**Affectionate Tidbits: Postcards as a Medium for Love around 1900.**

Anett Holzheid

Our verbal toolbox of everyday communication contains many formulaic expressions. One – the end justifies the means – serves to express the notion of some action running borderline against socially approved norms. It applies quite fittingly to the epistolary paradox of communicating private discourse on a wide-open postcard. After the postcard had been introduced as a new means of verbal intercourse in Germany in 1870, it elicited strong resentment among the bourgeois middle class, who considered valued standards and principles of written correspondence to be seriously at stake.[1] Despite its rock-bottom postage, the generic blank postcard demonstrated in numerous ways its insufficiency for conveying private messages. Its general acceptance was hampered by its characteristic semi-public distribution, and the limited and often repetitive verbal patterns associated with its use. Small-scale on many levels yet lacking the seriousness of a telegram, the use of a privately sent postcard in the early days was restricted to occasions requiring an exceptional demand for communicative efficiency, with its visible content a straightforward message and its subtext an obligatory explanation and an apology for this choice of cost-conscious contact.

The functional design, the obvious convenience, and the simple, unencrypted messages of the postcard would seem to constrict its use, certainly leaving little to offer for private verbal fancy and the discourse of the heart. And yet, the love postcard emerged strongly as a subset of general postcard communication and became a fashionable part of late nineteenth century popular culture. To explain its increasing popularity, one might again pull from that verbal toolbox and simply declare that all is fair in love and war – the postcard included. Undoubtedly, the medium did enjoy historic success as *Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte* during the Franco-Prussian War in 1870/71. Even so, there remains the crucial question of how meaningful for love's sake the medium ultimately became. Furthermore: what were the socio-cultural implications that provoked and shaped love discourse on postcards, despite the

medium's constitutional characteristics that were neither compatible with the concept of love nor with the concept of written communication in the nineteenth century? What designs of graphics and text were generated to transform the postcard into a valuable and acceptable medium of intimate interaction? Pursuing these questions we will briefly elaborate on the phase that preceded successful love card usage by explaining how the general postcard was adopted for private communication.

**Private postcard communication**

The general postcard grew significantly and rapidly when it was officially authorized by the post office in addition to being a lucrative product of the paper industry. Through an intricate combination of technical refinements and high caliber artwork involving printing, coloring, and embossing, the medium was upgraded from plain cardboard into valuable picture postcards. Also, as a consequence of the introduction of novel materials such as superior ink, glitter, feather, fine fabrics and pearls, and even fragrances, the medium came to provide a multi-coded stimulus for private communication. Semantically enriched with several sensual and symbolic layers of meaning, each single card opened up a small playground, where image and text interacted to created private messages.

A *perpetuum mobile* of social communication had begun. The industry's new found ability to reproduce, on cardboard, sparkling details of real places and envisioned dreams gave people of any social level, age group, or gender, a new norm for maintaining or transforming their social network. Felicitations – seasonal greetings or congratulations upon personal success – were conveyed, as were spontaneous gestures of friendship. The significance of the postcard habit became such that the unexplained absence of an anticipated card caused disappointment and implied rejection.

Readily recognized and accepted, postcards continued to develop in their role as carriers of friendly greetings. Then, with deliberate ambiguity, affectionate tidbits of

the amorous sort subtly and gradually slipped into the mix. On the cards' iconic level, an inventory of accustomed symbols of emotional closeness (e.g. hearts, doves, rings, cupids, and floral arabesques) advertized either way the cordial rapport between sender and receiver as either friendship or love. Likewise, the writer could use humor and skill in the verbal message to withhold from the unauthorized reader whether those hugs and kisses to the dear she-addressee were sent by a suitor or by her best female friend.

**Lovecards unbound**

It stands to reason that lovers waived standard epistolary etiquette and approached the medium playfully and impulsively. Love cards were exchanged in sequels of small verbal units sometimes more than twice a day (see figure 3), which parallels to our current use of short and multimedia message services. Abbreviated style, characteristic of both private SMS and postcard communication, is clearly demonstrated by a piece of correspondence (fig.1), which was distributed within Berlin in 1905:



**Fig 1** "Heartfelt greetings to my sweet mouse. / Yours / C[arl]chen. / Berlin 03/21/1905."

Although this card's design suggests a hand written letter in narrow line spacing, the actual message dispenses with lengthy content and follows a common pattern of three lines (1.2 - 4), which corresponds to a typical closing frame of a private letter. In large fonts and wide spacing, this pencil script joins with the prefabricated text (1.1; bold, A.H.) to one bicoded message unit, which will be referred to as the postcard communiqué:

(1)    1   **Meiner süßen Maus einen herzlichen Gruß**
2      Dein
3      C'chen
4       Berlin 21/3.05.

The printed text in this verbal unit, which purports to be an intimate greeting-card but is not confined specifically to a love relationship, sets the stage on which the sender-text provides deictic references to transform this piece of mass media into an individual token of social contact.

Aside from matching the linguistic level, the sender's text genuinely merges with the typographic and overall visual design of the printed text into a darling, petite, semiotic creation: The card's color frame (limited to dove-blue cardboard, white ink, red for the two rebus signs) provides an aesthetic context for the sender's pencil gray. The embossed sensual print and cursive style of font strategically mimic sophisticated handwriting. The two pictorial rebus signs create a unique atmosphere to which the small sender text conforms in his verbal stylistics (e.g. ellipsis of verb; signature consisting of morphemic diminutive and apostrophized abbreviation; numerals instead of words for the month, abbreviated numbers for the year). The possessive pronouns (the handwritten "deinem", which corresponds to the printed "meiner"*)* and the underlining of the signature, which formally echoes the ornate line of the printed text, suggest balance between first and second person singular and indicate a close relationship. Here, the gesture of devotion symbolized by the handwritten pronoun not only claims special emphasis in its relation to the overall length of the text, it also

appears framed and as a central part of the verbal eye-catch. Hence, with the grammatical diminutive and its semantics of affection worked out to the last detail, the communiqué semiotically becomes a super-sign of affectionate form.

Such creative play of charming miniature centered around the element of signature constitutes a primary basis for love discourse enacted through postcards. The signature, a marker of completion, can signify the gesture of silently assenting to the message of the card. As is still true today, each deployed version of signature was acknowledged to indicate a certain degree of emotional closeness, the common signature scale running from anonymous to surname to first name to nicknames with various forms of abbreviations and combinations to the ultimately intimate no-name. However, forms of signature back then primarily needed to reflect the state of progress that was officially accepted for this couple within the social community.

Especially in the heyday of picture postcards, when a vast majority of intricately designed cards were sent to be collected in albums, the element of signature turned the card into a designated present. As exemplified in figure 2, such cards consisted of a typical patchwork pattern, which would spell out the love message appealingly, demanding as little as the sender's consenting signature:



**Fig. 2** The whole visible world echoes greetings of love.

Following the standard visual design of a geographic panorama postcard, this card (fig. 2) shows a private resort against the backdrop of an unlimited horizon, illustrating the concept of distance and, by extension, 'here' vs. 'there' and 'addresser' vs. 'addressee'. Its warm sepia colors combine – in a module like manner – common elements of the "Greetings-from" card (*Gruß-aus-Karte*) with ornamented frame-like elements and symbols (untouched nature and chapel, sailboat with white canvas). The four-lined verse (2), which becomes the basic verbal element of love card design, refers to and explains the pictorial message, describing the visible world as an advocate to love. The lyrical "I" in the printed verse fulfills the sender's intention of greeting the beloved addressee:

(2)  1  **Es klingt aus Wellen und Wogen,**
     2  **Lacht aus dem Sonnenschein,**
     3  **kommt mit dem Schifflein gezogen,**
     4  **Der Gruß: "Ich denke Dein!**

Applying a close to word-to-word translation the verse reads: "the greetings: 'I am thinking of you' echoes from the sound of small and big waves, appears as a smile of the shining sun and comes along as the carriage of a little sailboat.

Three word affirmations, similar to the "thinking of you" phrase (2.4), which in figure 2 was particularly emphasized by the sender's underlining, make up the key message of love postcards. The medium's manufactured emotive atmosphere provides the means to declare, repeatedly and anew, unaltered emotions between separated lovers. "Bist Du mir treu" (are you faithful), "Ich bin Dein" (I am yours) are examples of such question and answer games that were favorably played by series (figures 3a-3d):

**Fig. 3a-d.** Within one day the she-addressee, Miss Kätchen, received a gesture of greeting subdivided and expanding across one day, being tied to morning, mid-day, evening, and night as referential points of devotional acknowledgment.

This series from 1899 performs a spoken greeting in the form of a written one. Including a compliment to the postal-service, the verse of card 3a uses the postcard as a substitute for face-to-face contact: "**'Guten Morgen!' aus der Ferne / Ach wie brächt ich's selber gerne / Doch die Post wird's treu besorgen: / 'Guten Morgen!'**" ("Good morning" from afar. Ahh, I would just love to deliver these greetings to you in person, but I am sure, the post will do it just as well: "Good morning!")

As demonstrated, a particular tradition of love card writing was generated by fixing and emulating the language of the desired greetings. This language consisted of a set of small versed citations, formulaic phrases and stereotypical visuals, which served to manifest a core meaning using slightly altered signifiers (fig.4).

**Fig.4 a + b** Happy Easter on love cards. Two variations of the *Happy Easter* theme: "Herzlichen Ostergruß", "Fröhliche Ostern!"

Taking advantage of this manufactured authority of common text, which the printed word and the graphics exhibited naturally and which the portrayed topics acquired by simple rule of repetition, senders subscribed to this postcard design and pattern wholeheartedly (fig. 5).

**Fig.5** To establish a momentum of intermediary contact before the upcoming face-to-face visit, this love card was deployed by a female sender.

"Ewig Dein" (yours forever) is presented as a noble motto of faithful avowal, whereas unambiguous symbols (roses, tulips, carnations) and common symbolic color (red, gold) are put into place to bring the verbal meaning to its maximum effect. The female sender adopts this technique of unmistakable emphasis, and shapes her perfect expression of love by bringing the language of the postcard itself to perfection: she expands on the motto by adding a version of a rhymed verse (5), which might just as well have been part of the printed text. Drawing on the symbolic meaning of flowers, this popular folk verse declares the exceptional endurance of love that holds together the lyrical "I" and the addressee:

(5)   1   Rosen Tulpen Nelken
      2   Alle Blümlein welken
      3   Marmor und Eisen bricht
      4   Aber unsere Liebe nicht.[2]

Likewise, in the space for the verbal message on the reverse side, her words express thanks to the reader for the card he had sent to her, and express hope that her most preciously loved sweetheart may be as safe and sound as she is. These warm remarks

are followed by a farewell and at last by the typical ending of hugs and kisses from his ever loving and forever loyal Elise.[3]

This two-sided message further implies perfect love by addressing the only two concepts of time that lovers find relevant: the present moment of fulfillment, and the state of never-ending eternity joined into one semantic entity of undivided love. The handwritten note documents some present moment of situational and mental contact, and the overleaf slogan "Yours forever" claims time-transcending validity.

In contrast to perfecting postcard language by means of such intertextual citing mode, the sender-text of figure 6 explicitly certifies the content of the printed message to be perfect:



**Fig. 6** Bicoded love card design of 1942 marked as veritably fitting the communicative needs of the male sender.

The graphics (fig. 6) consist of a clever comic-style arrangement, with the thought bubble being removed from the picture and placed as a subtitle to the photograph, leaving it to the specific user of the card to determine whether the male or female gets connected with the lyrical voice of the printed thought.

(6)  1  **Junges Glück!**
     2  **Schau ich Dich an, so sieht das Leben aus**
     3  **Schön und bunt wie der Blumenstrauß.**

The expressive noun phrase (6.1, young and blossoming happiness of love) can alternatively be interpreted as the thematic title of the picture or as an emphatic invocation of the addressee. Additionally, due to its elliptical style and the use of definite articles, the text itself serves to decode the picture as much as to provide adulation: "looking at you makes the world appear as beautiful and colorful as this bouquet of flowers."

The male sender attributes iconic quality to these lines of praise, equating the verse with his very thoughts and feelings:

     4  Dieser Spruch stimmt haargenau auf
     5  das, was ich nur denke und fühle,
     6  Elise.

His comment, which tenderly ends by using the addressee's name (6.6), perfectly matches the first line of the printed verse (6.1) in style, and provides further emphasis to positively denote the addressee.

**Limitations**

Although the love card became an indispensable means to communicate with the beloved partner, this bonding ritual was not completely left to the lover's discretion. Societal restrictions held great sway. As Peter Gay (1986: 3) poignantly put it: "Acceptable paths to love were plainly marked and heavily guarded."[4] To

reconstruct some of the basic principles governing the normative rules of middle class conduct, the picture postcard of figure 7 shall be worth our attention:



**Fig.7** Caricature card of 1905 used in a teasing man-to-man-correspondence.

This caricature dramatizes social convention, lover's interaction, and the popular topic of the coy male suitor. In the salon of private homes, one of the designated areas for courting activity, interaction conforms to accepted roles (i.e. female responsiveness, initiative of male, obligatory presence of a third party of paternal authority). The distance between the couple, marked as artificial separation, follows the rule of restrained intimacy which required, prior to engagement, that the woman be verbally addressed with the formal version of her name. At large, these norms implied that each interaction should signify commitment, show rational character, and include modest limitations of length and frequency in writing and conversations.

The picture addresses these issues by contrasting mediated and unmediated discourse. Paper, as the vehicle for language, appears in its central vertical axis: first, the unfolded newspaper (symbol of common public interest, serving as a prop for the occupied male mind), secondly, the closed book (symbolizing the female's realm of a private home), and thirdly, the small note deployed as *billet-doux* (referring to intimate verbal intercourse and the medium of postcard). Within this hierarchical order of paper

media, the small note located in the foreground is particularly emphasized. It is part of both the vertical and the horizontal axis, clearly indicating the propriety of the postcard. Indeed the postcard, during the first phase of acquaintance, carried the advantage of private contact without the secretiveness of a sealed letter. By adapting the pattern of general greeting cards, visually as much as verbally, the standard card from a suitor passed the critical eye of family sentries as an innocuous gesture of politeness. Images of seasonal illustrations, scenes of photo realism, and reproduction of pieces of art strategically kept its denotations to the realm of generic postcard topics; and explicit greetings to the "werten Eltern und lieben Geschwistern" (much esteemed parents and dear brothers and sisters) made the tacit claim that the cards were open to public inspection.

In the everyday discourse between lovers, postcard messages conformed strictly to the traditional system of accepted morals. Favorite pictorial expressions of mass produced cards were sent as legitimate samples of lovers' individual values and fantasies of private happiness. Popular images of undisturbed togetherness, chosen by both women and men, featured scenes illustrating rapturous mutual attention through gesture, gaze and talk. Such scenes were located on open green or some hidden bench surrounded by blue sky. Cards chosen by men at a later stage of relationship unmistakably portrayed personal concepts about their future wives (see fig. 8ad):

**Fig.8 a, b** were deployed by a young male teacher as to send some simple greetings at day or night time to beloved Miss Anna. **Fig.8 c, d** are part of a series of country idyll, addressed to Miss Bella, residing in Frankfurt city.

Such cards with a message of scenic harmony were frequently adopted to approach the addressee tenderly – either to smooth over a previous incident of disagreement, or to visually forecast future fulfillment in compensation for the present moment of want.

**Double voiced**

Love cards aim for ultimate togetherness, but vital discourse also includes mystifying and controversial forces. Due to the ambivalent potential of visual language, love cards became popular devises to play out guessing games. Aside from the surplus of pleasure associated with the riddled sign, enigmatic greetings affect intimacy because those who are involved decode the message in light of the exclusively shared presuppositions of their history. It may also be, contrary to the romantic mode of intimated conspiracy, that encrypting techniques were applied as a precautionary approach. The following examples demonstrate different forms of creative mystery as a substantial feature of love card language.

To substitute names was a popular strategy, which can be depicted by a message of five female senders (9). Their hand written text consists purely of a list containing a possibly identifying reference to each sender. Instead of names, periphrastic signatures were used. The message (9) translates to: "affectionate greetings and a kiss / sends / a silent female admirer / likewise: an even more silent / female admirer, / a through and through silent female admirer, / a truly silent female admirer / an ardent female admirer":

(9)　　[I]　　1　Herzlichen Gruß und Kuß
　　　　　　　2　sendet
　　　　　　　3　eine stille Verehrerin,
　　　　[II]　　4　desgleichen: Eine noch stillere
　　　　　　　5　Verehrerin,
　　　　[III]　6　Eine ganz stille Verehrerin
　　　　[IV]　7　Eine wirklich stille Verehrerin
　　　　[V]　　8　Eine glühende Verehererin [sic, A.H.]

At first glance these signatures can be read according to the common lexicon of that time, as manifestations of traditional female ethos. Yet this position of introverted sensation takes on a different meaning when viewed in context of the image of the selected postcard (fig. 9).



**Fig.9** Referentially, the visual theme of this card provides the primary information of the whole communiqué. It functions as a note of cultural event referring to the debut performance of an operetta by Franz Lehár in Munich.[5]

While it was rather unusual for women to initiate a contact to a male address, other than their relatives, the selection of this card for correspondence, taken by itself, could be interpreted as a fully decent and stereotypical act. The culture of theater was explicitly declared topic number one for conversations between young middle-classed men and women. And yet, writing apparently innocent greetings related to the topic of the emancipated wife seems to challenge the traditional role of woman. It evokes an act of modern wishful self-promotion by associating each female writer with the world of actresses – with glamorous successes and their masquerade of fictitious seduction. The communiqué's peculiar quality of double-voiced message is generated by oscillating between gestures towards the male addressee, enacted in the sender text, and turning away from him, envisioned in the printed message.

16

Creative playing off conventional form, as this communiqué exemplified, is another form of flirting.[6] It worked in its swaying and noncommittal character against the officially designated routines of committed behavior. Typically these cards were circulated during social gatherings of adolescent peer groups such as bicycle clubs and fraternities, and signatures were accumulated from everyone present in order to pull together one collective hello to the absent addressee. Such multi-voiced postcards were successfully turned into love cards when addressees took up this hide-and-seek-play and decoded one signature as indicating more meaning than the rest of the names.

This strategy of concealing identity by carefully blending one's message with the standards of postcard language might have addressed the individual need of the coy lover, who preferred subdued ways of communicating love. This type of sender, who played his love cards like a piker with much precaution, liked to have the imprinted message of his cards indicate love vaguely, by keeping his own hand writing physically and content wise at a distance to the illustrated love scene. In general, adolescent multi-voiced greetings on cards seem to have been closely related to a specific rule of nineteenth century middle class conduct, according to which teenagers were expected to approach a member of the opposite sex within small groups only.

However overtly ambiguous, cards of the early stages of a relationship nevertheless contained small traces of discrete meaning on close inspection, whether placed there on purpose or unintended. Thus it was left to the addressed reader to decide whether the orthographic peculiarity of the last female sender of the operetta card (9.5) was meant as a jocular wordplay or rather subconsciously triggered as a Freudian slip. Her conflating the two key words of the card – the noun *Verehrerin* (agency of female admirer) and the noun: *Ehe* (institution of marriage) – into her version of "Verehererin" fuels ambivalent meaning. On one hand it, this version with an additional e-vowel can be interpreted to imitate a stressed pronunciation of the regular lexical form as to indicate a higher degree of adoration. On the other it reads like the writer's wishful path of proceeding from admiration to matrimony.

Much different yet is the strategy of camouflaged message that was adopted on a card of 1904. Its printed text reads like an instruction manual about indicating love

on postcards. It appears to perform a secret semiotic maneuver which, if intercepted, no one else would be able to decipher: "**Willst du dein Herz mir schenken, / So fang es heimlich an / Dass unser Beider Denken, / Niemand errathen kann**" (if you want to devote your heart to me, do it secretly. No one shall decipher our intimate thoughts.) The male sender follows suit and takes advantage of the card's illustration, which depicts the medieval romantic cliché of a noble suitor carefully watching a sleeping beauty who was resting on a bench after gathering pink rose blossoms. This pictorial face-to-face-encounter equally compares with the photographic card in figure 6 and allows for the small verbal pencil message well hidden in the pleats of the lady's dress: "Mittwoch auf Wiedersehen" (seeing you again Wednesday). This embedded information about an upcoming tête-à-tête connects to the card's pictorial message of a meeting at a romantic site. Further intricacies of the art of concealing an intimate message in a seemingly innocuous carrier are exemplified in the use of cards depicted in figure 10a and b.



**Fig. 10** To address thoughtfulness and comfort, these two cards were sent – two days in a row – by a young man in 1904 within a small town to his female friend, who was sick in bed.

Manifestations of young female health and attractiveness, these two serial cards of baroque beauty seem to unmistakably allude to the physical condition and persona of the addressee; with each of the pictorial elements – the girl dressed in her morning gown with loose hair, rosebuds, open décolleté – indicating not only the sender's best wishes for recovery but also his adoration and desire. The similarity between the two visual images is reflected by the sender's verbal messages. Both texts constituted polite greetings with the element of formal address. The message of the second day (10b) in an almost literal translation reads: "how is it going today, Miss Babettchen??? Much better, for sure! Soon you will be able to walk around, won't you? Be greeted most affectionately from Rudolf".

(10b)  1    Wie geht es heut, Frl.
       2    Babettchen??? Doch
       3    sicher besser! Nicht
       4    wahr, Sie können
       5    bald wieder aufstehn?
       6    Seien Sie herzlichst
       7    gekrüßet [sic, A.H.] von
       8    Rudolf

Aside from orthographic markers that indicate informal spoken language, one orthographic peculiarity of (10b.7) stands out. As a marked substitute for the unmarked version of the past participle *gegrüßt* the applied version "gekrüßet" (l0.7) indicates elaborate, antiquated style and thus shows that two discourses are active on this card (i.e. formal register of young suitor plus informal register of old acquaintance). What seems to be yet more significant is the substitution of the regular consonant (voiced plosive *g* to voiceless *k*). This alteration of letter might have been caused by dialectic interference[7] but, read as a consolidation of the verb *grüßen* (to send greetings) and the verb *küssen* (to kiss), it suggests that the formal greetings contain some secret kisses. This conspicuous letter appears to be akin to another secret sign on this card: next to the stamp, a small penciled cross points to the secret note underneath the stamp. There the message was constituted, much to the contrary of the "main" text, by intimate address, explicit kisses and an affectionate form of signature.

Although at risk that their message would be detected and fined by the postal institution, lovers frequently used this space underneath the stamp just as they would use the main space for the sender's message: to exchange kisses and cite verses, to express their desire or frustration, or to set up the next secret date.

As further embellishment in the address section, the stamp itself symbolized a certain message of devotion depending on its angular position.[8] Although carrying the typical vagueness of postcard signifiers in general, the stamp applied in figure11, being specifically highlighted by two exclamation marks, denies any accidental meaning, and adds yet another touch to the many genuine forms of verbal caress that were spread throughout the sender's text and address section.



**Fig11** The stamp as an additional sign of affection addressed to: "My sweet little bride" in 1900.

Undoubtedly, gestures of love can be subtly and creatively worked into any medium, including seemingly innocuous postcards. Writers were free to encrypt their greetings to add some secret or tender touch. For example, a writer might use numerals or the Morse code on a Christmas card to stretch the scope of common season's greetings. Levels of secrecy were dependent on the stage of the relationship and its specific predicaments and constraints.

**Conclusion**

The postcard, in the pre-telephone era, certainly did not replace the elaborate medium of the love letter, but it could not be discredited as a medium of laconic and uninspired communication either. Love card writing grew as a tradition despite being open to public scrutiny, and a whole new realm was opened with its own democratic rules. Small private messages, no longer negatively connoted, began their career as much sought after charming and affectionate tidbits. By utilizing the advances of the paper industry and by taking a more or less courageous and creative spin on prefabricated cards, standard modes of communicating affection were turned into unique signs of endearment without requiring unreasonable amounts of time, money and artistic skill. Using a variety of coded signs to affirm the message of the heart, the love card culture of the turn of the twentieth century set the stage for the various electronic modes of multi-coded affectionate short messaging of today. Genuinely new standards of affectionate communication rose to the social surface, actively affirming the conceptual changes of love that were emerging. Moves of mutual give and take, either dramatically dynamic or nearly imperceptible challenged the gender fixed concept of communicative action and reaction. Whether love messages be inscribed on cardboard, circa 1900, or transmitted electronically, circa 2000, the enduring popularity of this type of dialogue affirms that the discourse of the heart continues to be a two-sided matter: a mysterious twist between expression and concealment, and a tricky compromise between traditional concepts of showing of affection and modern ways – apt and timely, reaffirming and sparkling new, extraordinarily individualistic, and yet not awkward but commonly understood and accepted.

**Images**

Cards are from the author's collection, except Fig. 6 (collection of Eva Herold, Coburg) and Fig. 3, 9 (collection of Joachim Schlotterbeck, Würzburg).

**Fig. 1**: 21.3.1905 **to:** Fräulein Emmy M., Elberfeld **from:** C'chen, Berlin.
**Fig. 2**: 4.6.1901 **to:** Hochwohlg. Fräulein Lotte von K, Austria. **from:** Adolf.
**Fig. 3 a – 3 d**: 5.9.1899 **to**: Kätchen B., Bamberg, **from:** F. Nüsslein, Bamberg.
**Fig. 4 a**: 28.3.1918 **to:** Gussy, **from**: "Deinem Dich heiß lb Bräutchen Ilse".
**Fig. 4 b**: 2.4.1920 **to:** Frl. Mari Sch., Retzbach, **from:** Luise, Aschaffenburg.
**Fig. 5**: 7.12.1906 **to:** Herrn Ernst R., Oberdallendorf, **from:** Elise, Obercassel.
**Fig. 6**: 8.5.1942 **to:** Frl. Elise B, Nürnberg, **from:**"Dein Wildfang", Kirchenlamitz.
**Fig. 7**: 14.1.1905 **to:** Eduard K., Ökonom, Bad Kissingen, **from:** Simon F.
**Fig. 8 a**: 20.12.1909 **to:** Fräulein Anna O., Karlsruhe **from:** Franz, Gengenbach.
**Fig. 8 b**: 20.7.19012 **to:** Fräulein Anna O., Karlsruhe, **from:** Franz, Lörrach.
**Fig. 8 c + d**: 11./25.11.1909 **to:** Frl. Bella S., Frankfurt, **from:** Richard, Frankfurt.
**Fig. 9**: 20.7.1905 **to:** Herrn Andreas N., Munich **from:** 4 female sender, München.
**Fig. 10a + b**: 14./15.5.1907 **to:** Fräulein Babettchen H. , Fulda, **from:** Rudolf, Fulda.
**Fig.11**: 21.5.1900 **to:** "meine Kleine süße Braut". **from**: "Deinem Dich liebenden Willi."

---

[1] First issued by the Austro-Ungarian monarchy on October 1, 1869, other countries followed. The medium was e.g. officially accepted in Great Britain, Switzerland (1870); Denmark, the Netherlands, (1871);France, Russia (1872); Spain, the USA (1873), Italy (1874), etc.

[2] As stated in the verse: Roses, tulips, carnations and the rest of flowers are bound to wither away and, likewise to this fate of natural beauty, the solid entities of marble and iron are breakable by some natural forces, but the couple's love would neither be fading nor be broken.

[3] "Mein innigstgeliebter / habe Deine liebe / Karte erhalten. / Hoffentlich bist Du noch gesund und / munter was ich auch / noch bin. Lebe wohl / bis Sonntag. / Herzlichen Gruß. und Kuß von D.[einer] D.[ich] ewig tr[eu] l.[liebenden] Elise".

[4] Gay, Peter (1986): *The Bourgois Experience*. Victoria to Freud. Volume II. The Tender Passion. New York: Oxford University Press.

[5] Lehár's operetta "Die Juxheirat" ("The Mock Marriage") had its debut performance in Austria, Theater an der Wien in 1904, December 12.

[6] In Germany *flirt* first appeared as a dictionary entry in the *Meyer's Conversationslexikon* in 1894.

[7] Considering that within the region in which this card was sent, speakers frequently substituted the voiceless plosives by voiced ones, this particular word might be a hypercorrection phenomenon, triggered by the formal version of the word.

[8] The specific meaning of each stamp's positioning was part of the couple's individual love code. Due to the many different and changing interpretations of love stamp language, which over time were also illustrated in several inexpensive booklets, from today's perspective the single stamp-messages offers several readings. The depicted angle in fig. 17 can be interpreted, e.g. as "I am longing for you", "I won't tell and my lips are sealed" (around 1900); "please, would you pick me up" (1902); or "are you really faithful" (around 1930).