From:

Eva Lia Wyss (ed.)
Communication of Love
Mediatized Intimacy from Love Letters to SMS.
Interdisciplinary and Historical Studies

By the end of the twentieth century certain new media had established themselves which have profoundly changed communication among lovers. SMS and email in particular have created new relational forms and forms of intimacy. From declarations of love on talk shows to televised dating games and marriage quiz shows, television offers a panoply of wildly popular theatrical communications of love. Does the neglecting of traditional communication media, such as love letters and the telephone, cause the intermingling of intimacy with the public sphere and hence the abrogation of it?
From the disciplines of sociology, history, cultural and media studies and linguistics, this book offers answers to this question by analyzing and discussing new media from various perspectives.

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IMAGINARY AND FICTIONAL INTIMACIES

Mediatized Intimacy

Interdisciplinary and Historical Studies (Abstracts)[1]

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Over the past two centuries concepts of love, as well as the nature of intimate relations, have undergone modifications. Along with these modifications, the language of desire, the genres, text types and writing practices have changed as well. As these historical cultural differences and similarities have not yet been systematically studied this volume will explore with a strong focus on interpersonal, private and public media communication.

People have long since started to disintegrate the division into a private and a public sphere as eminently social spaces that has led to diffuse *spatial* demarcations. At the dawn of the 21st century the public and the private sphere become recognisably clashed in a widespread "trading zone" of the social. In the course of this the categories of social identities that are founded on this separation become indistinct.[2]

The attribution of gender, status and class, i.e. masculinity and femininity, upper class and lower class, a high status and a low status, is becoming increasingly fuzzy. The borders of the secret and intimate are shifted or even revoked. Neither the cultural practices nor the used media can any longer be strictly separated into private and public types.

These transformation went along with the mediatization of communication: in the closing decades of the 19th century the postcard and the telegram, in the 20th

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1   This volume would not have been completed without the kind and generous support of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Center of Competence of Gender Studies of the University of Zurich and the authors grant of the Canton of Solothurn.

2   This affects the category of gender, that is linked closely to sexuality, as well. The relations between Sex and Gender are explained detailed and accurately in Cameron/ Kulick (2003).

century mobile telephony and the Internet invited people to create different forms of mediatization of everyday communication. The use of new communication media influenced and determined then the formation of new communicative practices, too. Apparently new media are prone to establishing practices that go hand in hand with a new configuration of *identity*, *intimacy* and *relationships*.

The concept of "intimacy" is ambiguos, though. Focussing on the construction of intimacy one can assume two different modelings: On the one hand, intimacy is seen as a spatially or metaphorically spatial organized quality, which is attributed to the inner realm of the private sphere – inside the body, one's house as well as metaphorically in a realm of the personal kernel that is imagined as the innermost part of an individual. On the other hand, intimacy is seen more as a constructed state between a person and a (love) object that is interactively and dialogically constructed. The current condition of relation of the interlocutors therefore must be considered as a result that is communicatively and interactively co-constructed by communicative cultural practices.

Contemporary dictionaries usually describe a spatial modelling of intimacy as an attribution to a space that is located in a center or a kernel. It is explained in relation to a vaguely defined but supposed "intimate sphere" [German. "Intimsphäre"] and linked to the Latin "intimus, -a", the innermost.[3]

As a compound, it metaphorically refers to the innermost sphere of a person. Here, the spheres of a person are radially arranged from the inside to the outside, like the cloth of a Roman tunica, layer upon layer: the intimate sphere is belted by the private sphere, which is then manteled by the public sphere. The definition was established in social sciences at the beginning of the last century by Simmel. He assumed an "order of ideational spheres" (Simmel 1983: 151) and defined this intimate sphere as the innermost tier of an array of "ideational spheres" (Simmel 1983: 151), where he imagined the innermost as "support", as the "spiritual private property", as the core of individuality, as what set him apart from others. The innermost zone was believed to store one's "emotional private property" (Simmel 1983: 152), which constituted the core of one's individuality, and distinguished one person from another. Penetrating this most private sphere of spheres might destroy "an individual's personality" (Simmel 1983: 151) and must therefore be protected.

These extensions of meaning can be understood if one takes into account that – together with a cosmological stratification of the body and in analogy to the literal meaning – intimacy is described as "the most interior" part of the body. This refers only partially to those regions that are traditionally linked to *sexual* practices. This individual part of a person is veiled like the genital area, which is referred to as "in-

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3 The latin term signifies in the feminine form "intima" (or intima tunica) the innermost layer of the roman tunica dress.

timate" as well, just as those regions that permit *access to the interior of the body*.[4] With the metaphorical shifts also the eyes[5] are included in the range of body parts that allow access to the "interior world." It leads even to reflections on skin as a perceiving organ and trading zone between the outer and the inner sphere.[6] Because of its tactile sensitivity that is connected with the capability of touching and sensation, the skin is not to be seen as a mere exterior and visual form that demarcates the body but as a perceiving organ (beyond the eye, the ear, the nose, the hand and the tung) that is crucial for the conceptualisation of identity. This corresponds to Anzieu's (1985) idea of a skin-ego, which can be seen as a counter-concept to the cognitive-visual constitution of the ego and as a sensation-related emotion-ego, which represents a challenge to the new visual media (de Kerckhove 1993). Vision and touch-sense are merging into one melted concept of identity-related sensations and achieve to overcome the distance of the gaze. With the effect that intimacy is not shaped tightly located and stable, but used in order of social and cultural practices or as co-constructed interactive attribution by members of a group.

It seems that the construction of intimacy is not based on a single coordinative frame nor on a specific set of scripts. Rather it is characterized by a formal flexibility:

So far intimate communication, as well as other emotional performative acts, have been ascribed not only a content but also a quality of action, and as a part of an interaction they become highly relevant social facts.

However, deliberations concerning language cannot be separated from the reality of the media. In the media space, linguistic communication emerges as media communication and pervades as media reality these newly established spaces of interaction as media reality: this way the perception of reality is shifted, too: real is what becomes visible in a medium. Soon, information and events are produced for this medium: reality becomes a product of the media (Krotz 2008). Media reality and reality can no longer be clearly distinguished. Therefore a clear and dichotomous separation of exterior life (the public, which masculinity was attributed to)

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4   Further orifices that are labelled "intimate": those that grant access to the interior of the body: the anus, the ear and the mouth, which are more or less put under taboo.

5   According to Ovid (Metamorphoses, X, 243-297 (Pygmalion)), it is the look that strikes like a bolt of lightning from Amor's quiver into the eye of the other. Through this "window to the soul" (cf. Pliny the Elder and common parlance) the look strikes the soul and touches the innermost part.

6   Cf. Streisand (2001), Benthien (1999) and Böhme (1998). This corresponds to Anzieu's (1985) idea of a skin-ego, which can be seen as a counter-concept to the cognitive-visual constitution of the ego and as a feeling-related emotion-ego, which represents a challenge to the new visual media (de Kerckhove 1993).

and the interior life (the world of emotions, which was connected to femininity) is deconstructed by mediatization more and more. The public sphere is obviously no longer a locus that is conceived as an exterior space, no longer a locus of heterosexual masculine presence. Consequently, the differentiation between public and non-public personas, virtual and non-virtual figures, between masculinity and femininity, between sexuality and non-sexuality has been suspended more and more: This affects the most private expression of love, desire and intimacy.

In the first part the present volume includes *theoretical reflections* on new intimacies: Eva Illouz develops in Chapter 1 the effects of rationalizing romantic practises toward a distant emotional attitude and astrangement; in Chapter 2 Karl Lenz shows how love communication has changed since the 1950s, based on a new methodological approach analysing fictional film data for historical-sociological description of pick-up practices. Sabine Maasen and Catherine Duttweiler focus in Chapter 3 on the self-change work as a form of passionate and intimate caring practice that leads to a rationalization of everyday life. Friedrich Krotz depicts in Chapter 4 the undergone changes of everyday life and communication as mediatisation on the communicative microlevel. Manfred Weinberg analyses in Chapter 5 performances of sexuality indicating a new (homosexual) status of the intimate in everyday life and self-identification

The second part *Media of Intimacy* focusses on the construction and coconstruction of intimacy trough media interactions: Helga Kotthoff and Joachim Hoeflich discuss the usage of *phone communication* by adolescents, while Alex Bergs, Eva L. Wyss, Clemens Schwendener and Christine Moeller-Sahling analyse *(love) letter communication*, Anett Holzheids' studies the *postcards usage* at the beginning of 20th century. Mahmoud Al-Khatib explains emergent communicative genres in Arabic love songs that are *broadcasted in television and radio formats*.

In the third part this volume presents essays on the question of the specifics of *imaginary and fictional intimacy* by Holger Schulze on *changing patterns of story telling as traces of the imaginative persona* and Claudia Lieb explaining *fetishistic transactions* in Thomas Mann's oeuvre.

ABSTRACTS

The following summary of abstracts represents a brief introduction to the reasoning of each paper.

Illouz, Eva
Of Rationality and Passions
Using Simmel's notion of "cultural form", this paper addresses the relationship between technology of representation, social institutions and romantic sentiments. The author suggests that the increasing reliance on literacy and on literate modes of self-examination has fundamentally altered the phenomenology of love. In the same way that literacy gave rise to what historian Brian Stock has called an "ontology of the text", the therapeutic way of managing emotions has given rise to an "ontology" of intimacy. The paper is based on an analysis of therapeutic self-help books and interviews with 30 middle-class American men and women.

Lenz, Karl
How Love Relationships begin. Communication Patterns in Change
Whether the discourse of love has changed is examined via results from a research project on the institutionalising processes inherent in the relationships of couples. Interviewed were couples who "found" each other in the 1950s, '70s and '90s, and reports on data derived therefrom is followed by an analysis of medial portrayal of partnership formation, especially in movies and novels. This combination of the couples' subjectivity and the researchers' scientific analysis reveals what changes occurred in the medial representation of love discourse among couples over the course of these three decades. Further, the article reveals how the couples themselves describe their verbal exchanges in the early stages of the relationships, and how declarations and confessions of love have become part of their personal histories.

Maasen, Sabine/Duttweiler, Stefanie
Intimacy in How-to Books: The Passion of Self-Change Work
The rise of therapeutics in modern society has led to the prolification of self-help texts in a variety of media, from Internet chat to telephone hotlines to how-to books. The how-to book offers particular challenges to its users, who engage in a solitary practice of diagnosis, goal-setting, and transformation, constructing an intimate setting in which self-analysis and -exchange leads to self-change. The article argues that the discourse of "therapeutic communication" and the notion of "counselling" in how-to books, whose history and rationale are also presented, thus forges a new intimacy based on a trusting and truthful relationship with one's self. Further, the article examines how this relationship and its internal processes has now become a

modern imperative, as well as a normative, socialized, and thus ultimately sociable, practice.

Krotz, Friedrich
Intimate Communication on the Internet: How Digital Media are Changing our Lives at the Microlevel

Intimate communication is a specific type of human interaction that takes place under specific circumstances and constraints – but these social circumstances and constraints are in flux. Given the rise of digital media, how then has intimate communication changed? Has Internet communication, in particular, altered our communicative reality and behaviour on a social microlevel? The article seeks to answer these questions and points out that the emergence of digital media has made possible several new forms of intimate "interactive" communication, including a form that is here termed as artificial communication. Since (viewed through the lens of Meyrowitz's Medium Theory) communication is the underpinning of social and emotional relations, the article also suggests that new communicative forms have engendered new types of social and emotional relationships and behaviours, with long-term consequences for how human beings live in and understand the world around them.

Weinberg, Manfred
Let's Let the Devil Out! How the Public Deals with the Private

The *coming out* of homosexuals plays a special role in contextualizing the dramatic changes in public and publicised treatment of the private realm. After reviewing issues surrounding this phenomenon (such as the emergence of a uniform subject – at least, from a sexual perspective), the article examines medial aspects of Klaus Wowereit's confession of homosexuality – controversial less for the declaration itself than for his added comment, "And that's the way it should be!" The emerging coordinates in this "case" for a public staging of what is intimate/private, and the reactions thereto, are addressed via concrete questions about what conditions surround both a *coming out* and public discourse about homosexuality. The latter are then examined and generalised based on a now fundamentally different status of the private realm within the public medial space, which – regardless of whether cause or effect – also indicates a new status of the private/intimate in everyday life and self-identification.

Kotthoff, Helga
Adolescent girls on the phone:
The management of dating and social networking

In this article I will discuss how adolescent girls negotiate among themselves standards of romantic approaches, rejections, and falling in and out of love. I will focus

on the conversationally constructed dimension of feelings and show how girls orientate to each other in forming their relationships with boys. I basically analyse *private telephone conversations* between 14-16 year old girlfriends communicating about the ups and downs of first romantic matchmakings between boys and girls. I will also briefly comment on boys' practices. Overall, they do not develop such an intense conversational culture of ongoing monitoring of romantic encounters, as the girls do. Relationships with boys do not compete with girls' friendship, but rather provide them with an abundance of conversational topics. I also draw on stories told by boys and girls in focus groups about lovesickness. Methodically my study is situated in the field of interactional sociolinguistics.

Höflich, Joachim R.

The Mobile Phone: Bringing the Private into the Public

Although the divide between public and private is not necessarily dissolving, boundaries are nonetheless shifting, and mobile telephone usage is an example of boundary-shifting discourse. The article introduces results of a pilot study that explores differences in the perception of mobile phone private and public communication domains in several European countries. Collected data explore how social and cultural differences pertain to mobile communication: Private communication via mobile phone is bound by social/cultural communication practices. Not least, this also affects emotional exchanges between lovers via mobile phone – i.e., under the auspices of mediatisation. Finally, the study's results transcend the context of mobile telephony and encompass aspects such as correspondence and its private nature, public conflict and argument, or perceived breach of rules and embarrassment. The ultimate goal, however, is to clarify aspects of relationship communication under the conditions of mediatisation.

Bergs, Alexander T.

Investigating Love Letters Across Time: Semiotic, Sociolinguistic and Cognitive Problems and Perspectives

The author poses linguistic questions about 19th-century handwritten love letters and current emails and SMS from the perspective of a linguistic research project at Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf. Under examination are data collected and analogous problems, relevant bordering research domains (literary and media sciences, sociopsychology), as well as practical ramifications. In particular, the article explores the metaphor/symbolism continuum in love letters and text-typological findings for the subgenre "love letter." The third part focuses on sociolinguistic components: Has the change from handwritten letters to email and SMS altered love letters in form and content? At the same time, the article asks if this change influences sociopsychological transformations in the perception and performance of

communicative behaviour, then evaluates whether prototypical characteristics of love letters could function as a litmus paper for such change.

Wyss, Eva L.
From the Bridal Letter to Online Flirting: Changes in Text Type from the 19th Century to the Internet Era

It is surprising that certain elements of the correspondence between prospective brides and grooms of the 19th-century bourgeoisie seem today to be enjoying a comeback on the Internet. Some of the parameters, however, have changed. This essay will explore the similarities and differences of intimate literacy from a historical and pragmatic point of view. On the one hand it will discuss the text type in its pragmatic, textual, stylistic and medial aspects, and on the other hand it will focus on a number of distinct writing practices.

Schwender, Clemens
Letters Between Home and the Front: Expressions of Love in World War II "Feldpost" Letters

The written word endures and suggests commitment; thus, it should suffice to merely once declare mutual love in a letter. However, love and faithfulness pledges have a short half-life, dictated by changed life circumstances and long separations as evidenced by World War II Feldpost, letters written to and from the field. Through Feldpost testimonials, the article explores how a "love relationship" becomes defined. Absence of mail can indicate death, injury, or imprisonment, but it can also be interpreted as the diminishment of affection. The daily wait for mail therefore becomes an integral part of the relationship, and fragility of communication during war harbours the relationship's frailty. In war letters, love is thus always newly affirmed and demands being confirmed; the article reveals letter themes that reflect this instability and fragility. It also examines how an emancipation of women can be discerned in Feldpost and how that independence can shake foundations of love relationships, especially given a lack of control felt by both parties and the absence of a shared daily routine.

Möller-Sahling, Christine-Folke
"Aesthetic Brutality" and "Boundless Candour": Mediation of Love in the Eighteenth-Century Letter

This article examines dialogism in letters between Sophie Mereau and Clemens Brentano, Caroline and Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Luise Mejer and Heinrich Christian Boie in order to consider the changing literary and aesthetic qualities of love letters around 1800. Gender-typological questions follow: How do correspondents approach the topic of love, and do these approaches concur with the conception

of love as described by Luhman? How are femininity and masculinity conceived in these letters? Does male dominance mark these exchanges, or do partners correspond equitably? To what point do paradigms of male-oriented literature supersede the demand for individuality in female-authored letters? How does the change in the perception of love influence epistolary culture and genesis of the love letter? The investigation shows that observable discursive strategies between correspondents bring new revelations about how love functions in the search for identity. Most important, new solutions to and variants of love discourse toward the end of the 18th century do not appear unexpectedly, but rather are rehearsed in the love letter.

Holzheid, Anett
Affectionate Titbits: Postcards as a Medium for Love around 1900
Since their introduction in the last third of the 19th century, postcards embody an alternative to the love letter. While the letter is a form of the private and self-contained, the postcard is based on the principles of reduction and transparency. The article shows how postcards can be deemed the formal equivalent of linguistic phenomena of love discourse, such as diminutive formation, spontaneous neologisms, and breathless interjections; how they convey secret layers of meaning; and how forms of love texts are determined by media-specific parameters in interplay with the communicators' social circumstances, needs, and authority. Also discussed are strategies of sending and formulating text, as well as bicodal application. Since messages are encoded both verbally and with imagery, and since prefabricated images and texts are available to postcard writers, the postcard text *in toto* dwells in the area of conflict between language and gesture, insinuation and expression, form-preserving stereotyping and form-breaking originality, as well as between anonymising disguise and expository representation of subjectivity.

Al-Khatib, Mahmoud A.
Love Songs in Arabic: Language, structure and function
This article examines love songs in Arabis, using the notion of an ethnography of speaking and the theory of interaction as developed by Hymes (1972), Savilee-Troike (1989), and Scheff (1990), et al. In Arab society, people tend to use love songs to communicate, perhaps by exchanging songs on cassette or through song dedication. From data collected, song aspects such as language, structure, form, function, strategies, and style are examined via the dual analytical model of discourse and sociolinguistics. Also, the study attempts to highlight the effect of media (in this case, television programs) on love songs as a mode of communication. Data indicates strategies such as blaming, flattering, and especially suffering and complaining are used to communicate the message of love. The author argues that love songs can be regarded as social acts conveying affection, and that they can be understood only in the context of the situation for which they are composed and used.

Schulze, Holger

The Medial Persona. Tectonics of the Medial Imaginarium

How do we move and act in a public space? How does the tension-rich structure of this artificial medial space, this imaginarium, shape our actions and the persona we thus assume in order to represent ourselves? Given this persona, what is the function of an action that we judge as "intimate"? The article investigates these questions through the use of so-called "medial stories." Medial stories, as collectively discovered artefacts of the medial imaginarium, constitute the sole tangible representation of the medial persona. Their topical, culturally and historically changing patterns of telling — constructed narratively and performatively — can be seen as a trace of the persona that makes visible the artificiality of public actions and appearances in light of a "theory of the genesis of works." The article also turns self-referentially to describing medial situations in the area of scholarship, as well as to medial stories about political life and ventures at the edge of medial art.

Lieb, Claudia

Window-Dressing: Fetishistic Transactions in Fictional Prose by Oskar Panizza and Thomas Mann

A study about the condition of love discourse from a literary and (literary-) theoretical point of view (Goethe's *Werther*, Julia Kristeva's *Tales of Love,* and Niklas Luhmann's *Love as Passion*) concludes that love is a phenomenon that eludes tangible, material methods or practices. Instead, it drifts into the realm of the imaginary: The beloved partner must be virtualised, and this occurs with the help of visual media. Since the era of Romanticism, the medium of the window is a fixed component of love discourse; and beginning in about 1900, display windows also enter into the discourse. Thomas Mann's novella *Gladius Dei* and Oskar Panizza's short story *The Operated Jew (Der Korsetten-Fritz)* are, aside from being cultural-scientific deliberations, the core examples through which we can examine the status of the public woman, and what attraction she holds for readers and observers.

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