

My Desire's My Own

Female sexual pleasure in the digital age

Feature

Author: Bettina Mittelstraß

Speakers: Sebastian Rüger, Katja Schild, Bettina Mittelstraß

Direction: Bettina Mittelstraß

Technical Support: Susanne Hertzog

Editor: Bernard Senn / SRF

Production SRF 2 Kultur / Switzerland 2019

First Broadcast 10.01.2020 20 h

<https://www.srf.ch/sendungen/passage/meine-lust-mir-vom-weiblichen-geschlechts-genuss-zu-digitalen-zeiten>

00:00:00 Music / Goldfrapp "Slippage"

00:00:06 Speaker (male)

"Without doubt, the man has a more intense sexual appetite than the woman. As a result of a powerful natural instinct, at a certain age a man is drawn towards a woman. He loves sensually and is influenced in his choice by physical beauty. (...) With a woman, it is otherwise. If she is normally developed mentally and well raised, her sensual desire is minimal. If this were not so, the whole world would be a brothel and marriage and family inconceivable. In any case, the man that avoids women and the woman that seeks sexual pleasure are abnormal."

00:00:48 Music / Goldfrapp "Slippage" / a scream

00:00:52 Author

Psychopathia Sexualis. Standard textbook on sexual pathology at the end of the 19th century. The author:

00:00:58 Speaker (male)

Allow me to introduce myself: Richard Fridolin Joseph Freiherr Krafft von Festsberg auf Frohnberg, named von Ebing. In short: Richard von Krafft-Ebing.

00:01:07 Author

German-Austrian psychiatrist, neurologist and medical examiner.

00:01:14 Atmosphere / a door opens / natural atmosphere

00:01:16 Speaker (female)

Hey... Is that you? I can't believe it! We haven't seen each other for ages! So what are you up to?
And what's your topic right now?

00:01:28 Author

My Desire's My Own

Female sexual pleasure in the digital age

Feature by Bettina Mittelstraß

00:01:36 Speaker (female)

U-huh... And how does it work? I mean, how do you research it? There are, like, apps, right, where you can...?

00:01:44 Music in Background starts / Year Klartac, Electro Bag on Tour

00:01:45 Speaker (female) continues

But you're only registered as a journalist, right?

How, exactly? So with... I mean... met up for real? And then... did you...? Really?

00:02:03 Music continues

00:02:06 Author

I've known this woman for as long as I can remember, this woman I talk to when out walking the dog while my thoughts are caught up in this manuscript. She asks and I chat away in response. I tell her that I'm as intrigued by sex dating on digital platforms as I am by other adventures I report on. Go along, join in, try out, grapple with, gain trust, ask and understand. This is the best way to tell stories (or is that just an excuse?). Why should I stop at sex? At least I can already do it. I'm competent in that department.

00:02:42 Speaker (female)

And how does it work? Do you, like, mention – certain preferences?

00:02:45 Author

That's what it's all about, that you communicate your specific sexual preferences and desires. You set up a profile, describe what you're looking for and can also tick what you wish to try out. You can upload explicit or less explicit photos, as you wish, and then people respond or you actively search. If you choose to define yourself as a heterosexual woman, you select a man for the type of play you want. And then you make a date. If both of you wish to.

00:03:16 Speaker (female)

To...?

00:03:17 Author

To do whatever you then wish to do.

00:03:21 Speaker (female)

But I'm not like that. I mean, not that like that when it comes to falling in love, and then there's all the cheating, I don't think that's really... And in a way, it's also consumption, right?

00:03:35 Author

I hear myself arguing ...

00:03:36 Music starts / Goldfrapp "Paper bag"

00:03:37 Author

...that love and lust are two very different things, that sex isn't paid for here, that people for whom sex is simply fun meet on an equal footing, and I sense her look of uncertainty. Disbelieving. Perplexed. She has started a family and lives monogamously with her partner.

00:03:58 Musik continues / Singing starts with

"No time to fuck.."

00:04:01 Author

Of course there are a few problems after all these years but you're basically content to muddle through. The next day, I see her again with her dog in the woods. I want to go swimming. She notices my rucksack and the first thing she asks me is whether I've got boots in there, and the suspender belt for the next guy...

00:04:21 Music / Singing continues with

“Brown paper bag...”

00:04:26 Author

She laughs. I laugh. But I get scared, too. What am I expecting here? The new knowledge has thrown a veil over my very ‘normal’ everyday behaviour. I could go for a shag at any time more or less – let’s just say it as it is – and the thought then sticks. Instinct rather than routine.

00:04:43 Music / Singing continues with

“*When the world stops for snow...*”

00:04:54 Author

Does that now mean ‘not normally developed’ and ‘not well raised’?

Not in her world at any rate. Is her joke intended to keep thoughts at bay? Or is it curiosity? Is she unsure whether she’s allowed to be curious? Is the world in which women chat about their sexual desire like it’s a great sport still such an exception? Who even wants to know about desire in the lives of the women I’ve spoken to? About female sexual pleasure? Can I penetrate people with words they don’t want to hear?

00:05:33 Music / Singing continues with

“Brown paper bag...”

00:05:41 Atmosphere, opening a bottle of wine

00:05:42 Voice of ‘Madame A’

I think I’ve always been happy to talk about sex, but not as intensely as I’m doing now, of course. Floating around on a portal like this has shown me that people from normal life also exist in this kind of parallel universe, and I think I now expect, in principle, that something like this is possible with all the people I meet.

00:06:10 Author

I’m calling you ‘Madame A’, even though you’ve given me permission to say your name, because you self-confidently identify yourself to all members of the portal. But I’m not sure if I can do that publicly. I’m at your home and we talk for nine hours, share nothing but hedonistic memories, and every hour is like a year that we’ve known each other. Like me, Madame A is a bit over 50. She works for a scientific organisation. When she says ‘parallel universe’...

00:06:42 Music starts parallel to the voice / Mezzanine, “Massive Attack”

00:06:42 Author

...she means the online dating agencies and platforms that focus on casual sex, where you now find lots of very normal people romping around.

00:06:53 Speaker (male)

Around 650,000 Germans are looking for what's known as 'casual dating', for example on [secret.de](https://www.secret.de). 1.5 million people in Germany, Austria and Switzerland have joined [firststaffair.com](https://www.firststaffair.com). [Lovepoint.de](https://www.lovepoint.de) is popular among women in the German-speaking region. Almost 60% of its 500,000 members are female. [C-Date.de](https://www.c-date.de) has 3.7 million members in Germany, Austria and Switzerland and more than 23 million members internationally.

00:07:21 Music/ Singing starts with

“Shame, such a shame...”

00:07:28 Speaker (male)

And according to survey conducted by the website [diebestepartnerboerse.de](https://www.diebestepartnerboerse.de) among users of dating sites an August 2019, *JOYClub*, founded in 2005, is the most popular sex forum for casual fun. Around 350,000 of the 2 million members in Germany, Austria and Switzerland are online every day and an estimated 1,000 new members join every day. Some 30 per cent of the members engaging in online dating here are women, 40 per cent are men, and 30 per cent are couples.

00:08:04 Atmosphere / Door closes / Background Musik

“Wellness Therapy Massage Music, Spa Songs Collection for Homes and Hotels”

00:08:06 Voice of 'Lady M'

We both recognised relatively early in our relationship that, generally speaking, we're very lustful people. And people who also like to try out lots of things. And we then joined the *JOYClub* platform – it's well known – initially just to see what's there.

00:08:25 Author

I'm calling you 'Lady M'. It's early in 2019. You're 26 and studying Law. I go with you to a small private sauna. I think that the intimate space suits two women, sometimes hot, sometimes cooled down, talking openly about sexual desires.

00:08:45 Voice of 'Lady M'

Today, I think it's somehow so obviously part of it. Society is becoming more and more open. But yeah, it isn't so long ago, maybe about seven years ago, that it was totally new – I mean having sex with other people with one's partner, or going to various clubs. So we signed up as a couple on the platform and then went to a swingers club together for the first time. And I can still remember that first time: we just watched. We simply wanted to see what actually goes on there. We were curious and didn't want to get too involved in other couples' desires ourselves.

00:09:24 Atmosphere / Door closes / toasting with wine glasses

00:09:25 Author

Madame A arranged her first sex date via a portal for people seeking affairs. After her marriage ended, she didn't miss the relationship, but she did miss sex. The meeting didn't quite provide the lustful fulfilment she was seeking, but it was pleasant and instructive.

00:09:40 Voice of 'Madame A'

We'd been writing to each other for a while – but always on-and-off, not in such a way that we did anything particularly specific. At some point, he wrote and asked if we wanted to meet up. Then we met, found each other attractive and had an unbelievable amount to talk about. We had an amazing conversation. It was just a wonderful situation. Then it went like this: I went with him to his hotel room and we started to play around, and then – I wasn't feeling that good about things myself, something to do with his smell, and went to the toilet and came back – and then he said: I'm really sorry but there's something about the way you smell that bothers me. It's not turning me on.

00:10:23 Music / Klartac, Electro Bag on Tour

00:10:24 Speaker (female)

Oh god. How humiliating. I don't think I can take it! What's wrong with me? I'll say it, it's nothing. Oh, I shouldn't have. A rush of blood to the head and an eternal feeling of shame....

00:10:40 Author

So you here, from now on I'm calling you 'Doubt'. You're 'My Doubt'.

00:10:48 Voice of 'Madame A'

I said: I'm not at all angry with you, because if I were in the situation, the same thing could happen to me. So let's just end it here. I don't take it personally. It's a shame because I find you attractive, but you can't force things. And then I left. And I didn't feel bad at all! Because I, too – I'm able to see things through someone else's eyes. I didn't see it as a rejection of me as a person. I used to see this rejection as a rejection of me as a person, as a woman, and was deeply upset. I no longer felt attractive as a woman, not sexually attractive, not loved. Today, I know; I reflect that! It's exactly the same for me sometimes, too.

00:11:30 Music / Klartac, Electro Bag on Tour

00:11:31 Speaker (female: 'My Doubt')

Fair enough. We have freedom. Sexual freedom – the result of successful emancipation efforts by women. That has created legal foundations. There's also emotional freedom. The libertarian principle of 'self-ownership' applies.

00:11:49 "Wellness Therapy Massage Music"

00:11:49 Voice of 'Lady M'

... that you have exclusive access! That you can... – as stated in the German Civil Code BGB –, that you can exclude others from having this access to one's property, and that you're in no way property. I don't belong to anyone. And that I'm the only one who decides! And even a man won't decide for me who touches me and who doesn't. I alone decide that always.

00:12:10 Atmosphere Door closes / Music Year Klartac, Electro Bag on Tour

00:12:11 Speaker (female: 'My Doubt')

My desire's my own. How could it be anything else? A sexual choice based purely on hedonistic grounds has also been culturally legitimate in Germany since the 1960s. Nonetheless: how do I say to a stranger that I can't stand his smell? That I really wanted to, but ...

00:12:32 Voice of 'Madame A'

Admitting it, saying to someone, a sex partner: But I don't fancy it right now. That's something you have to learn, because before, as a woman, you said: So you've already gone so far with the guy you can't back down now, right? Even if it's maybe not so great, I remember these kinds of situations, they're really only a few years back, when I thought: Wow yes, wow now. All the effort and then

you can't say: But I don't fancy it right now. But yes, I can. I can do that now. I just say: No. It's just not right, right now. I'm not in the mood.

00:13:17 "Wellness Therapy Massage Music"

00:13:17 Voice of 'Lady M'

That's how we've handled communication up until now. Of course, we remain friendly. When we write to couples, we always write to both people. And yes, of course, if it somehow isn't right, or you come to realise that – you just have to live with it.

00:13:30 Author

Even Lady M and her partner don't always find a perfect 'match' – as it's called – with other couples they write to on the platform. And sometimes you don't know that until you're all in the same place.

00:13:42 Voice of 'Lady M'

Yeah, and that's something I also had to learn, as in the beginning I made the mistake of thinking: Oh, you know, just go along with it now, or something, but that's total bullshit! So there it also took me a while until I realised – oh right, okay, ... So you're always expecting such dreadful reactions, but that's not true at all.

00:14:02 Music Christian Zehnder & Gregor Hilbe, Oloid

00:14:03 Author

The 'no' feeling, saying 'no' and accepting a 'no', the freedom not to, the not fancying it – all that needs to be practised just like stating one's own desires. It's a purely practical matter.

00:14:19 Music Christian Zehnder & Gregor Hilbe, Oloid

00:14:22 Author

The Swiss artist Talaya Schmid fights for this emancipatory practice. Art and pornography is her topic, self-determined sexuality and the social dimension of gender. She has launched *Pornydays* – a porno film festival in the century old art-house cinema *Riffraff* in Zurich. *Pornydays* runs over four days at the end of November. With films, debates, parties and performances, the festival is principally about communicating artfully and playfully about the desires and sexuality of people

who identify as women. And yes, Talaya says she's a feminist, and that all that is by no means an out-dated notion.

00:15:03 Atmosphere of Zurich

00:15:04 Voice of Talaya Schmid

I'm amazed how recent all of that is! Yeah? How different it all was not so long ago, around the time when I was born. Even all the women's rights and everything! I mean, women's right to vote in the Canton of Appenzell, Appenzell Innerrhoden or Ausserrhoden, I really don't know. But the last Canton where it was introduced, it was in 1991. That's kind of extreme.

00:15:26 Author

I meet Talaya on a very hot summer's day in a small park on a hill in Zurich. We sit on a bench in the shade.

00:15:35 Voice of Talaya Schmid

In fact I'm always very aware that I'm the first generation to grow up with this self-image. And I think it's very important that people continue to live and manifest it.

00:15:48 Author

The city groans under the heat. You can hear and sense the urban restlessness, but Talaya exudes immense inner ease. She tells me that up to 30th May 1980 Zurich had been an untouchable, prudish lady. The date marks the youth unrest and street riots that have gone down in history with the moniker 'Zurich Burns'.

00:16:15 Voice of Talaya Schmid

I mean, until then Zurich was really conservative and the restaurants closed at midnight and were all set in white, and you weren't allowed to go swimming in the lake. And that all came together with, like, the desire for liberation and other ideas about life in the city. Fredy Meier described it so beautifully. He said: Yeah, think of it like this: You want to have sex with someone but they tell you that you're only allowed to touch them under the breast, around there a bit, and then somewhere on the upper arm, and a bit on the ankle. You can't have sex that way.

00:16:52 Author

Fredy Meier, a painter, is known in Switzerland by his pseudonym Hans Müller, which has become a household name. Back then, he was an activist and appealed to people to support the liberation protests. He was the libertarian spirit and the *enfant terrible* of the middle classes.

00:17:07 Voice of Talaya Schmid

He created an allegory for the city, how back then it didn't actually belong to you. And it's true there was kind of no feeling of belonging, because the city wasn't accessible in that sense. I thought it was such a beautiful image in a way.

00:17:21 Author

The city now has a porno film festival intended to generate desire: a desire to discover desire, specifically the desire that people call 'female desire'.

00:17:28 Music: Broadcast, The Noise Made by People, singing starts with:

"You won't find it by yourself, you're gonna need some help, and you won't fail with me around, come on let's go.."

00:17:43 Voice of Talaya Schmid

Pornography can be so much more than simply what you find quickly online, like very playful, humorous, by no means just explicit necessarily..., multi-layered, yeah intelligent, stereotypes that are broken open, surprising, instructive.

00:18:01 Music: Broadcast, The Noise Made by People, singing continues with:

"You know who to turn to, now everything's changed, Come on, let's go.."

00:18:09 Speaker (female: 'My Doubt') / with Musik "Klartac"

I have my doubts about this... Information about female desire coupled with pornography?

00:18:17 Voice of Talaya Schmid

I can't emphasise enough how important it is to talk about it – to talk about sex, to talk about pornography. Censorship achieves nothing! We've already seen that far too many times by now. It's of no benefit whatsoever! Pornography is a massive business! Should we now simply leave the industry to get on with it!? That's not really the way. We have to accept that it's been part of our culture for hundreds of years. And how can you bring other images into the world? How can you

participate actively yourself? Including in this discourse? And re-shape it? By breaking open stereotypes, by re-assembling them or not doing so. The same for sexuality.

00:18:54 Musik / Broadcast, The Noise Made by People / Singing continues

Stop looking for answers in everyone's face, come on. let's go

00:19:01 Atmosphere / toasting with glases

00:19:02 Author

Madame A has put her voyage of discovery in the affairs portal on hold again.

00:19:18 Voice of 'Madame A'

I landed there, then after this one experience I cancelled it. In the meantime I had a relationship, then I didn't have one, and then I realised:...

00:19:19 Author (with Music, Alberto Carretero, Metàphores)

You can now continue listening – or not. The wishes, acts and 'things' will be now called by their names – those 'things' that we're simply allowed to chat about.

00:19:33 Speaker (female)

Allowed!! Yes, definitely allowed. But what about being able to? I'm out of practice. Is this a kind of training in stating the facts of desire and non-desire? Will it work? I don't know. My tongue and palate are as awkward as during the first French kiss.

00:19:50 Voice of 'Madame A' (voice-off)

I just say: No. It's just not right, right now. I'm not in the mood.

Sorry, but you'll have to go home and have a wank. It's just the way it is.

00:19:58 Voice of 'Madame A'

Then I realised: I have certain needs that I can't satisfy with this just getting to know someone every now and then. Then I talked about it with a good male friend of mine, we're so open and frank, and I said: You know something? I'm totally under-shagged and I don't know what to do. Then he said: Yeaah, I may have something for you there. I don't know if you're into it but you can at least have a look, I'm also signed up there. And then I looked at this website and found it really exciting, and then I think within half an hour I'd already spewed out a profile text and signed up, and was really

excited. This is how I set the ball rolling. ...

00:20:50 Music Hanna Kulenty, Arcs&Circles

00:20:50 Speaker (male)

"I advance through *The Story of O* as though through a fairy tale (...) – as though through one of those fairy-tale castles that appear completely abandoned, but where the armchairs under their covers and the tabourets and the four-poster beds are carefully dusted, and the whips and riding boots are already – by nature, so to speak – squeaky clean. Not a trace of rust on the chains, not a touch of dirt on the colourful panes of glass. Whenever I think of *O*, a word comes spontaneously to mind: decency, a word that would be difficult to justify, so let's leave it. And this wind that blows incessantly, flowing through all the fine apartments."

00:21:41 Author

Allow me to present: Jean Paulhan, French author and critic, writing in his 1954 preface to the novel *The Story of O*.

00:21:50 Voice of 'Madame A'

If you sign up for one of these portals and upload a few appealing photos – text is secondary, something that as a woman you also have to learn at some point: you can do without it – you receive lots and lots of replies, because you're displayed as a newcomer on the homepage, and everyone jumps at you. And then I felt like a little girl in a sweet shop, okay? And him! And him! And he's good-looking, and he wants to meet me and ... I was suddenly really excited. A new world opened up for me

00:22:22 Speaker (female) with Music / Klartac

"Could a woman have several men at the same time or always just one after the other? And if the latter applied: how long would she have to be married to one man before she could change? And how many men would be 'appropriate'? A few, five or six? Or many, many more, countless even? How would I handle it – if I were a grown-up?"

00:22:46 Voice of 'Madame A'

I didn't want to see any of these men a second time. I wanted to meet lots of men! I wanted – yeah, to try things out! What's out there, all of it? And it's, you ... – it's so easy as a woman to have sex! I always find it a shame when I talk to female friends who say: Oh, I don't know what I should do. I can't talk to someone in a pub somewhere. I say: Girls, if you're horny, join one of these portals. You get sex really quickly. There's a guy standing in front of the door before you can count to three.

00:23:15 Speaker (male) (with Music/Hanna Kulenty)

“In *O*, there also blows some indefinable spirit, pure and violent, endless and unadulterated. It is a decisive spirit that nothing disturbs, neither moans nor horrors, neither ecstasy nor nausea. If I should be honest, my taste goes mostly in a different direction: I like works where the author has hesitated; in which a certain inhibition reveals that the subject initially intimidated him; that he doubted whether he would ever cope. By contrast, *The Story of O* is executed from beginning to end like some brilliantly planned sortie.”

00:23:54 Voice of ‘Madame A’

It wasn’t really just the sex that was important at the time but the fact that, after my 13-year marriage in which I only had my husband as a man in my life, I suddenly had contact with lots and lots of men. And I also learned what makes them tick, what makes them tick sexually, that they’re also not all that different to us women, that they’re just as unsure about whether they’re attractive to a woman, whether they’re accepted.

I found that fascinating at the start, really tested it thoroughly, until at some point I realised that in reality it wasn’t really doing very much for me now. I would really like a bit more substance. And most of all I don’t want to have any more of this ordinary sex.

00:24:39 Speaker (male) with Music/Hanna Kulenty)

“But *O*, in her way, represents a virile ideal, or at least a masculine ideal. At last a woman who admits it! Who admits what?”

00:24:50 Voice of ‘Madame A’

I felt my way forward slowly. Then – I really have to think now what the first thing was – Oh! Yes! I’d been registered for about six months. I was in Berlin and looked to see who was in the area, and I contacted someone who, funnily enough, was just around the corner from me. We met, it was someone from Switzerland, a very nice Swiss policeman, and I then – so we arranged to meet at 11 in the morning and began with a coffee and then saw Berlin, then we had lunch – it was really nice.

00:25:32 Music Leonard Cohes, I’m your man, starts with singing:

“If you want a lover I’ll do anything you ask me to. And if you want another kind of love, I’ll wear a mask for you.”

00:25:52 Voice of ‘Madame A’

And at some point he said: Yeah, I'm actually in Berlin because I'm going to a party this evening. Maybe you'd like to come with me? I say: What type of party? Yeah, in the Kit Kat Club – *Wasteland*. No idea. About anything! I didn't know this world yet. This was new territory for me.

00:26:09 Author

Wasteland is the most famous and probably the biggest of the wild, frivolous parties – in Amsterdam, with a little sister at Berlin's Kit Kat Club

00:26:19 Voice of 'Madame A'

I then had a look in the portal. What's that? Yeah, it looks really exciting, but I don't have anything to wear. He says: So let's go shopping. We then bought what, to my mind today, was a very restrained outfit, I have to say, and then went together to the party. And it opened up a whole new world for me! For me, there, it was kind of: Wow! I like it. I think it's great. The freedom, the open way that sexuality was conducted there – and I mean conducted because it was a bit mechanical. There's no intimacy. Quite the opposite. But I found it really exciting.

00:27:07 Speaker (female: 'My Doubt')

But that's, yeah – dreadfully distant!? It's too much for me. Oh, would you read on in the book for me?

00:27:16 Speaker (male)

Of course, if you want me to.

00:27:18 Author

Then you're now called: 'My Alter Ego'. The 'I'-part of me defined as masculine. My Doubt and my male-perspective also-ego – they should negotiate the desire with me.

00:27:30 Speaker (male: 'My Alter Ego')

What was it, then, that you'd started reading earlier?

00:27:33 Speaker (female: 'My Doubt')

It was from the autobiography by Catherine Millet, an art expert from France. *The Sexual Life of Catherine M.* Published in France in 2001. It was a scandal.

00:27:46 (male: 'My Alter Ego')

What's it about?

00:27:47 Speaker (female: 'My Doubt')

"Never before has a woman written about her sexuality in this way," the blurb says.

00:27:53 Speaker (male: 'My Alter Ego')

I'm in favour of you trying to read on with your voice. Why don't you dare? Narrate observationally, laconically and casually, like a report on a many-course meal in a restaurant.

00:28:06 Speaker (female: 'My Doubt')

I'm in doubt.

00:28:08 Speaker (male)

And why?

00:28:09 Speaker (female: 'My Doubt')

It's crude, it's not right...

00:28:11 Speaker (male: 'My Alter Ego')

Literature is always right.

00:28:12 Speaker (female: 'My Doubt')

Is it literature?

00:28:14 Speaker (male: 'My Alter Ego')

Highly praised internationally – and very controversial, obviously. Like all open writing by a woman on her excessive sexual fantasies and lived practices. But how great it is that there's at least something to read about women's fantasies and what they live out!

00:28:30 Voice of 'Lady M' (With Music "Oloid")

My male friend said to me right at the start: Do you know what really turns me on the most?

00:28:36 Music parallel to the voice / Mezzanine, Black Milk

00:28:36 00:28:30 Voice of 'Lady M'

If I see that a woman wants it. That's the best thing that can happen to a man. If the woman really wants sex and shows it and it's really bursting out of every pore. That's much more important, it's.., so for him that's far more in the forefront than looks, than all the other possible things, more than toys or certain practices, even a simple missionary position can be really great if you see that the woman

really wants it, and you realise that you can satisfy this desire – he said that this is the best experience for him.

00:29:06 Music / Mezzanine, Black Milk, singing:

“I’m not your food..”

00:29:16 Speaker (female: ‘My Doubt’)

Yeah, it’s wonderful that way. Desirable. Like-minded individuals – and still it confuses me. Must I now have lust bursting out of every pore and become that libidinous creature of desire the way that men have defined THEIR desire for centuries? So that men in turn accept me?

00:29:37 Speaker (male: as an echo)

Without doubt, the man has a more intense sexual appetite than the woman.

00:29:43 Voice of ‘Madame A’

I think you touched on that briefly earlier, whether we’re now so influenced by these images that we think we have to be exactly like them. Take multiple orgasms, for example, it was – it’s no longer that ‘in’, but it’s also something that’s now considered normal, so as a woman you have to be capable of having multiple orgasms, otherwise you’re boring!

00:30:06 Speaker (female)

Even Catherine Millet writes: “The fact that orgasms are always portrayed the same way in porn films is bad. ...”

00:30:16 Musik Roudoudou, Porno Paradise

00:30:19 Speaker (female) continues

“...They almost always come after a few accelerated thrusts (...) and they shout. (...) Did men and women use the same phrases and did they make their erotic gestures following the same patterns before the invention of film?”

00:30:34 Musik Roudoudou, Porno Paradise

00:30:36 Author

Critical, yes, but read on: “But the bigger the orgasm, the less ‘porno flick’ it is. I can confirm that myself. The more desire I have, the more I move; not just the pelvis, I grope with arms and legs.”
Would we know this – without such frank narratives?

00:30:55 Voice of Talaya Schmid

I think there’s still a great deal of work to do to supplement this extremely one-sided image and also to show, for example, that many of these vulvas that you see in a large-scale format in the porn that is readily available online have been operated on.

00:31:15 Voice of ‘Madame A’

Squirting! Squirting is also ‘in’! Yes – everyone expects it. Men want it. I always ask myself why? Why they want it, exactly, but it’s expected. There are certain things you have to do to stay attractive on the market. I’m also influenced by this, of course. When I squirted for the first time, I naturally had no idea what it is. Yeah – then it happened and I realised that men like it. I like it to a certain extent. It always depends on the situation I’m in. But I’m also practical with it, for example: if my sofa is soaking wet afterwards, the guy leaves and I then go at it with Febreze und cloths, which I don’t enjoy, then I don’t want that. So I put it where it belongs – I decide when I follow a trend and when I don’t. And that of course depends on the situation.

00:32:15 Voice of Talaya Schmid

‘Squirting’ is colloquial and female ejaculation, I think in fact that we ought to simply start talking about ejaculation in relation to women, too, and to re-appropriate the word, as it belongs to us, too. And then there’s the male and the female ejaculation, but women ejaculate, too, full stop. Every body can do it but doesn’t have to at all. It’s always important not to create this pressure, right? But – of course also to try it out, have a go, and explore it in a playful way.

00:32:48 Speaker (female: ‘My Doubt’) with Music Porno paradise

There are so many narratives about how it should be – what is recognisably desire? A recognisably successful highpoint that ‘has to’ happen? The clichés are still so recent, for example in self-help literature. In 1970, directly after the ‘68 movement, Georges André Hauser wrote in *The Book on Love and Marriage*:

00:33:13 Speaker (male: ‘My Alter Ego’)

“For the man who brings the woman to orgasm, maybe for the first time in her life, this successful sexual intercourse is also a great success for him, increasing his prestige vis-à-vis his partner.”
Ugh! Do I have to read on?

00:33:29 Speaker (female: 'My Doubt')

Please do. Here we have this kindness that's intended to be collaborative – and yet it's all part of the scenario that we lustfully wished – or wish – to escape.

00:33:39 Music / Björk, Declare independence / singing starts with

"Declare independence, don't let them do that to you!"

00:33:47 Speaker (male: 'My Alter Ego') (with Music Porno paradise)

"All sexual intercourse with fulfilment of the woman represents success, even for the woman herself; and that in two senses: because the woman, who secretly fears frigidity, experiences an orgasm and because she thereby helps the man to success."

Can I stop now?

00:34:04 Speaker (female: 'My Doubt')

One more that makes me despair: *Make Love. The Book for Men* by Marc Rackelmann, from 2017.

00:34:11 Speaker (male: 'My Alter Ego')

"In summary: (...) Female sexuality is multi-layered and complex. A great deal is less clear and obvious than with men. For women, a fulfilling sexual encounter cannot be reduced to an orgasm or a refined sexual technique to the same extent as with men. For many women, the emotional quality and the setting of the sexual encounter is far more relevant."

00:34:39 Music / Björk, Declare independence / singing starts with

"Declare independence, don't let them do that to you!"

00:34:43 Voice of Talaya Schmid

That it was still in there: yeah, female sexuality is really something very different to the situation with a man, and the context is massively important, and it simply requires a different mood, and that's all a bit more complex. (...)

00:35:00 Author

Talaya Schmid has collected these and other sex guides for a publicly funded art project. At a *Pornybruch* on a Whit Sunday, she presented a reading from these manuals and opened a debate on the clichés about 'female sexual pleasure'.

00:35:15 Voice of Talaya Schmid

I'd say that sexuality is very different and highly complex for each person. But to keep getting this feeling conveyed that as a woman my sexuality is complicated, I think that does something to you! It's very problematic. And I find it shocking that this message is still being passed on like this.

00:35:37 Speaker (female) (with Music Klartac)

But how is that going to change if I make online sex dates? There's no 'politically correct' communication there, it's just fucking. Sorry... And ultimately, I'm the slapper, if word gets out.

00:35:50 Voice of 'Lady M' (With Music oloid)

If you now say as a woman that you'd rather know the dick size rather than behave romantically, that's exactly what I mean: you meet different women, and maybe this mental image that men have of us, which we may be seeking, possibly gets a bit weaker! These clichés get weaker, that we're romantic, whiny creatures who always immediately associate sex with feelings and love. And that we can be very different. For example that it's entirely possible for us as women to say: No, I actually just wanted to know how big it is and if it's a good match, and then we can meet, and actually I don't want any candlelight dinner or romance, I want sex, that's why I'm here.

00:36:36 Author

Thank you 'Lady M'.

00:36:39 Voice of 'Lady M'

We're not just 'the' women and 'the' men: we're still all human beings.

00:36:41 Musik starts parallel: Róisín Murphy, Ruby Blue,

00:36:41 Voice of 'Lady M' continues

Each person has different needs and for these needs, I find this so great, you can write a profile text, you can describe exactly what you envisage, what you're looking for. You'll find out whether you get it or not, but you at least have the opportunity to leave an impression on lots of people, and to say: I'm imagining that... I'd like it if... Or this or that turns me on. Who sees it the same way? Or who feels the same way? And this is all possible there.

00:37:11 Musik starts parallel: Róisín Murphy, Ruby Blue, / singing:

"Curiosity, the young and the free..."

00:37:22 Speaker (female: 'My Doubt')

OK good. Let's get right to it. Perhaps that'll help me lose my self-consciousness.

00:37:38 Speaker (male: 'My Alter Ego')

Without a doubt.

"I lost my virginity when I was eighteen – not especially early – and just a few weeks later I had my first group sex".

00:37:38 Speaker (female: 'My Doubt')

If you read it that way, it all sounds very normal.

00:37:41 Musik Sielab, Take your pants off and follow the leader

00:37:41 Speaker (male: 'My Alter Ego')

"(...) Nothing stopped me from constantly tasting a different saliva every time, or from blindly feeling with my hand for a form that would always be unexpectedly. (...) I discovered..."

00:37:55 Speaker (male) / author as a duet

"...that each dick had a different impact on me and that I went about each one differently. And just as every time I had to adapt to another kind of skin, another complexion, different degrees of hairiness, different amounts of muscle tone, the intrinsic nature of each body seemed to require different positions from me. (...) I remember myself full of pleasure ...(...) In short, like when I was a child on the ghost train ..."

00:38:21 Author

"... I plunged into my adult sexual life blindly – for desire's sake, to be indiscriminately grabbed and shagged, or to put it better: to be swallowed up like a frog by a snake."

00:38:32 Voice of 'Madame A'

I've experienced so many mad things there! And I just thought: I'm in a film here! Like – Wow, I've never experienced anything like that before! And I've never read about it. I've neither read it in a book nor seen a film about it. Which is why THAT is completely new!

00:38:48 Author

'Madame A' dived into the adventure of what was then her newly discovered lust. She met partners for the evening on her platform and played her favourite games with them, in the 'parallel universe'. Games! That needs to be stressed.

00:39:02 Voice of 'Madame A'

I think it's, yeah, nice if a man arrives and asks my partner if he's allowed to do something with me. Whether it's shagging or something else. I'm really kind of female about things like that. It's also a kind of role-play in which I'm kind of naturally subjugating myself. But I like it. I don't have to take any decisions myself. I find that rather nice. To be assigned. Yeah, I like that too.

00:39:32 Author

In everyday life, 'Madame A' is more the one who makes decisions herself what goes on and does so very successfully.

00:39:38 Atmosphere: Door closes / Music Oloid

00:39:39 Author

'Lady M' initially spent hours and days discussing the desire for sex with her lover – and about their initial fears.

00:39:47 Music Matthias Loibner, Augenblick

00:39:48 Voice of 'Lady M'

We simply confided in each other. My boyfriend had lots of fears, too. He was scared about what he should do if I disappear and somehow happen to be with others, with five other men, for example, in a room, and I said: It's really interesting you say that, as I would never have imagined it, doing anything like that, because I've no desire for it! I was interested in couples! I wanted to do things with other couples! I wanted to know how other couples have sex and how you can have sex amongst each other and more than anything I was also very interested in women. It wasn't a knee-jerk reaction. We spent a long time talking about the rules. Nothing happened on the first evening but on the second evening things became clear relatively quickly, as we kept making eye contact with each other. We agreed to maintain eye contact, and that we notice in the other person's eyes, or in a very light downward-looking nod, okay that's pleasant, or that's not so pleasant now, and that by doing this we also protect each other, so to speak, and that of course neither of us decides anything over the other's head, and that we experience that together.

00:40:53 Speaker (male) / speaker (female) / author

"My memories of the parties, of the evenings in the Bois or in the company of my friends and lovers are comparable with the rooms of a Japanese palace. You think you're in a closed room, then a wall

moves, revealing a suite of other rooms, and if you move on, walls keep on opening and closing. If there are lots of rooms, you can go from one to another in countless ways.”

00:41:24 Speaker (female)

Do you really want to read on?

00:41:27 Author

Just stay beside me.

00:41:29 Speaker (male)

Remember: read as if it were the story of the three-course meal... or five, or seven...

00:41:36 Author (with Music “Augenblicke”)

“Éric settled me on a bed or a sofa in one of the alcoves, taking the initiative to undress me, we had kind of got into that habit. He started to rub me and to kiss me, and others came immediately. (...) I took pleasure in this caressing more than in the penetrations, in particular when it was a penis trailed over my face or a glans that rubbed against my breasts. I liked to catch one in my mouth as it passed by, running my lips up and down it while another came and begged attention on the other side of my outstretched neck, before turning my head to take the newcomer.”

00:42:15 Speaker (male)

Yes, the menu was okay, but without onions, please.

00:42:19 Speaker (female)

“The plurality of participants in this event points to a diffusion of sexual delights in both meanings of the word ‘diffusion’: the sex act is spreading out, it’s becoming inclusive rather than exclusive, it’s not focused on a single person, and at the same time it’s becoming a diffuse and sexless property of an atmosphere rather than a privileged exchange between two people,” as Israeli sociologist Eva Illouz says.

00:42:51 Author

Yes, my doubts. Yes. It’s different. And it’s diffuse. And unsettling. But being diffuse is precisely what makes it desirable, because it’s linked to uncertainty. Isn’t that a re-evaluation of uncertainty in life? The opposite of ‘clarified’? The appreciation of the fluid, the return of the poetic; exchange and sharing based on optimism? Isn’t that exactly what our modern life needs in this global, digital age? Inclusion much more than ‘privileged exchange’?

00:43:28 Speaker (male)

Eva Illouz has spent years examining how capitalism, sexuality, gender relations and technology all inform each other in the modern age. Her latest monograph from 2018 is titled *The End of Love*, in which she dissects casual sex in particular.

00:43:46 Speaker (female)

“Sexual desire, sexual freedom of choice, gathering sexual experiences with multiple partners, have fundamentally altered heterosexual relationships – and thus at the same time the ways in which stable emotional and cultural frameworks are formed and maintained.”

00:44:06 Author

Is ‘privileged exchange’ really the only thing that stabilises a society? And what’s more, is it really disappearing to make way for more free, occasional casual sex? I have my doubts about you, my doubting friend...

00:44:20 Speaker (female)

I quote: “Casual sex separates the body from the self, because it sees it as an autonomous source of desire and therefore as pure materiality. After all, casual sex demands that participants forego any designs for the future, because all interactions in this area are necessarily brief, hedonistic, self-referential and are pursued for their own sakes.”

00:44:48 Author

Yeah, it’s simply about the here and now. And yes, there is a separation. But surely the question is: why?

00:44:56 Musik Goldfrapp, Deer Stop

00:44:56 Voice of ‘Lady M’

Because I wanted to have desire without love at the same time! And because of course I’d like to have love, with desire!

00:45:02 Author

Do people really want to replace a sustainable relationship for casual desire?

00:45:06 Voice of 'Lady M'

When it comes to sex and love – in my current relationship I can say that I love my boyfriend very much. But in the past, when I had sex, I think I often mixed the two up. Yeah, somehow I always thought, right, we're having sex, and now we love each other as well, don't we? So I really wanted to separate the two, because I noticed that it doesn't work like that. So, sex – I mean, you get undressed and of course you let others get close to you, close to your body, too, and it might sound a bit mystical, but I can decide whether I want to let them get close to my spirit or whether I let them get inside my head.

00:45:41 Musik Goldfrapp, Deer Stop, singing:

"Don't you call, deer stop bottle in a shell"

00:45:54 Speaker (female)

But naked is naked, after all!

00:45:46 Musik Goldfrapp, Deer Stop, singing:

"Shoot a thousand stars over me..."

00:46:06 Author

"Guards with dogs and walkie-talkies were standing at the entrance to his property; the mass of people intimidated me. Some women were dressed appropriately for the occasion in transparent clothes that I envied. As long as new people kept coming and everyone was drinking champagne, I kept myself apart. I didn't feel relaxed until I got rid of my dress or trousers: my real clothes were my nakedness. It protected me."

00:46:Voice of 'Madame A'

We talk about 'intimate parts'. But are my intimate parts really so intimate? Actually they're not really intimate at all, if I make them available to several people. What is intimate about them? Well, intimate is really what I have in me. I mean IN me. And this intimacy actually does take place in me rather than externally, with my body.

00:46:33 Musik Goldfrapp, Deer Stop, singing:

"You've arrested a knight.."

00:46:38 Voice of 'Madame A'

We talk about 'intimate parts'. But are my intimate parts really so intimate? Actually they're not really intimate at all, if I make them available to several people. What is intimate about them? Well, intimate is really what I have in me. I mean IN me. And this intimacy actually does take place in me rather than externally, with my body.

00:47:01 Author

Some things are a bit more intimate to Madame A than her intimate parts – in the sense of being more open –

00:47:07 Voice of 'Madame A'

I've always had the feeling that when I have sex, I'm intimate with somebody, because I'm completely focused on him. And I can have that with a one-night stand.

00:47:19 Author

And then there's the case when it goes deeper – when love enters the game, Madame A wraps up a whole intimate package for herself.

00:47:27 Voice of 'Madame A'

When I'm in a relationship, I wouldn't say from the start that it's an open relationship, where everyone can do what they want. I wouldn't want that. It isn't so much to do with possessiveness, because that's not important to me. I'm completely tolerant in that sense, so for example I wouldn't mind, or I wouldn't condemn it, if my partner had sex with another woman – I just wouldn't do it myself, because when I'm in a relationship, I want to concentrate totally on this person. And that includes everything: sexuality is part of that.

00:48:05 Voice of 'Lady M' (with Music Oloid)

For me, intimacy is our relationship, our secrets, the experiences we share, and it would hit me much harder – and I have told him that – well, if he confessed to me – so we don't have an open relationship, we have a committed relationship, that means we do everything together.

00:48:19 Speaker (female)

Open or committed. Committed without being open, committed with openness. Feelings aren't exactly an easy matter.

00:48:27 Voice of 'Lady M'

If he confessed to a one-night stand, then I'd say: okay, it was a one-night stand, it was just about sex, I wouldn't find that so bad as if he suddenly said something like: I've met someone. Because that

meeting someone: that's something else, that's much more. It means trust, it's, um, they have things in common that's not just limited to sex. I think, yeah, I think I probably would be jealous. I admit that openly, because I want us to share these things and not that he shares them with another woman. But sex? No. If he wants to share sex, I want to share it too, I can share it too, then I can't feel jealous.

00:49:09 Author

New negotiations about a stable emotional life are in the offing, when things get gloriously diffuse in the area of sexual freedom. What's bad about that? Nothing, says Lady M.

00:49:20 Voice of 'Lady M'

That's the great thing about it! I can make up my own rules, together with my partner. We're in no way dependent on what society dictates or what other people think or say; on the contrary, we can make rules for ourselves that are specially made to suit us, we, that is, me and my boyfriend. This approach really suits us.

00:49:37 Author

We have the choice. The free choice. And yes, sexual freedom for both – for women and men – does perhaps shake the previous logical contract of our heterosexual relationships. Yes. It spreads uncertainty and also enters an uncomfortable relationship with consumer capitalism, when we swipe over pictures of people thinking, "Like that one", "don't like that one", "want that one", "don't want that one".

00:50:02 Voice of 'Lady M'

If I sit there every evening and maybe see people more as objects or as commodities that are only there to somehow give me satisfaction – but I don't think that has anything to do with the platform itself – then I probably already have problems with myself as a person anyway, if I see other people in that way.

00:50:21 Speaker (female)

"These days, sexual freedom is a field of interaction in which 'everything works fine': women have a wealth of technological means, cultural scripts and images to guide their behaviour, to enjoy an interaction and to set the limits to this interaction. But feelings have developed into the level of social experience that 'causes problems', an area in which confusion, uncertainty and even chaos reign."

00:50:52 Author

And Eva Illouz goes on to say: and in turn, the whole psycho-industry lives off this, by clearing the path to self-understanding again. The increasing availability and turnover of wellness opportunities, yoga seminars and 'good for me' courses are impressive. Freedom can be a real burden.

00:51:10 Speaker (male)

"As for freedom ... every man and every woman who has experienced it themselves may rebel against it, threaten it with curses and horrors. Certainly, there is no lack of horrors in *The Story of O*, but sometimes it seems to me that, here, it's not so much a young woman as an idea that is being tortured."

00:51:35 Musik Porno Paradise

00:51:35 Speaker (male)

A fellow student confesses her feelings to me and then, of all people, it has to be the one that half the town has already had. No way, that's not going to work with me.

00:51:44 Speaker (female)

I can't believe I'm reading this attitude to women here.

00:51:47 Speaker (male)

I can understand it. I can't imagine marrying a woman and having children with her either, if countless dicks have already been in her and she's been a slut."

00:51:55 (female)

Heavens, how come you're all so misogynistic?

00:51:58 Speaker (male)

I understand you. I've got nothing against an apple with a bite out of it, but when half the town has licked it, I wouldn't want to eat it either. Lol.

00:52:07 Author

An original chat from the social media app *Yodel*, developed by a student in 2014 for anonymous communication among its users.

00:52:17 Speaker (female)

Okay, I won't say any more.

00:52:21 Voice of 'Lady M'

Well, this image alone that somehow seems to go back to Adam and Eve – my impression anyway. No, Eve, who took the apple, who let herself be tempted, stupid woman, hm, that's what the Bible says, and then she takes a bite of the apple and that's it – and to present it like that these days, that it somehow turns up again after such a long time, I think that's awful.

00:52:43 Author

Unfortunately it's not so long ago that religiously motivated aversion of women's desire was frighteningly effective. That's why Talaya Schmid fights so hard for sex education and normality and joy in relation to desire and women's sexuality.

00:52:58 Voice of Talaya Schmid

In the USA, the last operation to remove a little girl's clitoris because of masturbation was in the 1950s. So you don't even need to go and look at other cultures. Sometimes it's not that far away.

00:53:15 Author

One of the people who instigated this practice was John Harvey Kellogg – the inventor of peanut butter and cornflakes. A protestant and an influential doctor.

00:53:25 Voice of 'Lady M'

He specialised in female sexuality and recommended drizzling acid onto the clitoris as a cure for – oh, I really don't know, well, also too much sexual desire, falling in love with other men besides their own husband, probably headaches as well and other kinds of sleep disturbances. Well, since then I've never eaten anything from Kelloggs.

00:53:50 Atmosphere natural environment

00:53:51 Author

I meet 'My Doubt' again in the woods.

00:53:56 Speaker (female)

Ok, take care! And of course I'd like to hear all about it!

00:54:01 Author

We laugh. Despite all the doubts about whether you'll be able to deal with the uncertainty that's triggered in some people by knowing about female sexuality – there's no question of ever giving up

this ability to choose freely how to behave. Listen. Ask questions. Chat. Make your own decisions.
Play.

00:54:23 Voice of 'Lady M'

No one's going to do your thinking for you, but then that's the same everywhere. No one can do it for you. And I think it would be a bad thing if you wanted to give it away! Even to your partner, for example! So of course I'm equally in favour of not letting your partner decide whether it's now the woman or the man who wants to do that, of not letting your partner decide: we're going to have group sex from tomorrow onwards. No, no way!

00:54:45 Music Sielab, Take your pants off and follow the leader:

"By the way - take it all off!"

00:54:53 Author

My Desire's My Own

00:54:54 Speaker (female)

Female sexual pleasure in the digital age

00:54:58 Speaker (male)

A feature by Bettina Mittelstraß

00:55:01 Speaker (female)

The speakers were:

00:55:01 Speaker (male)

Katja Schild, Sebastian Rürger and the author

00:55:05 Speaker (female)

Technical support

00:55:06 Speaker (male)

Susanne Herzig

00:55:07 Speaker (female)

Editor

00:55:08 Speaker (male)

Bernard Senn

00:55:09 Speaker (female)

Production

00:55:10 Speaker (male)

Swiss Radio SRF 2 Kultur, 2019