new woman**

I recorded a snippet from a BBC podcast with Joye Murchison Kelly – later Joye Hummel – the first writer to work on *Wonder Woman*. (The respective comic strip of an Amazonian princess with superhuman strength created by the psychologist William Marston in 1941.)

*wonder woman*  
*semifictionality*  
*prosody*

Joye: “Actually... can I say this?.. one of the reasons that I was hired is in my youth. I may have had an appearance and definitively the attitude of Wonder Woman. I’m a brunette, weighed about 103 pounds [laughs...] very athletic, a good student and now I feel I’m bragging [laughs again half happy half ashamed...].” (min 1:44)



That laughter! That voice!

### 12.11. **Title ideas**

Eine Erschöpfungsgeschichte  
A fiction in 11 body parts  
Kay, a bodybiopic

*blurbing*  
*preambling*  
*forwording*

I’m writing blurbs.

*Confessions of a preamblist: Who knows where this excessive writing of forewords and introductory introductions comes from. It’s almost as if she did NOT want to come to the point.*

### 5.11. **Inframince**

The term intensity is usually used in the sense of “strong”, “severe”. I’m interested in its spectrality. In what is almost not perceptible. The gliding quality of it.

Conceptually: When and how does something become noticeable at all? How to name it? And how far does the name, naming become part of that something? Personally: How to de-escalate, make anti-dramatic moves.

*“What do you call the affect of an occurrence that is less than an event? That functions less than a cause nor as an effect. And yet remains formative as a force.” (Paul Ricco)*

29.11. **Apropos Immediacy**

fs recounts how he came to his first poetry book: he isolated himself under a cover and produced neologism *shoulder* that he then hung on the wall to generate sentences. The words were direct distillates from his inner states at the verge of a private language.

Inspired by Kafka, fs wrote a diary and left it lying around. His cousin, a long-distance lorry driver, discovered it, reads it and started to admire him. At this moment fs realized that it was garbage. Henceforth, he integrated the perspective of the other which has proven to be very useful. fs wants to know who looks over Kay's shoulder.

*Usually the editor is the first reader. In this case, dp and fp.*

30.11. **Colloquium in Vienna**

Questions from colleagues

Verena Faisst: How do you become a medium? Can you trigger experiences? One can program sex but not love. *peer review*

*So true: I can set up as many dates as I like but I can't say: Now I'm going to love 18 people; or grieve about 7.*

Katarina Šoškić: Do you think of the reader, of the effects of your writing? Imagine a triangle: Writer, reader, intensity. What about research on the intensity effects of literature?

*To be honest, up to that point I had not taken the reader into account.*



# 2018

## 11.1. **False Feelings**

According to Eva Illouz intensity has become a value, a currency for truth in the age of emotional capitalism. (I feel therefore I am. What I feel must be real.) dp asks: When the character searches for intensity how does she know that it is “her intensity” and not one of the many scripts (societal disgraces, hormones, etc.) cd: Kay knows that her feelings do not belong to her. *identification*

## 13.1. **Wish and Intensity**

*Kinderwunsch* (childwish). There is no equivalent noun in English. Sounds like a disease. The same goes for *kinderlos*. The childless woman is a common topos. I have never read or heard of a childless man. *re-sensing*

I found great footage about the wish in Monika Rinck's book *Ah, das Love-Ding*:

“Dass es Wünsche gibt, dass es einen Antrieb gibt, ist offenbar. Dass man Wünsche verfolgt, wenn man sie einmal hat, ist verständlich und liegt in gewisser Weise in der Natur des Wunsches. Das Ausmaß der Verfolgung hat mit Mut und Ermutigung, mit Vernunft und Unvernunft zu tun. Am Anfang steht das interesselose Wohlgefallen, am Ende die *idée fixe*. Rinck: p. 65 *essay poetry*

Veronika sagt, Fassbinder habe gesagt, er hätte gerne einen schnellen Wagen. Und er hätte keine Lust, den Wunsch zu haben und keinen schnellen Wagen, und genauso sei das jetzt auch. Rinck: p. 97

*In psychoanalytical, marxist but also very banal terms: Why do we want what we want? And who, what produces this want?*

## FIELD RESEARCH

Bisexual, Man, Single, 180cm

Speaks German, English, and some Polish, Attended  
Post grad

*Okcupid*

Has kid(s), Pisces

Looking for

*self-summary*

single women, within 81 km, ages 27-47, short & long  
term dating, hookup, and new friends.

### 17.1. **Kay and me**

I define Kay. What she wants/can do.

I take on some properties of Kay.

I am partly Kay, partly the intensity researcher that  
turns Kay into a case.

*notes to self*

I work with a chance-based approach.

And this shall be my armor to go into the field. Trying  
to overcome the usual preferences of the white, hyper-  
gamous middle aged woman looking for love. Testing  
different 'pitches' in the profiles.

*'Kay' did NOT work as 'armor'. I went on these dates  
without a specific method. Something to elaborate in  
the future: How to access an experience as someone  
else?*

### 21.1. **Bin ich die neue Günter Wallraff?**

The journalist Wallraff constructed a fictional identity  
as a Turkish Gastarbeiter for his undercover investiga-  
tions on lower class working conditions in Germany  
published in his reportage "Ganz unten".

*dum analogy*

The writer Daus constructed a semi-fictional identity as  
a wanting-to-mate-woman for her undercover investi-  
gations on the sexual scripts and habits of the German  
urban middle class published in her novel SEHR.

*borrowing a sentence*

### **Dating platforms**

Most men seem to feel obliged to emphasize that they “also want love.” (No one-night stands!) Most women feel obliged to emphasize that they “also want sex”.

*cultural scripts*

I started to collect best-of-dating profiles. They vary between a medical self-report, an advertisement for a technical object, absolute generic writing and great stuff for a novel.

”I’m boring, I’m lazy, not all that friendly and I’m all yours, ladies. I know how do make reading and do writes good.

*OkCupid  
excerpts*

Despite my years of training I’m a very, very bad fencer.

I’m a professor at a less than prestigious university. Like this: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeSdC7lbA1A>

I’ve never had tuberculosis.

I can graft fruit trees.

I make candy.

(...)

It really bothers me when people smell bad, myself included.

I’m really good at spotting four leaf clovers from a distance. Like autism, good.

I’m a perfectly off-putting mix of debilitatingly shy and unnervingly vulgar.

I’m starting to realize that I put the word “that” into sentences far more than one should.”

### 3.2. **Intensity and Meaning**

cd The implicit moral of the term *meaningless sex* makes me furious. I suggest to take it literal, to ridden it from all the (love) pressure. To offer a word exempt from the ill-formulated debate about sex/love that in most cases tries to downscale the fleshy experience. A novel that is an ode to anonymous sex. To a tenderness that does not seek to penetrate the twoness, the pact of loneliness, the fleetingness of being together. *re-sensing*

Kay tries to cultivate a loving fucking as well as a fucking grieving. The semantic indetermination of the word love, and the mostly pejorative determination of fucking lead me to invent a new hybrid, that may some time lead to a practice or even to an object. A modality that does not have to exhaust itself between a bipolarity of sensuality and intellect.

dp: What does meaning lesser mean on the level of the plot? Is this all about advanced sex-and-the-city knowledge? Are you the gym leader for post-love? *gym leader*

cd: I like the idea of the gym. Recently I was reading Plato's symposium again. Conceptually it relates to a scale that ranges from the singular boy through art to the platonic idea. From the sensual, the senses towards pure meaning. Love appears as a means of optimization, as an increasing capacity of sublimation that must forget the body. Plato propagates a striving for knowledge that is driven by the intensity of Eros. The wise old teacher instructs his beautiful young lover.

I imagine Kay on a stepper in the gym: There is a continuous movement that leads nor up nor down. She can even walk blindly thinking of her lovers' bodies. Of balls, thighs, knees. It's hard work and she is sweating. But maybe this is the only way how to get rid of the idea of love. At the end there is no end, she'll just fall asleep. It relaxes her deeply to know that she is finite and replaceable. *the stepper of love*

5.2.

**Dramaturgy**

1 End of love = core melt down

2 meaning lesser sex = cooling down

3 new beginning = Kay in a post-romantic landscape *conceptual scales*

cd How could the specific feminine heroic look like? *superwoman*  
(beyond what we know from superman/superwoman)

dp Once a guy said to me: I would never go into bed  
with someone that is stronger than me. Women do this  
all the time.

cd In the film *Casanovagen* there is a tragic scene with  
a transman that only realizes after his operation that he  
misses his womb.

10.2. **Looking for a body double**

cd Today I met my 16-year-old body double in the subway. She seemed so perfectly Kay. I talked to her and she gave me her number. Now I don't know what to do with her.

*How to inhabit another body? How to experience from a body that does not yet exist? How can artistic research provide tools to invite other people into a fiction?* *future method*

dp: She's your medium. She helps you reconnect with your 16-year-old self.

cd: Eros is a middle being. So it seems good to cover the range 20 years below *and* above my age.

dp: A friend comes to my mind. Marion, author of an unpublished novel. I can ask her.

cd: Viv Albertine's *A typical girl* is a great example how someone can write being on a par with one's younger self. The short chapters, especially the one on the blow job work very well. I also find Dora Russell and Margarete Sanger very attractive.

dp: You could jump between times and reappear as Sanger's revenant.

cd: Yes! The fictional autobiography seems to be it. A sentence from the documentary *Man for a Day* comes to my mind: I've always wanted to be more. To take bits and pieces from those women for Kay's biography a trans historical intensity-Heroine. (Reread Woolf's *Orlando*.) *autofiction*

dp Each chapter in a different discipline!

cd Okay in a nutshell, we have the young, middle aged and old Kay and their relation to sexuality. Furthermore starring: the reckless editor, the superego, foot-stomach and headnotes ect.

16.3. **Interview with a post-love-professional**

A profile on Ok-Cupid catches my attention: “looking for encounters, middle to long-term, respectfully binding, without love, pleasant hours (and possibly very) good sex”. A mission that resembles that of Kay. I write to the guy and meet him for an interview in a Berlin Shisha Bar.

*field research*

18.3. **Conversation with a Tinder researcher**

On Tinder I come across the sociologist Thorsten Peetz who himself does research on/in Tinder. We speak about how it feels to go with one’s own body into the field\*, what kind of (protective) tools do sociologist and other researchers have assumed dating as a method. He recommends: Loïc Wacquants *Body & Soul* as well as to read Adam Isaiah Green who has been researching in the gay sexual field.

*sexual scripts  
tinder studies*

*Why have I not interviewed Thorsten on precisely this question?*

A few weeks later, Thorsten travels to New York for research. He sends me a screen shot from his tinder account. He had just matched a woman. Her first message was: “Hi, wanna fuck?”

**Shulamith or the End of Wombmanhood**

This summer semester I teach at Literaturinstitut Hildesheim that departs from Shulamith Firestone’s book.

*teaching*

## 7.5. Public Colloquium, Vienna

Feedback from the colleagues:

Charlotta Ruth: I still ask myself what is it that you're writing? Is it really a novel? I think it could be a live action role play. If this is the case, you could consider different forms to develop your character as it happens in the world of gaming for example where you learn how to talk to your character, design a setting etc.

peer review



Hannes Böck: Your scale should have a circular form.

cd: Like a Möbius-strip?



## 14.6. Theweleit on Pasolini – the lust structure of violence

Watched Pasolini's *Saló – 120 days of Sodom* (1975), and then – to calm myself down – Theweleit's lecture *Der andalusische Hund von Saló* (2014). Relevant excerpt: "Buñuel was one of the first to recognize de Sade as a theoretician of sexual violence. Instead of sadism it should be called 'sexualized feudalism' and 'sexualized clericalism'. Pasolini is interested in showing the physical structure of sexualized violence. One can only approach this violence, if one recognizes its specific lust structure. To watch carefully. The crying of the victim versus the laughing and scorning of the torturer. *When the victim is all pain, the torturing man is on a high. The stronger the pain, the stronger the lust. This blows up any universalist theory repertoire – that's where art is needed.* Pasolini's art does not care for the limits of good taste. He wanted to show this category of gentlemen exactly like that. Gentlemen that philosophize about Baudelaire, Nietzsche and Paulus or Dada, that torture, make others eat shit, that let scalp and jerk off on it. One does not want to see this muck (Drecksmixtur)."

transgression



*Not to care for the limits of good taste.*



- 29.6. **Futur II**  
 Which grammatical form would be adequate for an „emotional science fiction“?  
 In German we have Futur II, the forefuture, the assumption that an action will have been completed by the time of speaking, or by a particular point in the future. “She will have had been hungry.” *undecided decision*  
 Kay IS the future. 2030. 2040, yes, to be fixed! Take a decision. fs is a little bit afraid of her. Does Kay have a secret? Is there any other character that determines her desire? Someone that looks over her shoulder? See also theory of the excluded third person > René Girard
- 6.7. **Date with sexologist**  
 I meet T. a polyamorous sexologist from Switzerland. He introduces me to the concept sexocorporel by Jean-Yves Desjardins. *sexology role play*  
  
*We kept in touch. T. turned into a character; I call him Dr. Shauklbaum.*
- WOMAN AS FORMAT**
- 10.7. **Sisters in Crime**  
 I keep on hitting the edges of the woman as a format. dp recommends me to read Shulamith Firestone *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970). I take the book into the summer holidays with my son. *reading*
- 31.10. **Two books**  
 I’m planning two publications: the novel *SEHR* (2020) and an accompanying journal *THE HEFT* (2040). The aim of the latter would be: To situate Kay as a figure between two eras – the era of biological birth and the era of assisted birth (ectogenesis). In the context of a history of feeling and its formatting. (“Our feelings are works.” Émile-August Chartier) *framing fictocriticism*

20.11. **Recognition (*Anerkennung*)**

Conversation with fs about the first chapter of the novel. Kay and Ran meet for meaning lesser sex. Kay has set herself a rule not to feel too much. She realizes if she is not meant to a certain extent, she does not feel anything ("Could you refer to my knees, at least?). Ran in hindsight pretends as if nothing has ever happened. fs: Isn't it all about recognition?

*knee-shoulder*

*"I is a group and each sees different at its time, has its habitus. All together, from subject to group, makes up the field again, the context that sets, creates the rules for use – as long someone else is been looked at, as he/she or it is being deemed necessary." (Schmatz in aufSätze, p. 17)*

*I-group*

22.- **Get rid of meaning**

24.11. Kathy Acker Symposium  
Badischer Kunstverein  
Waldstraße 3  
76133 Karlsruhe

A windowless room in the basement of the Kunstverein gathers a crowd of former friends and lovers of Acker, disciples, fans, literary scholars, artists and interested audience. Cult-like vibes. The curators managed to bring and install Kathy's personal library. (Traces of Acker in the book, underlinings, all the passages that she appropriated in her books.) And then of course the accounts of those who knew her: McKenzie Wark, Matias Viegner and others. Special moments: Leslie Dick's dialogue with her own daughter Audrey Wollen, two generations of women. (Trivia: The chlamydia Dick shared with Acker through her partner Peter Wollen, Audrey's father in spe.) Dodie Bellamy gave a great poetic-pragmatic talk on Acker's funeral ceremony. I can't even say I'm a fan of Acker. Nor that I enjoy reading her texts so much. Yet she, her work has been coming back to me since I first read her in 1998. That Merve book that now has fallen apart. Flashes of connection, her radical approach towards sexuality and writing, her obsession with un-making sense, her intense living with and in text of all kind.

*aura*

*living text*

### **The blue tape (1974)**

There is a separate small projection room in the basement. Among other works Acker's video "Blue tape" is projected, a live- writing-talking-and-licking experiment she undertook with one of her lovers. To look at Kathy's 'real' cunt is hardly bearable. In the video she gives her lover instructions ("this is good, no not there"). One cannot avoid thinking that she was in control. (What does it mean to be the author of one's sexual experience? Sex as a practice of power, as a practice of not being in power.) Makes me think of her deployment of language as surface. When looking at this experiment I'm tempted to think that it was hard for her to give in to pleasure: „The only way she could feel was to abject herself“.

*video licking*

*live writing*

### **Writing Affect**

In his lecture Hajo Berressem speaks about writing as a practice of affective resistance, dealing with re-writing affect. And how literary texts participate in real life consequences. "The Pornological instead of pornographic"; "Syndromalogy instead of symptomatology"; "the logic of abject jouissance.

*Throughout the entire symposium cd was busy chatting with a dom. She got hooked on the fact that there was someone who told her what to do. To be given all kinds of absurd bodily tasks. But then she had a hard time immersing herself into the BDSM codes. The vocabulary, the stereotypical images were a total turn-off and caused a disruption in the game as she's seeing herself from the outside. She has to laugh all the time. Her initiation into the world of BDSM while attending the symposium creates a strange new connection with Acker.*

*shoulder*

*role play*

**Acker’s tattoo**

I have never wanted a tattoo. Yet this one totally makes sense: restriction and expansion, sense and sensation coming together on the skin. (Sense is always open, sensation territorializes. Someone during this symposium said: “She tried to take the cultural poison out of the body.”) The materiality of the body which can’t be overcome.



**Against Ordinary Language**

In *Against Ordinary Language. The Language of the Body* Kathy Acker sets out to write about body building but realizes that she forgets to write after every workout. And not only that: The part of herself that does the training resists language, resists to find a vocabulary for the workout. Kathy writes on, searches where these resistances lie. She realizes that fibers of muscles must break before one can build up muscles. I need a similar ritual.

*What needs to break before I can build up a text, a texture?*

body building  
writing

2019

30.2. **Pronouns**

The 1st person narrative tends to have more impact on the reader as the lyrical I tends to become confused with the author. I prefer the 3rd person, the fictional author’s 3rd person.

auto-autofiction

- 30.2. **Notes Towards a Politics of Location**  
 Re-reading Adrienne Rich. How far shall I address my own (writing) conditions?  
*Being a half-time mother navigating between two distinct states: To be on my own – to be with my son (an emotionally and motorically VERY lively, lovely child). The dilemma of needing to and not wanting to name his intensity as a specific neuro-biological condition.* intensity non-mother
- 15.2. **Reading, University Helsinki**  
 I'm invited to participate in the research cell *Through phenomena themselves* led by Alex Arteaga in the framework of the research Pavilion #3 in Venice. I practice how to pronounce *Pheno-meno-logy*. phenomenology
- 21.3. **On Gapping**  
 Lecture Performance  
 Society for Artistic Research (SAR)  
 Zurich re-sensing
- 6.-12.5. **Questionology**  
**Cordula Daus and Charlotta Ruth**  
 Live installation  
*Research Pavilion #3*  
 Venice  
*"You bring a phenomenon of your choice. We apply questionology: a playful interview series in progress that investigates the nature of the question and questioning."* live writing installation



8.-10.5. **Reading on Reading**

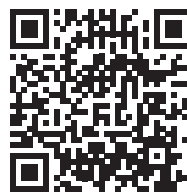
Collaborative Practice

Emma Cocker, Cordula Daus and Lena Séraphin

Research Pavilion #3

Venice

Different ways of reading can generate different registers of sense making and affect; there is scope for testing experimental tactics. (...). Certain language must be rolled in the mouth before it can be digested, new meanings revealed in the pauses and durations breathed between the words. Over three days, Emma Cocker, Cordula Daus and Lena Séraphin test different practices of reading on reading at various locations within the Sala del Camino.



28.5. **Jens**

Lecture

Public Colloquium

University for Applied Arts

Vienna



17.6. **Jens**

Lecture

Research Pavilion #3

Venice

*Jens* | Cordula Daus

Cordula Daus studies the writability of intensities. Currently she is working on a speculative emotional fiction based on the female character Kay. Seeking to suspend heterosexual feeling frames and imperatives of love, Kay pursues a radical form of interrelation: meaning lesser sex. *Jens* is one of her objects of desire – a proper name and word-physiognomic study into different states of matter in language. *Jens* will be presented through an audio-graphic play consisting of different voices and typographical fragments.



2020

15.1.

**Kay**

Lecture

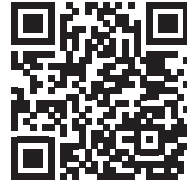
Let's fabulate

University for Applied Arts

Vienna



3.6. **Public Colloquium**  
Online  
University for Applied Arts  
Vienna



I presented the concept of two interrelated publications and showed video of a conversation with [M] Dudeck *On Higher Love*.

*conversation*



a novel by Kay  
2020



a journal based on SEHR  
2040

*fictocriticism*

While the novel is set in the year 2020, the journal speaks from the near future, the year 2040, looking back at the intensities of fucking loving grieving as described in the feminist classic SEHR.

## REVISION

15.6. **Conversation with dp**

How can the fucking grieving be dismantled? Where does Kay's grieving come from? Result: Love and sex must be revolutionized. Thesis: Grieving is the motor, motivation, drive for something new. But grief remains. (Gap) dialectic of the new: Bound to a resistance. Out-look: Abolition of Wombmanhood.

*outer woman*

*Note: My tendency to overdetermine a work. Better to have small intermediate outputs, self contained forms. Leave the rest for the next project.*

28.6. **THE HEFT**

“In the German a Heft refers to booklet, journal or exercise book. The English language takes us somewhere completely else. In Northern England a heft is a piece of upland pasture to which a farm animal, like a sheep has become hefted. ‘Despite their considerable heft, buffalo are agile creatures,’ says the Cambridge Dictionary. The verb to heft means to lift up something heavy. ‘Sich das Heft nicht aus der Hand nehmen lassen’ says a German proverb – to remain at the wheel. THE HEFT you hold in your hands has been deliberately conceived as an ambidexter. With its left hand it holds on to another book. The right hand wants to be on its own. As a series THE HEFT publishes critical essays, documents, notes and reviews concerning the period of the Outer Woman. Its first edition is dedicated to concept of intensity. It is hefted to the character Kay, as depicted in the novel *SEHR* by the German author of the same name (1970-2038).“ Excerpt from Prologue *prologue*

*I wrote 23 versions of a prolog. The index of the publication has changed innumerable times. I had become too hefted to the idea of the journal.* *self-critique*

2.7. **Infinite regress**

Stagnation in the editorial office! The authors I invited to contribute to THE HEFT do not answer or have declined. I asked a psychologist, a philologist and a musician to respond to a specific episode in the novel. Premise: to write from a future in which the artificial uterus is a reality. This is all too demanding both for me and them. I need to take the future out of this project.

*How can I invite a scientist into a fiction without scaring him/her off?* *missing method*

18.12. **Turning point**

Phone conversation with fs. The Heft is dead. I will write an essay. End of doubts. The core idea of the Heft (speaking about Kay from different perspectives) can reappear in other forms. *revision*



2021

### Questionology

First try outs with Charlotta Ruth at  
Zentrum Fokus Forschung Vienna



1.6. **The questionnaire is online!**

Together with Charlotta Ruth and Simon Repp (programming) we developed a live online-questionnaire as a warm-up for the upcoming performance. The questionnaire is a living online piece that will be temporarily accessible.

*automated writing*

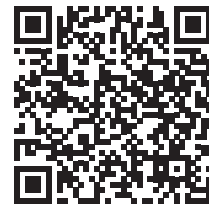
19.6. **Premiere Questionology**

“We are standing outdoors. Our pelvic floor is ready, our gaze is wide. Slowly, we zoom in: Solar system. Earth. Austria. Vienna. Zentrum Fokus Forschung, brick. Welcome to Questionology, the world’s first walk-in research program for Applied Questioning. Everything is already there. All we need is the right move to get it out.”

*performance*

*environment*

Questionology is based on a shared fascination of autopoietic systems that generate words and worlds independent of their creators. In their joint project, writer Cordula Daus and choreographer Charlotta Ruth combine their respective artistic research: While Daus deals with the interrelation between language, body and intensity, Ruth explores ‘liveness’ in participatory art and game design. *Excerpt from website, brut/Vienna*



# Appendices

## Appendix A: Conceptual History of Intensity

Intensity is an interdisciplinary concept, a theorem, a technical term, a figure of thought, and a philosophical problem. It also, and to my purpose in this project, refers to a subjective spectrum of emotions expressed in language. In this case, it's not only a theorem but a presupposition that comes about non-empirically and will be looked at inferentially in relation with other expressions of a discourse. Conceptual histories per se are jumpy and brutal as they rip off text passages out of larger bodies of work. So I hope the reader will bear with me.

Some antecedents of intensity *avant la lettre* can be found in ancient thought. Aristotle, as usual, provides the contours of a problem that relates to think about the concept of sameness and difference, about a processual change in the property of a being. According to him “some qualities, as accidental beings, admit of the more and the less.”<sup>76</sup> In *Categoriae* 8 I find a seminal passage:<sup>77</sup>

Qualifications admit of a more and a less; for one thing is called more pale or less pale than another, and more just than another. Moreover, it itself sustains increase (for what is pale can still become paler)—not in all cases though, but in most. It might be questioned whether one justice is called more a justice than another, and similarly for the other conditions. For some people dispute about such cases. They utterly deny that one justice is called more or less a justice than another, or one health more or less a health, though they say that one person has health less than another, justice less than another, and similarly with grammar and the other conditions. At any rate things spoken of in virtue of these unquestionably admit of a more and a less: one man is called more grammatical than another, juster, healthier, and so on.

Interestingly, Aristotle as well as medieval European thinkers that follow his path, do not approach the problem of qualitative change as a problem of comparison between two qualities in two different beings or subjects, but to draw an “ontology of qualitative change within a single being or subject.”<sup>78</sup>

If we read over the passage above from a purely formal perspective, we can discern elements that convey a gradual change. Most languages contain elements that allow to express an increase or decrease of a quality: adverbs (“many”, “more”, “very”); adjectives (“pale”, “healthy”, “big”, “weak”) or through the use of comparatives and superlatives (“the body that is pale is called more pale now than before”) – what was missing and what would be introduced in modern empirical thinking was an overarching figure of thought. A figure that allows to “inscribe the abundance of discontinuous representations into a taxonomic unitarian continuity (such as force, light, sentience).”<sup>79</sup>

76 Solère: p. 582

77 Aristotle: Categories 8, 10b26-11a4.

78 Mader: p. 7.

79 Kleinschmidt: p. 24

What follows is a sketchy word history. Intensity can be imagined as an actor that appears on different stages, in different costumes and with different speeches leading us through time.<sup>80</sup> According to the philologist Erich Kleinschmidt this history starts in the age of enlightenment:

[i]ntensity only becomes [...] thinkable, from the moment that a theory of the extremes exists. The latter emerges in the 17th-18th century in a discourse on physical forces and energies (...) Yet the theorem of intensity functions also without its scientific and mathematical fundament, as it disengages soon from its fundamental premises, to be torn into a linguistic process of intensification, fluctuating as an independent and territorializing figure of thought. The thinking in intensity unfolded its own dynamic and emancipated itself from its exact potential of initiation.

Intensity emerged in the 18th century in natural sciences, applied to describe phenomena such as light, temperature or speed. Differential calculus and the principles of Newtonian optics open up a thinking in degrees, scales and gliding form. What is interesting for my purpose is how the term moves between concretion and abstraction, serving different functions in different discourses.

In 1665 Robert Boyle observes the weather trying to estimate the degrees of cold:<sup>81</sup>

For though (to give an instance) be thought the Liquor, that is most susceptible of such an Intensity of Cold, as will destroy or suspend its Fluidity, yet not here to repeat, what we formerly deliver'd of the easie congealableness of Oyl of Aniseeds, we have (as we elsewhere note to another purpose) distill'd a substance from Benzoin, which becomes of a fluid, a consistent Body, and may be reduc'd to the state of fluidity again by very much lesser alterations of the Ambient Air, as to Heat and Cold, then would have produc'd Ice or Thaw'd it.

Intensity becomes a fluid concept soon to be adopted by rationalist philosophers. In 1704 Leibniz in his *Nouveaux Essais* develops the fundamental concept of “intension où degrés” based on infinitesimal calculus.

His student, the philosopher Christian Wolff, is the first one to coin the neologism *intensitas*. His ontology *Philosophia prima* written in Latin defines *intensitas* a “multiplicity of degrees, as a quantity that exists in the multiplicity of its parts.”

Wolff realizes, if we want to speak about the ontological situation of a multiple state of infinite degrees (*graduum multitudo*), we need a new word. This state can't be conceived as a unit in itself but as a spectrum for which he provides the term intensity (*intensio*). By coining this word Wolff opens a place in language.

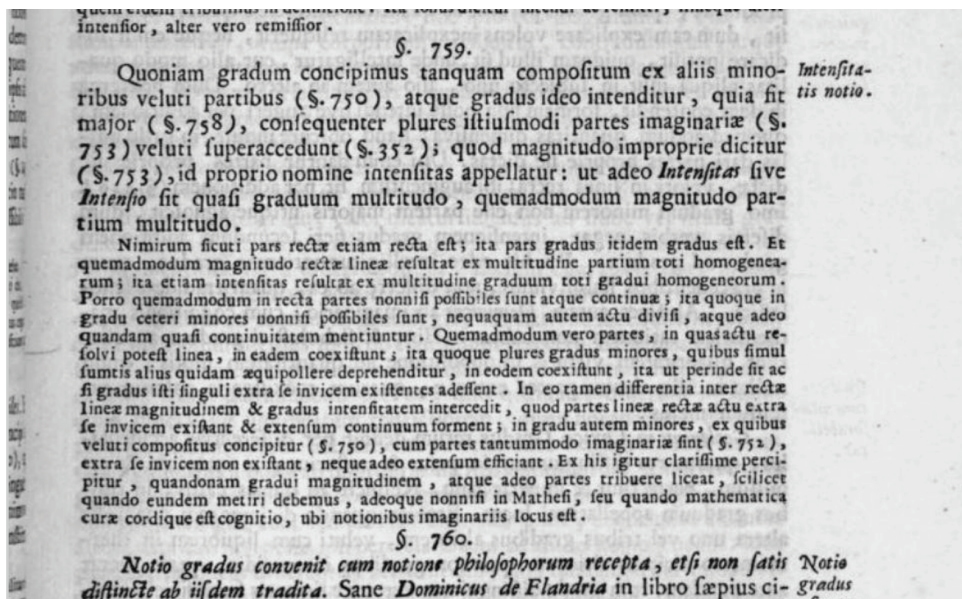
80 I will do this in a more or less chronologically basing myself on two major secondary sources, the article “Intensität” in *Bloch-Wörterbuch: Leitbegriffe der Philosophie Ernst Blochs*, Berlin/Boston 2021 and on Erich Kleinschmidt's *Die Entdeckung der Intensität: Geschichte einer Denkfigur im 18. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 2004. Most references to primary sources and comments that follow can be found in the aforementioned books. For the sake of accessibility, I will still add bibliographical references of the primary sources and sometimes cite them more lengthily.

81 Boyle: p. 67-68.

## *Philosophia prima*

*sive Ontologia, Methodo Scientifica pertractata, qua omnis cognitionis humæ principia continentur.*

A simple copy and paste of the above title, and I'm thrown into the middle of a 400-year-old book in a few seconds. I'm reminded of how it once felt to look at a microfiche through the old reading devices at the Humboldt-University around the year 1994. All the actions that had to be undertaken to reach a book, a specific passage in a book. And here it is, the first scene in our word history of intensity.



Prof. Andreas Fritsch, a Latinist from the Free University in Berlin, helped me to translate the text into German. “I’m sending you a preliminary (!), incomplete (!) answer, that urgently needs to be discussed with a more knowledgeable person, a historia of philosophy, before it can actually be included in a dissertation.” Hence, I don’t dare to give you my clunky English translation of the incomplete German translation.

Following a word over time means to dig deep into grammar and to observe alchemical processes between languages. Wolff most probably derives the noun *intensitas* from the adjectives *intense* already known in French or English rooted in the Latin verb *intendere* (“to tense”, “to strain something”). The corresponding verbal adjective *intentus* (“strong”, “severe”, “tense”, and later “attentive”) existed already in the antique Latin. Around 1740 *intensité* appeared in the French language.<sup>82</sup>

Notions of the intense begin to inspire the vocabulary of writers and philosophers. Novalis, Diderot, Lessing, and Fichte develop a gradual terminology of passions and emotions. In 1767 the foreign adjective *intensiv* appeared in a German text by Lessing who refers to the acting style of an actress: “The total lack of intensive accents produces monotony”.<sup>83</sup> Diderot freely translates an essay from 1745 by Shaftesbury speaking of the degree of motherly tenderness as *intensité*<sup>84</sup> (imagine a thermometer in a woman’s armpit seeking to detect her degree of motherness). Shaftesbury himself had reflected upon the “immoderate Degree of Passion” in the context of a theory of “natural Proportion” and “right balance”.<sup>85</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte describes the atmosphere of a forest, the luminosity of trees in relation to the sensual capacity and intensity of reception of the observer.<sup>86</sup> In 1798 Novalis added a new connotation. He speaks about the density (*Dichtigkeit*) of colors, figures and volumes of space.<sup>87</sup>

To come up with the following midway conclusion: Intensity/intense/the intense promises an unheard-of alliance of scientific precision and subjective perceptual judgment, a relation between the measurable and perceptible. In general terms, intensity becomes a placeholder for the “quantity of a quality”. This will be of relevance for the psycho-physical terrain that I’m going to move into next.

In 1754 the term *intensité* appeared for the first time in *Essai de Psychologie*, a psychological text by Charles Bonnet. In his text Bonnet relates to an old philosophical problem trying to solve the dualism between body and mind with the help of a new term: Intensity shall serve as a magic term to correlate physical movements of the nerves with the vivacity of the psyche. Relating to the genesis of a new being just after conception he writes: “The reaction of the soul to the nervous fibers or the animal spirits, still proportional to the quantity of their movement, consequently augments intensity.” To continue with the following conclusion: “The sensations acquire enough liveliness (*vivacité*) to be accompanied by a certain degree of pleasure or pain”.<sup>88</sup> More than a century later Freud will describe the birth of the system Bw. in a similar setting.<sup>89</sup>

82 Kleinschmidt, p. 19.

83 Lessing: p. 223.

84 Diderot in: Kleinschmidt, p. 20.

85 Cooper Third Earl of Shaftesbury in: Kleinschmidt, p. 20.

86 Fichte in: Kleinschmidt, p. 26.

87 Novalis: p. 514.

88 Bonnet in: Ratcliff, p. 424.

89 “Let us imagine the living organism in the simplest possible form as an undifferentiated vesicle of sensitive substance: then its surface, exposed as it is to the outer world, is by its very position differentiated and serves as an organ for receiving stimuli. (...) We have more to say about the living vesicle with its receptive outer layer. This morsel of living substance floats about in an outer world which is charged with the most potent energies, and it would be destroyed by the operation of the stimuli proceeding from this world if it were not furnished with a protection against stimulation (*Reizschutz*). It acquires this through its outermost layer—which gives the structure that belongs to living matter—becoming in a measure inorganic, and this now operates as a special integument or membrane that keeps off the stimuli, i.e. makes it impossible for the energies of the outer world to act with more than a fragment of their intensity on the layers immediately below which have preserved their vitality.” Freud: p. 19-20.



Taking up a line of thought from Descartes, et al., Bonnet tries to find a “secret rule of unity” – a substance that would explain the physical order in the spiritual. Yet Bonnet’s essay lacks a comprehensive definition of intensity, a unity of measure to quantify sensations of the psychic order. In his later works this quantification, even if imaginary, becomes more thinkable to have an afterlife as a notion of an energy that can’t be quantified. More and more, the figure of intensity seems to cultivate a terrain for obscure, fictional quantities, or, in the words of the science philosopher Marc James Ratcliff: “The concept of intensity appeared as dependent on an imaginary construction of measure, closely connected to an experimental fiction that picks up a methodological order its experimental and discursive rhetorics.”<sup>90</sup>

We have arrived at a crucial degree of enlightenment. Immanuel Kant, who himself has worked hard to tell ghosts from real imaginations comes to establish the duality *extensiv/intensiv*. In the first principle of his *Critique of Pure Reason* titled *Axioms of Intuition*, Kant speaks about the a priori mathematics of “extensive magnitudes,” where wholes are measured by their discrete parts. This applies to empirical objects given in space and time which are themselves “extensive magnitudes”. In the second principle, titled *Anticipations of Perception*, Kant tries to prove the principle of “intensive magnitudes”. According to this principle, every sensation will display some “degree” (Grad) of “continuous” or “intensive magnitude” of “reality” (*Realität*). The seminal passage reads: “In all appearances, the real, which is an object of the sensation, has intensive magnitude”.<sup>91</sup> This applies to properties such as color or heat, or material forces such as weight or impenetrability. Kant establishes a correlation between sensation and reality according to a scale of changes. What is crucial here is the philosopher’s emphasis on the degree of attention, on the subject’s directed perception towards an object. According to Kant the sensation of intensity can’t be derived from the property of things alone but from perceptual changes in the subject. Subject and object enter into a crucial interdependency - that remains ever since to be discussed.

Henceforth, “intensity” defines the degree of strength of a perception or sensation. As a figure for a dynamic experience of perception it opens up new poetic possibilities. Philologists feel the impulse to invent new words: as the German “language contains an infinite number of actions (*Handlungen*) and sensations that are still *nameless*, which is why adequate foreign words and derived loanwords must be taken on.”<sup>92</sup> Rationalist thinkers like the mathematician and philosopher Johann Heinrich Lambert try to match words with numbers, concepts with degrees. In his 1771 *Architectonic* Lambert assigned the intensity degree 1 to “absolute consciousness” to think of its scalability, which is subjectively bound depending on “person, times and matter”. As an absolute unit”, he continues, consciousness can’t increase but can decrease through tiredness, confusion or distraction. Lambert seeks for material proof, fibres of thought: “that we, while imagining an object, take a sample, if the fibres (nerves) can give us a consciousness of the changed extension and intension of a magnitude or not.”<sup>93</sup>

Our word-protagonist swordplay’s in the good old body-mind to take one side or

90 Ratcliff: p. 445.

91 Kant: A166.

92 Lenz in Kleinschmidt: p. 34.

93 Lambert in Kleinschmidt : p. 37

another. We have reached a point where even orgasms once ought to be indescribable and undefinable are being defined through the help of intensity. The German doctor and philosopher Carl August Eschenmayer writes about the “intensity of lust”, that accompanies the act of procreation “as unmistakable phenomenon”. For Eschenmayer it is here where “beauty and love meet sexual excitement”, where the highest intensity converges with the starting point of new life.<sup>94</sup>

### **Some Definitions of Orgasm**

Ordered according to their length and intensity of affect on the writer.

“[From the Greek meaning] to swell with moisture, be excited or eager.”  
Oxford English Dictionary, Simson & Weiner, 2002a)

“The expulsive discharge of neuromuscular tensions at the peak of sexual response.” Kinsey et. al, 1953)

“A peak intensity of excitation generated by: (a) afferent and re-afferent stimulation from visceral and/or somatic sensory receptors activated exogenously and/or endogenously, and/or (b) higher-order cognitive processes, followed by a release and resolution (decrease) of excitation. By this definition, orgasm is characteristic of, but not restricted to, the genital system.” (Komisaruk & Whipple, 1991)

“The zenith of sexuoerotic experience that men and women characterize subjectively as voluptuous rapture or ecstasy. It occurs simultaneously in the brain/mind and the pelvic genitalia. Irrespective of its locus of onset, the occurrence of orgasm is contingent upon reciprocal intercommunication between neural networks of the brain, above and the pelvic genitalia, below, and it does not survive their disconnection by the severance of the spinal cord. However, it is able to survive even extensive trauma at either end.” (Money, Wainwright & Hingburger, 1991)

“A variable, transient, peak sensation of intense pleasure, creating an altered state of consciousness, usually with an initiation accompanied by involuntary rhythmic contractions of the the pelvic striated circumvaginal musculature, often with concomitant uterine and anal contractions, and myotonia that resolves the sexually induced vasocongestion and myotonia, generally with an induction of well-being and contentment.” (Meston, Levin, et. al, 2004)

All quotes taken from: Barry R. Komisaruk, Carlos Beyer-Flores, and Beverly Whipple, *The science of orgasm*, chapter I.

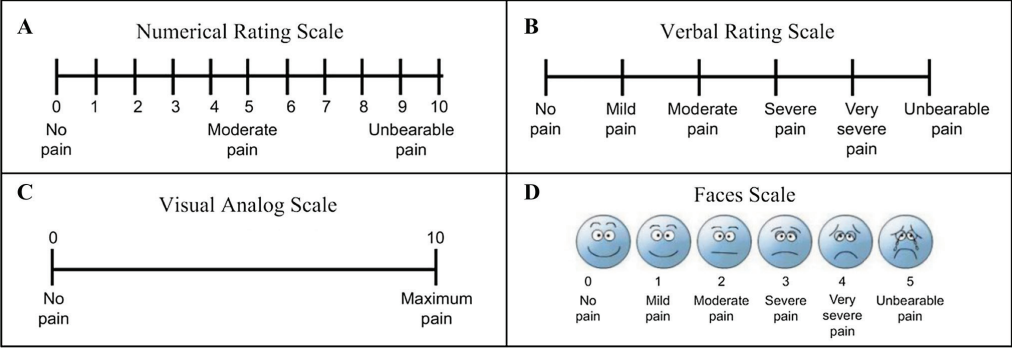


A century later, Gustav Theodor Fechner takes up intensity in his 1860 infamous law claiming that sensation is a logarithm of excitement. The principle of measurement appears in psychology and psychophysics as applied to the human senses, sight, hearing, taste touch and smell. Fechner's law (or Weber-Fechner's laws) mathematically notates the relation between sensation and experience, the actual change in a physical stimulus and the perceived change. Following Leibniz' concept of minimal perceptions ("*petites perceptions*" in the sense of differential units of experience), Fechner develops a formula of measurement that describes a non-linear transformational relation between stimulus and neuronal excitement. In German it is called *Maßformel*, a measurement formula. The name perfectly describes the general promise of "intensity" – to put an order to uncontrollable and messy things such as sensations or feelings.

My sketchy conceptual history ends here. (It could have infinitesimally more entries. I have not mentioned Schelling, nor Goethe, nor Humboldt. Novalis is missing. Not to mention the 20th century, Deleuze, Lyotard). Words and numbers entered into a peculiar tension in the 18th century: Intensity promised an exactitude, a structural order unknown in the centuries before that would also affect language. Mathematical formulas, electricity and electrostatic attractions would charge and recharge words and vice versa. New phenomena demanded new words – new words inspired new possibilities of perception, and ways of structuring the world intellectually.

No entry for "intensity" can be found in the *German dictionary* of the Brothers Grimm. Around 1835 when the philologists started their mission to assemble all words of the German language to study their origin and use – that particular noun was not among them. It belonged and still belongs to a rather elitist sphere, the discourse of specialists.

# Appendix B: Medical Intensity Scales



Examples of common pain rating scales used in most hospitals. A numerical rating scale (NRS), B verbal rating scale (VRS), C visual analog scale (VAS), D faces scale<sup>95</sup>

The scheme above shows four common scales used in human medicine to capture the intensity of pain. A patient is being asked to express their perception and to locate it on the scale.

The scale can be compared to a city map. It serves as an orientation tool to assign a position within the wide field of pain, so another person can identify “where” the patient finds him/herself. Composed of two elements, a graphic structure and verbal descriptors, it bridges the inner subjective experience to the outside world. The subject alone is able to assign a degree and point at a position on the graph. I am *here*. Intensity is happening *here*. The results can then be quantified and mapped in time.<sup>96</sup>

What is the difference between “severe” and “very severe pain”? I’m tempted to add more intensifiers (verys) to achieve a numerical progression but this is not how medical language works. How is quantity expressed in the verbal rating scale? Again, I’ll have a look at the extremes:<sup>97</sup> The lowest degree is defined by a negation, *no pain*, — something that is not there or that can’t be felt yet. The highest degree is indicated by *unbearable pain*. The prefix, includes a negation (un-), a quality that is there but too strong to *bear*. In Old English *beran* meant “to carry, bring; bring forth, give birth to, produce; to endure without resistance; to support, hold up, sustain; to wear”, the Middle Dutch *beren* denotes to “carry a child”, as well as the Old High German *beran*, or the German *gebären*. Many senses are contained in this notion of “moving onward by pressure.” This might take us a little too far, but it seems no coincidence that the word

95 Wang/Urman, R.D. *et al.* <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42452-020-03822-8>

96 In comparison with the visual analogue scale (showing faces with different expressions) and the numerical rating scale (showing only numbers) the VRS scale has proven to be least prone to flaws in capturing pain. See: <https://www.pschyrembel.de/Verbale%20Ratingskala/K0101>

97 Extreme (noun) is from extrēmus the Latin word for “utmost point of a thing,” or “outermost, utmost, farthest, last; the last part; extremity, boundary; highest or greatest degree,” superlative of *exterus* (see exterior). In English as in Latin, extreme is not always felt as a superlative, hence the Grammar allows for a *more extreme*, *most extreme*, a kind of doubling- up of the superlative. The Latin etymology *in extremis* refers to the “last stages of life” and reminds us of the limits on our scale, the limits of a body, of existence. Source: <https://www.etymonline.com/>

to *bear* takes us back to the beginning of life, the source of all pain.<sup>98</sup> Other medical scales draw on different notions of imagination or, with Kant, *Einbildungskraft* to express the maximum extreme: *non imaginable*, *maximal imaginable intensity*, or *most intense imaginable pain*.

Clearly, for the medical scientist each expression on the graph represents a clear reference to a state that can be quantified, transformed into data and thus compared with other states. Different ratings e.g., Stanine (STANDARD NINE) try to operationalize language, define the levels of measurement etc. This one-to-one reference (*Eineindeutigkeit*) between a descriptor and a number stands in contrast to the polysemic use of language in a literary text where ambiguity is very much wished for. Scientists have long attempted to make intensity objectively measurable. In the area of sensory physiology, it is currently being investigated if taste-intensity can be determined via an electronic measuring procedure, a “sensorial tongue”, in order to circumvent subjective judgements. In medicine and psychiatry, it is hoped to better evaluate illnesses such as depression via blood tests, EEG or neuroimaging. In the past years, a series of discoveries in psychosomatics, neurobiology and biochemistry have given cause for excitement, having reintroduced a direct, measurable correlation of language and the body. Experimental studies in the realm of psychoneuroimmunology could show how specific linguistic images can trigger somatic reactions in the body of patients.

98 From c. 1300 as “possess as an attribute or characteristic.” Meaning “sustain without sinking” is from 1520s; to bear (something) in mind is from 1530s; meaning “tend, be directed (in a certain way)” is from c. 1600. To bear down “proceed forcefully toward” (especially in nautical use) is from 1716. To bear up is from 1650s as “be firm, have fortitude.” Source: <https://www.etymonline.com/>

## Appendix C: Obituary

KENNETH D. KEELE, MD, FRCP (1909-1987)

With the death on 3rd of May 1987 of the distinguished physician and medical historian, Kenneth David Keele, the world of scholarship has sustained an irreplaceable loss, especially in the field of Leonard da Vinci studies.

(...)

In 1941 tragedy befell him when his first wife (née Doris Berther) died suddenly in late pregnancy from the rare complication of spontaneous hemorrhagic infarction of the suprarenal glands, which Kenneth described in a classic paper based on personal observation of his wife's illness.<sup>99</sup>

Keele's story reminds me of another story that a dear friend of my family once told me about his wife. I have not known his wife, nor do I know her name. I'll call her T.

T. was a neuropathologist and neurologist conducting research on a specific disease. Some decades ago, the disease was still believed to be hereditary. T. back then departed from the hypothesis that it might be a viral disease and that particles to be found in the brains of patients could be remnants of viruses. One day she was able to obtain fresh material and started to grow cell tissues. Her research looked very promising. Then she became pregnant. During birth she wished for an epidural. Only a few days after she started to work again in the lab. Maybe this has been the moment, my friend said. We will never know. Two days later, her lower extremities started to get struck by a paralysis and then spread further to the upper part of her body. This is how the catastrophe began. *Descensus ad Inferos*. For a while the newborn child got breast fed by a wet nurse. My friend would give her a piece of clothing from his wife that still carried her mother's smell. The biographical in this story does not seem compelling, even more so the tragic event during which life that appears fictional, turns itself against oneself stifling the throat.

Some go crazy over it, precisely through the intensity, as something inexpressible will always remain. "*Nicht das Biografische der Geschichte ist das Besondere, sondern das schicksalhafte Ereignis, in dem das Leben sich fiktional scheinend, einem unfassbar um den Hals dreht. Manche werden darüber verrückt, eben durch die Intensität, da immer etwas Unausdrückbares zurück bleibt*", This is what my friend

99 Kenneth Keele was a pioneer in pain studies. He introduced the first version of a three-digit pain scale to capture the subjective sensation between 0 (no pain) and 3 (strong pain). A particular sentence in his obituary catches my attention: A hidden tragedy mentioned but not told that is connected to the destiny of many other women. Women that have died in or through childbirth. No one can tell how much Keele, the inventor of the pain scale, suffered himself back then. For sure, grief clearly belongs to a different category than physical pain but in pain categories and sensations often collapse. Numbers are promises to contain pain. Phrases too. Some are contagious.

said. Narrative can't hold it. It will always sound sensational and sentimental. When one pauses in times of need and listens to the poetic, something might appear, that may touch others but it will continue to remain inconceivable for the person that is affected.

After the burial of his wife my friend wrote a poem. It was published in a newspaper on the following Sunday and many read it. Still when he was walking on the street alone with his two children most people went over to the other side. Later they told him that the density, the fatality of the event, had been too much for them, and that a kind of swoon overcame them that rendered an encounter impossible.

Back then, my friend had a friend, a literary scholar that had lost his younger wife to leukemia. His wife had a special genius and was of peculiar beauty; redheaded, tall, much taller than her husband. She died at 29. Our friend mourned with his friend. Once he, the literary scholar, came and told him something that my friend regarded as especially tough: "You will never find her again, searching in the memory is for nothing." Later he realized that his friend was right. The event of death would create a special bond between the two. They wrote many articles and a book together. But while the literary scholar did not dare to touch the work of his wife, our friend felt an inner urge to publish the medical research of his deceased partner. He started to complete some of her texts and to publish them. But unfortunately, the publication of her articles would never leave a living trace of her. He tried to write about this as well as about the fact that the experience of writing, the engagement with the remains of his wife had brought him to the inner conclusion never ever to publish anything scientific text again, only essays.

In the hope to approach the secret of understanding (*Ausdruck*) in full respect of the inconceivable (*Unausdrückbares*). Maybe this was the ominous something that he would never find out. Today he thinks it's a residue, held between what can be expressed, an image carefully woven into a texture that cannot be grasped with the senses, only beyond them. Later our friend turned into a full-time hermeneut, and this is how I got to know him: "*Da ist immer ein Überrest. Er kommt sicherlich aus einem Weltmangel, als Seinsgeschenk, eine Gnade, aber der Preis ist sehr hoch. Aber das wissen Sie ja selbst.*" You know that yourself.

## Appendix D: Blurbs

### WISSENSCHAFTSROMAN

Kay ist Leiterin des Instituts für Gefühlskunde. Wir verfolgen ihre Forschung auf dem Gebiet der Intensität der Liebe. In Exkursen rekapituliert die Autorin ihr Interesse an der Entwicklung neuer Feelings und Fähigkeiten. Was bedeutet Ficken, wenn keine Ehe, keine Kinder und kein Spaß mehr dabei heraus kommen müssen? Kay und ihre Mitarbeiterinnen propagieren ein anderes Liebesmodell: Lüben. Praktische Beispiele zeigen, wie jede diese Ability täglich trainieren kann: Lüben, lüben, lüben. Ein Sachbuch aus dem das Leben strotzt.

### ORNAMENTALE BIOGRAFIE

Die Stylistin Kay lebt in einem modernistischen Baumhaus am Gleisdreieck Berlin. Nach einer desaströsen Affaire mit einem georgischen Schriftsteller zieht sich Kay in ein Zenkloster zurück und arbeitet an ihrem Ausstieg aus der Fashion-Welt. Kays Mode verkauft sich schlecht. Mit ihrer Partnerin Susette gründet sie das Label "Inventory". Das Buch ähnelt einem aus den Fugen geratenen Lookbook.

### HEROISCH-SCI-FI

Kay ist eine Heroin, die (die) I. beherrscht. Sie verfügt über Superpowers: Body doubling, Ausencia, Anaesthesia (Gegen-Verwirklichung) und Eruptio. Bei Bedarf kann Kay zum Impersonalen wechseln. Ihr dementer Vater wird von einer inzestuösen Bande polnischer Pfleger\*innen betreut. Als er den dringlichen Wunsch äußert, von einer japanischen Roboterin versorgt zu werden, eskaliert die Situation.

### HARTE SAHNE

"A tantalizing, tough, wildly associative work that leaps effortlessly between music album and book, sex criticism and fiction."

### MEMOIR

Kay zählt zu den Pionierinnen der deutschen Postlovebewegung. 1979-1984 war sie Gitarristin der legendären Noise-Band *Fictionality*. Heute ist sie auch Mutter. Wie die Intimsphäre aus weiblicher Sicht erlebt und entliebt wurde, hat noch niemand so plastisch und zugleich so reflektiert, so ausgebufft und zugleich so fundiert geschildert wie die Protagonistin selbst in ihrem umwerfenden Memoir.

### SPINSTERLAND

Berlin in den Wechseljahren 2028/29. Die Europäische Union hat sich aufgelöst. Die Stylistin Kay (52) ist müde. Gemeinsam mit ihrer Freundin, der Soziologin Dee (67) plant sie ein neues Business: Spinsterland, das weltweit erste Zentrum für Lust & Alter. Sie erwerben einen verlassenen Olivenhain im griechischen Aspiria und suchen Unterstützung bei lokalen PolitikerInnen, Erotomanen und Farmer\*innen. Die Realität übertrifft ihre Erwartungen.

### TOPONYMISCHES HEFT NR. 11: KAY, FANTOME VERLAG. BERLIN 2040

Das Toponymische Heft Nr. 11 nimmt die Herausforderung an, das schier unmögliche Verhältnis zwischen Frau-Mann als einen Ort zu beschreiben, der im Sexuellen entsteht. Ficken ereignet sich nicht als solches, sondern immer anders. Kay

und ihre Verhältnisse stehen im Zentrum des Hefts. Damit wäre auch unsere toponymische Mission definiert: Frau kommt nicht vor. Die Protagonistin ist ein Verhältniskörper, den es zu benennen gilt. Extra: Mit Bauchnoten renommierter Sozialwissenschaftler\*innen.

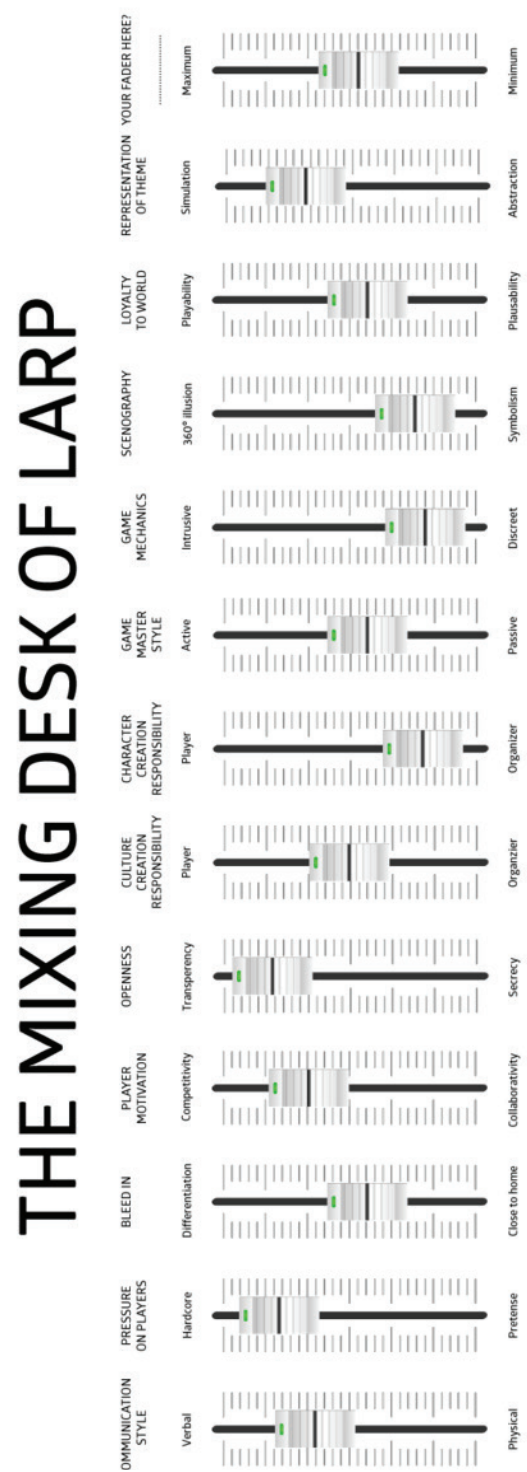
#### EINE GESCHICHTE DER SEXUALITÄT

Kay befindet sich im 5. Jahr ohne Love. Ihren Geschlechtsgenossinnen kündigt sich ein vielversprechender Paradigmenwechsel an: Das sexuelle Begehren, ein über Jahrtausende altes Programm ist mutiert und scheint sich loszulösen von seiner evolutionären Funktion. Und nicht nur dass – auch die romantische Norm des Liebens bzw. die Art, wie es sich anfühlen sollte, beginnt sich zu lockern. Kay u. Co. sind confused!

#### *SEHR*

In ihrem 45. Lebensjahr beschließt die Stylistin Kay, sich in den Dienst der neo-neosexuellen Revolution zu stellen. Sie arbeitet an einer radikalen Trennung von Sex und Sinn. In ihren Übungen mit Ran, Rek, Sef, Wolf, Jens usw. sucht sie nach neuen feelings. Meaning lesser sex! Doch immer wieder stößt sie an Grenzen. Die weibliche Natur (“Gebärmutter“) bleibt ein renitenter Faktor im Challenge um Gleichberechtigung und Würde. Draußen läuft die Reproduktion weiter. Kinder kommen immer noch aus Frauen raus. Aber nicht mehr aus Kay! There must be a Higher Love.

# Appendix E: The Mixing Desk of LARP



The image shows a conceptual mixing desk used in the world of Live Action Role Play (LARP). The basic idea is that the designers of a play (or the players themselves) can, like the technicians of a theater play, adjust their attitudes and other parameters. They can increase or decrease “openness”, “pressure on other players”, their “motivation”, and so on. See: [https://nordiclarp.org/wiki/The\\_Mixing\\_Desk\\_of\\_Larp](https://nordiclarp.org/wiki/The_Mixing_Desk_of_Larp)



# List of Works

## Artist Books

Toponymisches Heft No. 3 – Seismology. Fantôme Verlag, 2016, English and German editions.

Toponymisches Heft No. 2 – Geophysics of the Voice. Fantôme Verlag, 2013, English and German editions.

Toponymisches Heft Nr. 1 – Das Trujillo-Syndrom. Fantôme Verlag, 2010, German edition.

## Lecture Performances

“Kay, or a Case”, Public Colloquium, Angewandte Innovation Lab, 7.5.2018

“Exercises in New Meaning”, SAR10 Conference, ZHdK Zurich, 22.3. 2019

“Jens”, Convocation, Research Pavilion #3, Venice, 28.5.2019

“Kay, or a Case”, Public Colloquium, Zentrum Fokus Forschung, Vienna, 28.5.2019

Lecture performance, Continental Drifts, Salzhaus, Linz, 24.10.2019

“Kay”, Let’s fabulate, University for Applied Arts, Vienna, 15.1.2020

“Kay, or a Case”, Online Public Colloquium, Zentrum Fokus Forschung, Vienna, 3.6.2020

## Live installations and questionnaire

“Questionology” with Charlotta Ruth, Research Pavilion #3, Venice, 6.-12.5.2019

“Questionnaire” with Charlotta Ruth, (programming: Simon Repp), temporarily online since May 2020

## Performances

“The Temple of Artifice”, co-performing in a performance by [M] Dudeck, Hamburg-Machine, St. Catherine’s Church, Hamburg, 22.9.2019

“Questionology” with Charlotta Ruth, co-produced by brut Vienna/Zentrum Fokus Forschung, Vienna, June 2021

Concept, environment: Cordula Daus and Charlotta Ruth

Programming, sound: Simon Repp

Re-searchers: Waltraud Brauner, Cordula Daus, [M] Dudeck, Gilbert Grünbühel, Imani Rameses, Charlotta Ruth

Architecture: Hinnerk Utermann

Object design: Susanne Song-Yi Griem, Sofia Romberg

Logo: Vasilis Marmatakis

Graphic design: Maiko Sakurai Karner

Collaboration sound installation: Thomas Grill, Till Bovermann, Almut Schilling (Rotting sounds, FWF AR445)

Collaboration installation office: Margarete Jahrmann aka Superfem

Production: Dominik Grünbühel

Technical support: Felipe Duque

## **Audio-graphic Works**

- “Jens”, in production, 2022
- “Sal”, in production, 2022
- “Nyam”, in production, 2022

## **Workshops**

- “Questionology” - The Research Question, with Charlotta Ruth, Alliances&Commonalities, Stockholm, 22-24.10.2020
- “Questionology”, with Charlotta Ruth, PRACTICE(!)WEEK, Angewandte Performance Lab (APL), Vienna, 21.-24.9. 2021

## **Journal Articles**

- “Are you here?”, with Charlotta Ruth, Errant Bodies Press, Berlin, forthcoming.
- “Notizen zu Questionology”, with Charlotta Ruth, Informationen zur Deutschdidaktik 46. Jg., H. 2, 2022: Neues aus Österreich, forthcoming.
- “On Higher Love” In *Research Envelope #4*, Zentrum Fokus Forschung, Vienna 2021
- “Reading on Reading”, with Emma Cocker and Léna Séraphin, RUUKKU – Studies in Artistic Research, 2020
- “Kay, or a Case for Intensity” In *Research Envelope #3*, Zentrum Fokus Forschung, Vienna 2020
- “Exercises in New Meaning: Rek”, The Decadent Review, Berlin 2019
- “Meaning lesser sex (10)” In ztsrpt, Vienna 2019
- “Kay, or a Case for Intensity.” In *Research Envelope #2*, 2018, Zentrum Fokus Forschung, Vienna 2018
- “Dora, or a Case for Intensity” In King’s Review, King’s College, Cambridge 2017

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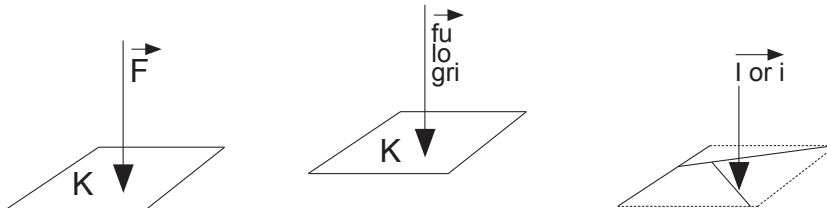
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- p. 58 “P – abysses of a consonant.” Photo: Olivia Bonares



Intensity ( $I$  or  $i$ ) is the amount of force applied at right angles to the surface of an object  $K$  per unit area. The usage of  $I$  vs  $i$  depends upon the field in which one is working, on the nearby presence of other symbols for quantities such as power, momentum, will, weight, age, and on writing style.