



Kay, or a Case for Intensity

Cordula Daus

"Kay, or a Case for Intensity" is an artistic-literary experiment that explores the reciprocity of body and language using the example of "intensity". For this purpose I will create the fictional character Kay:

Kay, 45, is inflamed. Where, the doctor asks. It's an autoimmune disease, the senior physician says. I can't find anything, the endocrinologist reports. She has become worked up. About a child, about a love. Both were removed, the senior physician writes. Kay strikes back. Severe, more severe, the most severe. The linguist measures. What about the stomach, the therapist asks. Kay looks for the spot. The stomach doesn't say anything, it doesn't speak German. Please remove the word, Kay says. There's no organ there I can pronounce.

How can one adequately address intensity? Where does it take place? Which "language" does it speak? And: How can I write about/with the body?

My thesis assumes the following premise: Intensity¹ poses a problem for both science and language. The "intensive magnitude" (Kant) of a subjective sensation such as love, joy, pain or grief, is neither objectively measurable, nor can it be adequately described by language.

Kay represents a container, a case of intensity that I wish to approach with both scientific and literary devices. I will thus continue the tremor studies ("Erschütterungskunde"), I began with my journal *Toponymisches Heft No. 3*. In a first phase I will study selected techniques in seismology, medicine and psychology that measure and describe intensity as a physical force which acts upon a body. Secondly, I will carry out a series of experiments in which I subject myself to these techniques. As Kay's double I will project myself into specific body parts and states. The objective of the project is to develop a writing-system for/of intensity that does justice to my character's symptoms. The process of my work, the shaping of a book, will be accompanied by a series of performative lectures.

1 The noun "intensity" first appeared in the scientific discourse of 18th century Europe. Originally implemented to exactly describe escalating and decreasing processes of phenomena such as light and temperature, the neologism becomes a metaphor to articulate the "gradual movement" ("Gradbewegung"/Novalis) of inner emotions, passions and states. Intensity establishes itself as a the "quantity of a quality" that vows to act as an intermediary between the outside and the inside, the world and the Self, between knowledge and feeling, that's exact measurement remains not directly possible.