“Feminist Awakening: Ida von Hahn-Hahn’s Gräfin Faustine and Luise Mühlbach’s Aphra Behn”

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School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies
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Abstract

I propose that the nineteenth-century German novels Gräfin Faustine by Ida von Hahn-Hahn and Aphra Behn by Luise Mühlbach contribute in a valuable manner to the genealogy of feminist Vormärz writing. The novels offer not only a reflection of society but views that were resistant of oppression. At a time when women were subject to marginalisation, and when voicing ideas critical in the authoritarian Prussian state was fraught with danger, they raised several issues that were contentious.

My analysis and exploration of a topic by Hahn-Hahn, which was avoided by social custom, and the veiled contemporary political criticism by Mühlbach, reveal the authors’ progressive perspective. Due to their popularity they were able to submit their ideas to the public and thereby contribute to shape social attitudes. The authors were ahead of their time in depicting an occurrence that has only in the late twentieth century been addressed by the legal systems of Western society. The social criticism of the, to a great extent, autobiographical Gräfin Faustine is uttered from the psychological point of view of its eponymous protagonist. Aphra Behn offers a broader socio-political analysis that includes the corruption of government and clergy. Through the example of the heroines’ actions the writers rendered material from which “women can learn” (Weigel, “Double” 60).

While scholars have evaluated these two works, to my knowledge no comparative study of Gräfin Faustine and Aphra Behn has yet been undertaken. In a close reading I discuss, first, the two writers’ use of narrative to voice their objections to injustice that, in a manner not unlike twentieth-century feminist ‘consciousness-raising,’ represents an early feminist awakening. Second, I analyse the themes of personal, social and institutional power relationships drawing on an interdisciplinary understanding of historical, gender, social, political and legal concepts. Third, I aim to make these texts more accessible to an English-speaking readership and create a wider understanding of the early feminism in these novels by translating and extrapolating key passages.

Keywords
Hahn-Hahn Faustine, Mühlbach Aphra, social criticism, early German feminist writing.

Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classifications (ANZSRC)
200512 Literature in German 50%, 210307 European History (excl. British, Classical Greek and Roman) 25%, 200205 Culture, Gender, Sexuality 25%.
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Chapter 1  Introduction

In the numerous¹ mid-nineteenth-century German states, male empowered political and religious governance upheld the historical marginalisation of women. Attempts to gain better conditions for women resulted in an activism that influenced a feminine writing tradition which sought to break out of established masculine writing modes. This is evident in the endeavour of those women writers who expressed forms of social criticism in their fiction before, and during the Vormärz (pre-March),² and the number of women’s associations that were founded in that time (Kuby 248). However, printed ideas that were perceived to be inflammatory were subject not only to ridicule but also to a regime that confiscated and banned these books and imprisoned or exiled their authors. This climate of ideological policing continued after the failure of the 1848 Revolution.³

During this censorship of public expression, the existing social and political ferment motivated some women writers to engage either through literature or by deed in social, political and emancipatory activism. According to Ute Gerhard, 1848 marked the beginnings of the women’s movement (“Über” 196), which was to motivate Louise Otto-Peters in 1865 to form the first women’s association, the “Allgemeinen deutschen Frauenverein” in Leipzig (Twellmann 34).⁴ My focus on two Vormärz narratives is inspired by the emergence of their authors’ “pronounced feminist consciousness” (Cocalis and Goodman, “Eternal” 17).⁵ I adopt Hilde Lindemann’s view of feminism. She does not advocate an aspiration for “equality,” for “women,” or for “differences,” but rather, for activities against a “social pattern, widespread across cultures and history that distributes power asymmetrically to favour men over women” (9), in other words “it’s about power” (9). Todd Kontje states that the narratives of the “feminists in the Vormärz” (138) share a concern for women’s rights, and thus for some power. Contrary to the general social mores of the period, women writers like Ida von Hahn-Hahn, Luise Mühlbach, Fanny Lewald, and others expressed a feminist consciousness in some of their narratives, while female activists like Louise Aston and Louise Otto raised their voices in political “Lyrik” (Treder 28).

According to Elke Frederiksen and Elizabeth Ametsbichler, these “feminist” (Kontje 138) authors sought in their writing “to address social injustice, to question and reinterpret women’s

¹ In 1815 the formation of the “German Federation” (Field 4) amalgamated over three hundred constituent states to thirty-nine. Until 1848 the head of each of these states ruled with absolute power.
² The Vormärz movement refers to the “radical politics in the years leading up to the [March] 1848 Revolution” (Diethe 38).
³ For example in 1851 the democrat Heinrich Simon, the man of Ida von Hahn-Hahn’s passion in 1836, was sentenced to life imprisonment in “contumaciam” (Stern 375) (“Verfahren gegen Abwesende” [Meyers 52] “procedures against absentees”) for revolutionary activities.
⁴ Towards the late nineteenth century, this middle-class inspired women’s movement had not succeeded in becoming an influential factor in public life (Twellmann 221-22).
⁵ Cocalis and Goodman refer to the 1838 publications of Luise Mühlbach’s Erste und letzte Liebe and Ida von Hahn-Hahn’s Aus der Gesellschaft.
roles, and to break directly into the public sphere” (Frederiksen and Ametsbichler XXIII). Sigrid Weigel asks the important question whether women’s literature reproduces “women’s social and individual reality” or whether it “liberates itself from them, and if so how?” (“Double” 59). She points out the “double bind” in which women were “involved and excluded” from male-ruled cultural order, because women have always been “defined according to male criteria” (61).

I propose that, in this male dominated environment, Ida von Hahn-Hahn and Luise Mühlbach addressed social injustices by reproducing realities and forms of liberation from them in their novels, *Gräfin Faustine* (1841) and *Aphra Behn* (1849). This is evident in their criticism of, and their liberation from a concept of everlasting love and the institution of marriage. Hahn-Hahn criticised systems of education and regimentation and Mühlbach targeted the governing institutions of clergy and monarchy as well as the apathy of the majority of the populace. The protagonists show how women cope with their social position and how they aspire to the “utopia of [. . .] liberated” (Weigel, “Double” 61) equal opportunity. Faustine leaves her first husband, lives freely with Andlau, leaves Mengen and then the convent. Aphra buys her freedom from marriage and becomes a writer who lives by her pen.

I suggest that the two writers’ feminist criticism assisted first, in creating an awareness of gender injustice, and second, in preparing the way for the ensuing campaigns of the later women’s movement. Their writing contributed, to some degree, to the changes towards more equality in German society as readers can be influenced by novels that they can understand and can relate to. This is especially the case when the literary context reflects their situation in society. Kontje asserts that: “. . .[O]ften—marginalised or —trivialised novels by German women played a central role in shaping attitudes toward class, gender, and the nation” (1). When the authors were widely read, as is evident in the popularity of Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach, the tenet of their works was bound to leave an impact on some of their readers.

Both writers deplore the custom of enforced conjugal rights by reproducing their heroines’ agony. By addressing this topic in mid-nineteenth-century Germany they were at the forefront of social and legal change:

Die sexuelle Selbstbestimmung der Frau als Rechtsgut wurde in der Bundesrepublik durch die Große Strafrechtsreform des Jahres 1974 durchgesetzt, aber erst 1997/98 wurde dieses Recht der sexuellen Selbstbestimmung auch auf die Ehe ausgedehnt, so daß es Ehefrauen gegenüber ihren Männern geltend machen können. Daß es in sexuellen Fragen überhaupt eine Selbstbestimmung gibt, die Frauen selber einklagen können, entspricht einer spezifisch modernen,

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6 Weigel uses the metaphor of male “spectacles” from which women have to free themselves in order to see the world through “the utopia of a liberated, unhindered gaze” (“Double” 61).
ja zeitgenössischen Auffassung, die einerseits eine gewandelte Vorstellung von der Sexualität, andererseits eine veränderte Stellung der Frau in Gesellschaft, Politik und vor allem im Rechtssystem voraussetzt. Wenn man in die Geschichte zurückblickt, muß man sich die historisch fremden rechtlichen Konstellationen vergegenwärtigen. (Dane 29)\(^7\)

The sexual self-determination of woman as a legally protected right was implemented in the federal republic by the great criminal law reform of 1974, but only in 1997/98 was this right of sexual self-determination also expanded to marriage, so that wives can assert it against their husbands. The fact that there is in sexual questions generally self-determination for which women themselves can sue, corresponds to a specifically modern, contemporary view. This assumes on the one hand a changed perception of sexuality, on the other hand a changed position of the woman in society, politics and above all in the judicial system. If one looks back in history, one must visualise the historically foreign juridical constellations.

In a social and legal milieu that may appear foreign today but that was the reality of Hahn-Hahn’s and Mühlbach’s environment, both writers defied the establishment. The writers voiced their outrage through their heroines long before the situation that denied women sexual self-determination was addressed legally.

Despite the considerable amount of interest since the 1970s in the study of women writers from past centuries, Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres commented in 2001 on “the current status of feminist scholarly work” that: “Even if the state of Germanist feminist criticism has recently undergone some positive changes, there is still a scarcity of feminist critical writing on nineteenth-century German women” (“Scattered” 3). This absence, commented upon by Frederiksen already in 1982, prompted Frederiksen to publish her critical essay, “German Women Authors in the Nineteenth Century: Where Are They?” which she concludes with the challenge “Let us begin this task!” (to conduct necessary and detailed research on these numerous\(^8\) female authors) (“Women” 199).

Joeres points out that the nineteenth century is often overlooked by “many Germanists” (“Scattered” 3) in favour of the more recent twentieth, or the eighteenth, centuries. She also refers to the eighteenth century as the “German Golden Age” (3). As a contributing factor in this neglect

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\(^7\) I thank Beate Borowka-Clausberg for drawing my attention to Dane’s work.

\(^8\) Frederiksen quotes Robert Prutz who wrote in 1849: “Die Frauen sind eine Macht in unserer Literatur geworden; [. . . ] man begegnet ihnen auf Schritt und Tritt” (180) (“Women have become a power in our literature; [. . . ] one bumps into them at every turn”).
Joeres points out that, during the nineteenth century, British and French writers such as the Brontës, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot, and George Sand eclipsed German women writers (3). How can we reflect on the writing of German women in the development of a comprehensive and critical body of feminist knowledge? In answer to this question, further to Joeres’s call, to Frederiksen’s challenge, and, notwithstanding the existing body of recent feminist scholarship, I aim to extend this scholarly dialogue about historically neglected women writers by submitting an analysis of Ida von Hahn-Hahn’s Gräfin Faustine and Luise Mühlbach’s Aphra Behn.

I propose a threefold approach. First, these two texts reveal the feminist tenor of their time and a certain contribution to shaping social attitudes through the example of their free spirited heroines. The novels’ significance is evident in the innuendo for women to develop skills to resolve imposed conflicts in an inequitable society. The authors’ covert method of rendering their meaning to the public is distinct. Therefore this study contributes to the feminist scholarship of the Vormärz period of 1841 to 1848, and these writers should be notably placed in the genealogy of German feminist writing.

Second, I apply a twofold strategy in my exploration of social criticism in the two novels. Firstly, I highlight the writers’ intentions to voice their resistance to oppression at a time when women were predominantly marginalised. While the texts involve interesting ambiguities and contradictions, their inspiring social commentary and the heroines’, at times, ingenious actions justify scholarly investigation that complements the existing Forschungsstand of these and other writers of the period. Secondly, I adopt Toril Moi’s framework of “institutional, social and personal power relations” (“Feminist” 204) to interpret the two primary texts through close reading.

I discuss Gräfin Faustine and Aphra Behn in a thematic order that introduces the historical events of the time, the compelling storyline, the complex characters and, importantly, the feminist and at times avant-garde issues and criticism. Here the emphasis is on passages and incidents that epitomise the gender struggle and inequities. Karen Offen suggests that feminism is intertwined with a wide range of “historical inquiry” (European 2). This stance corroborates my contextual interdisciplinary approach which provides an overview of relevant historical, gender, social, political, and institutional perspectives, as well as critical reflections on the literary and feminist strategies of the novels. This approach enables me to discuss the relevance of the novels’ social critique.

Third, I aim to broaden the novels’ accessibility and appeal to debate by translating and evaluating appropriate German passages, and by making their ideas and the ensuing discussions available to an English-speaking readership.

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9 Luise Mühlbach wrote Aphra Behn in 1848, but it was published in 1849. For this reason, and foremost because of its evident criticism of this politically relevant year, I include this work in the pre-March movement.
The two writers Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach share age, locality, career and success, but their political persuasion differed. They were born within a relatively short time span of nine years (Hahn-Hahn in 1805 and Mühlbach in 1814) in the province of Mecklenburg and lived at different stages of their lives in the Prussian capital of Berlin.¹⁰ Both writers enjoyed immense popularity throughout German-speaking countries, but their work fell into obscurity towards the fin de siècle. Hahn-Hahn was a staunch aristocrat in contrast to the democratic stance taken by Mühlbach. This study is based on the 1841 edition of *Gräfin Faustine*, and the 1849 edition of *Aphra Behn*. All passages in German are followed by my translation.

The thesis comprises ten chapters. This first introductory chapter discusses my methodology and establishes the framework for a feminist analysis of the novels. The second chapter, “Introduction to the Writers,” examines the means of persuasion employed by popular literature and positions the two writers in relation to their peers. It provides biographies of Ida von Hahn-Hahn and Luise Mühlbach. Chapter three, entitled “Historical Background,” provides aspects of the nineteenth-century German social, political, institutional and literary scene. It presents an overview of the position of women, the social conformity of marriage, the custom of sexual coercion and the powerful matriarchs. It discusses the emergence of the German feminist movement and discerns the two writers’ differing forms of feminism. The chapter examines the effect of the historical environment on women’s literature and provides examples that reflect this.

The following chapters, four to six, discuss Gräfin Faustine. Commencing with chapter four, “Personal Non-Conformity,” the bohemian Faustine’s incongruence in society is accentuated with her disapproval of predetermined gender roles. A dialogue about her male namesake, Faust, suggests Faustine’s restlessness, and the sexual frustration in her relationship with Count Andlau becomes evident. The chapter ends with a focus on her friendship with Clemens, whose disillusionment with life may be seen as a precursor to that of Faustine.

Chapter five, “Social Non-Conformity,” examines women’s expected conformity in marriage and Faustine’s agony and loss of self-esteem due to marital rape. A challenge to traditions is evident in alternative forms of love, in Faustine questioning the concept of everlasting love and Cunigunde’s same-sex love for Faustine. Faustine’s critique of social regimentation and the educational system is another form of social criticism. Chapter six, “Transformation,” discusses Faustine’s conversion to patriarchal ideology, which seems to be motivated by sexual attraction for Count Mengen. In time she reverts to her true self by severing this arrangement. She enters a convent and dies soon after. Because of conventional morality this seemed the only choice for her. However, I interpret her death as an act of liberation and defiance, rather than resignation. The

¹⁰ My historical analysis focuses on Prussia, as apart from both writers living there at different times, I concur with Tönnesen’s contention that Mühlbach depicted in *Aphra Behn* the prevailing nineteenth century political atmosphere.
chapter concludes with an analysis of Faustine’s incongruous role in patriarchal society and juxtaposes her character with that of Faust.

In chapters seven to nine, Mühlbach’s three-volumed *Aphra Behn* is presented. Chapter seven, "Positioning Aphra Behn", examines parallels between the historical Aphra Behn and Mühlbach’s eponymous protagonist, and is followed by a comparison between fact and fiction. This is followed by an observation of narrative devices that, by alluding to a world of exotic and wondrous happenings, create the intriguing challenge to discern between appearance and reality. This salient twofold strategy fosters the blurring of the institutional similarities between nineteenth-century Prussia and seventeenth-century Stuart England which, in my contention, is the basis of Mühlbach’s criticism. The chapter examines the Prussian monarchy and systems of power.

Chapter eight, “Corrupt Systems of Institutional Power,” examines events in Surinam. The heroine condemns slavery and a corrupt government. This leads to the introduction of King Charles II and his relationship, on the one hand with his nepotistic minions and, on the other, with the general population who, as social agents, are shown to contribute to their own subordination. Due to characteristic similarities between fictional Charles and the three historical Prussian Kings, Friedrich Wilhelm II, III and IV, whom I believe to be the targets of Mühlbach’s criticism, the abuse of Prussian civil rights is paralleled with the narrative. The inequities of institutional monarchy and the clergy are discussed.

Chapter nine, “Female Response and Empowerment,” shows the personal response to institutionalised oppression by several typified female characters. One alternative to women’s subordination is offered in the manipulations of the royal mistress, the Duchess of Cleveland, the character of Nelly and, in a stimulating twist, Mrs Monk. Another choice is the voluntary and disillusioned exit from life by Sara and Imoinda. The personal power relation between Aphra and Captain Behn emphasises legalised gender inequities, including that of marital rape. We follow Aphra’s activism and her navigation towards self-actualisation in male-dominated society. The chapter alludes to the “double bind” situation that literary women had to face and foreshadows what has not yet happened—emancipation albeit at the cost of loneliness.

The thesis concludes with a summary in chapter ten, which compares the different strategies of the two authors to show their heroines’ ‘utopian’ liberation from social reality. It pays tribute to the pioneering work performed by these writers and what I perceive to be their contribution towards creating a more equitable society.

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11 Goetzinger suggests that *Vormärz* women find themselves in a “double bind” (104), they express in their fiction that which is denied them in reality—self-determination.
1.1 Methodology for analysis of the novels

My method incorporates an interdisciplinary approach that examines historical and philosophical phallocentric ideologies, attitudes and prejudices of the time, to which the heroines were subject and against which they rebelled. Ferrel Rose states that “society must change” (153) if it is to govern with humanity and if it aims to achieve true equality. Creating awareness of inequitable situations as is evident in the activism of some of the Vormärz women and literary narratives like Gräfin Faustine and Aphra Behn would seem to be part of a precursor towards any such alterations and with this a part of social change. To identify and suggest alternatives would be the next step, as is suggested in part in the novels and has occurred in the first and second wave, and is still occurring in the third wave of feminisms.12

My thesis focuses on Hahn-Hahn’s and Mühlbach’s struggles against patriarchy (here I refer to Emily Cheney, who describes “patriarchy” as “a whole system of cultural values that gives preference to men, the upper class, and the dominant race” [133]). I define feminism as an objection to a social pattern of biased power distribution. Moi emphasises that the relevance of feminist criticism, the result of a development of feminist ideas and behaviour, to personal, social and institutional gender power relations is important (“Feminist” 204). Thus my framework is specifically built on a threefold textual analysis of the inequities in personal, social and institutional power relations as a form of feminist criticism that describes and interprets the female protagonists’ experiences in patriarchal society. Faustine and Aphra are heroines who defy the establishment in a feminist manner, they question established norms and voice their criticisms of the power imbalance in a male-biased society. The emancipatory attitude of both is prophetic of what was to follow in twentieth-century women’s liberation.

In my analysis I apply two aspects of Weigel’s theory “[a]bout the detours on the route from writing women to women’s writing” (“Double” 63): first, I examine the two writers’ literary reproduction of “women’s social and individual reality” (59) and second, I investigate how each heroine liberates herself from the prevailing reality. Does she strive “after a utopia”? (64) Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach acknowledge the social reality of women’s oppression. They take a stance with their heroines’ defiance of conventions. At different stages, both Faustine and Aphra oppose a notion of everlasting love, the customary marriage contract, and critique the common and legally accepted, but generally not discussed, practice of marital rape. Disregarding masculine law, Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach depict alternatives for the repressed and marginalised—women, and their ‘utopian’ writing offers alternative perspectives and contributes towards wider social change.

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12 The first wave occurred in 1896 when the German press launched the term “Feminismus” after the Women’s Congress in Berlin (Offen, “Defining” 127). The second occurred in the 1960s-70s and the third in the 1990s.
Using Weigel’s proposition I investigate the writers’ reproduction of the heroine’s individual reality. First, in relation to personal power relationships in Hahn-Hahn’s novel, I analyse the dynamics of the free-spirited Faustine in her interaction with her patriarchal brother-in-law, Walldorf. By proposing gender “transformation of nature” (HH DR 278) in her novelistic role-reversals, Hahn-Hahn predicts a nullification of women’s oppression presumably as a means for equality between women and men. In some ways she was ahead of her time, as is evident in her sub-textual themes. The author alludes to Faustine’s sexual frustration with Andlau and, covertly yet provocatively, depicts the result of such torment in Count Mengen’s ability to manipulate Faustine into their incompatible marriage. Similarly Cunigunde, due to her unfulfilled same-sex love for Faustine, is driven into a marriage with a “drab lad” (HH GF 346), in an equally thought-provoking manner. The depiction of unmarried women who not only cohabited with a man but who aspired to autonomy, who expressed sexual frustration and lesbian yearning, had been perceived as being too scandalous by some critics. Writing of women’s aspirations for self-actualisation or issues of a personal nature was confrontational at a time when male doctors diagnosed female autonomous behaviour and mental distress as hysteria. In Mühlbach’s novel, I discuss Aphra’s initially oppressive relationships with Governor Bannister and with her husband Behn.

Both writers depict in their narratives the heroines’ innermost ‘realities’, their deliberations, their agonies, their quests, and their methods for self-actualisation. Each heroine deviates in her own way from the respectably moral and idealised, but unrealistic, conservatism that is prescribed by patriarchal society. Faustine’s psychological turmoil determines her early and, I would argue, liberated, end. Defying life through death as a means to depict her heroine’s liberation can be seen as an act of Hahn-Hahn’s modernist leaning. Aphra achieves professional satisfaction to the detriment of heterosexual love. In my interpretation, both heroines attain a metaphorical transformation.

Second, in regard to social reality and power relations I explore the concept of arranged marriages in the Hahn-Hahn characters, Faustine and Cunigunde, and in Mühlbach’s Barbara Villiers. I discuss the feasibility of everlasting love, as rejected by Faustine and Aphra, and a fight for divorce as instigated by Aphra, issues perhaps too confrontational in the prescribed confines of church-blessed marriage rituals. Germaine Goetzinger (100) points out that one form of protest by Vormärz women writers is the potential to evoke the readers’ sympathy for the heroine’s pain. This was accomplished by both writers. The issue of marital rape, as experienced by Faustine and Aphra, describes the agonies of women due to an act that was personally, socially and institutionally accepted and that has only been dealt with in recent times: “erst mehr als 100 Jahre später” wurde die eheliche Beischlaferzwingung zum Straftatbestand nach dem Strafgesetzbuch” (Dane 265) (“it

13 Dane discusses Gräfin Faustine which was first published in 1841.
was more than 100 years later that forced marital sexual intercourse become a criminal offence component according to the penal code”).

Third, in relation to the social reality of institutional power relations I examine the writers’ defiance of bourgeois behaviour and male-established conventions. Faustine criticises the educational drilling and societal regimentation. Aphra struggles to publish her writing as a woman reflecting hereby the same struggle that nineteenth-century women writers were faced with. In *Aphra Behn* the personal response to an unjust social and institutional system is depicted in the reaction of several female characters. In this novel I also investigate the monarchy’s subjugation of the common people, and the *quid pro quo* arrangement between monarchy and clergy. Mühlbach aspires to the idealistic negation of a dictatorship by those in power, who, in Storkey’s assessment, “are able to maintain the status quo” (29). Her political criticism of nineteenth-century Prussia, covertly depicted in the monarchical reign of Charles II, reveals in confronting manner the corruption of government and clergy, and the lethargy of the population at large. Would the criticism of the education system which was influenced by religious tenets, the disrespect for regimented militarism, for oppressive monarchy, for manipulative clergy, and for unthinking masses, undermine the social and institutional power bases? From what is known of 1850 Prussia this would appear to be so.

I suggest that a conservative feminism is found in the novel, *Gräfin Faustine*, and a more advanced kind of feminism in *Aphra Behn*. Anthony O’Hear defines “conservative” as “cautiously sceptical” of social standards and conventions and thereby maintaining the “status quo” (156). The protagonist in *Gräfin Faustine* displays tenets of such conservatism in her feminism. While recognising and critiquing historical and traditional gender inequities, Faustine is an aristocratic heroine whose emancipatory self-interest and self-actualisation occurs in a non-conspicuous, rather passive manner. She does not question the imposed inferiority of the non-aristocratic classes so that, in the novel, men’s denigration of women because of their gender might be perceived to be on a par with Faustine’s disregard for the common people. Conservative feminists tend to ignore the important analytical category of class. This elitist stance overshadows Hahn-Hahn’s otherwise provocative feminist perspective. Nonetheless, her heroine’s criticism of gender and social inequities, and the insight offered into her psychological turmoil, put the novel into the category of feminist writing.

Mühlbach’s novel depicts a more active type of feminism. Aphra unwaveringly strives for what she considers to be her rights in life. If she is unable to obtain a divorce legally, she surreptitiously uses a loophole in the law to her advantage. If publishers refuse to print her book because she is a woman, she arranges for her powerful associates to circumvent this. Aphra’s more advanced feminism actively pursues that to which she, as an equal member of humanity, feels
entitled. Her attempt to improve the plight of Oronooko and the Negro slaves in Surinam shows her genuine concern for those of another race and class. Furthermore, Mühlbach’s criticism of governance and clergy, and her endeavour to rouse the population into determined accountability, are radical. The distinction between these two feminist novels in the fight against social inequality is that of class-conscious passivity (Faustine) and non-class conscious activism (Aphra).

Rita Felski's approach is also relevant for my analysis. Felski differentiates two approaches to literature one is concerned with the semantics and characteristics of genre, while the other is concerned “with social meanings. It hooks up with other ways we have of understanding and making sense of the world” (12). Moreover literature is malleable, reflexive, and reflective of its time. It involves a plurality that ranges from the historical, ethical, political, to feminist, thus approximating a universality that “speaks to a common, shared humanity” (14). Drawing on Felski, this thesis proposes that the importance of the social meaning of these two novels outweighs the maxims of traditional genres. An endeavour towards creating a better humanity seems to be at the heart of these novels and this is engaging.

The authors’ methods of constructing their meanings are creatively different. Using the device of three different narrators, Hahn-Hahn portrays, praises and questions her protagonist Faustine’s emancipatory philosophies. The ambiguity of this narrative technique frees the author from identification with a particular point of view. In contrast, Mühlbach writes with a unified narrative technique. She disguises the critique of her contemporary Prussian milieu in the cloak of seventeenth-century Stuart England (Cornelia Tönnesen draws attention to the parallels between Charles II and Friedrich Wilhelm IV [“Überhaupt” 236]) by taking the historical Aphra Behn as her fictional heroine. Using narrative strategies of veiled criticism, both writers elude the wrath of patriarchal censorship and prosecution. Because of the narrative observations of, and the resistance of their heroines to, existing oppression, readers were and are confronted with prevailing power inequities and thought-provoking concepts. This enabled the authors to attune a receptive readership to their polemics, and thus transgress conventional cultural and political boundaries.

These narratives fulfilled a feminist consciousness-raising or awakening across a broad spectrum. An issue that is topical and that is presented in a language that is understood easily, and uses familiar codes and conventions, is bound to resonate amongst receptive readers. This resonance was heard by the Catholic Church, which insisted on Hahn-Hahn’s public recanting from her earlier written works. Against widespread misogyny and gender inequality, the two writers dared to voice their critique of traditional and segregated gender roles publicly. The “‘success’ of a feminist political practice [. . . ] lie[s] in its ability to contribute to the overthrow of the system that produces women’s oppression and sexism” (Ferrier 4). My thesis argues that the novels, Gräfin Faustine and Aphra Behn, make such a contribution to the existing body of literary female
expression and social criticism. Ludolf Wienbarg wrote in the nineteenth century, “Prose is a weapon, and we have to sharpen it” (Berman 1). Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach sharpened their pens to voice their critiques of socially accepted inequitable practices. I submit to an English-speaking reader the pleasure of the narratives, the intent, the humour, the irony, the frustration and the hope of the writers.
Chapter 2    The two writers Ida von Hahn-Hahn and Luise Mühlbach

2.1 Persuasion through popular literature

In a period when a politically oriented reading culture developed and when the upsurge of socially critical novels by women emerged on the German literary scene, Ida von Hahn-Hahn’s *Gräfin Faustine* and Luise Mühlbach’s *Aphra Behn* offered a reflection of their times and a contribution to shaping social attitudes. Between 1839 and 1875 both writers enjoyed immense popularity and some of their ideas such as forms of liberalisation and more equality in society were bound to captivate their readership. Scholars comment on the relationship of how historical reality is expressed in literary fiction.

Gisela Brinker-Gabler states that: “Eine Untersuchung der Geschichte der Literaturgeschichtsschreibung läßt erkennen, daß jeweils historisch bedingte Erkenntnisinteressen zu einer spezifischen Annäherung an den Gegenstandsbereich Literatur führten” (*Deutsche Erster* 12) (“An investigation of literary historiography reveals that in each case historically determined interests resulted in a specific approach to literature”). In quoting the “father” (13) of literary-historical writing, Georg Gottfried Gervinus, Brinker continues to say that literary history was an inseparable part of general, that is, national-political history. Thus literature is not only a reflection of, but is entrenched in history. Since 1839 its power has been somewhat optimistically coined by Edward Bulwer Lytton’s adage “The pen is mightier than the sword.”

Joeres refers in “Scattered” (5) to Arlyn Diamond and Lee Edwards, who state that the contributors to their work on feminist criticism show:

that literary material can legitimately be understood in terms of its wider social and moral context. All our authors see art as the product of a particular cultural milieu, sometimes embodying a society’s most deeply held convictions, sometimes questioning these values, sometimes disguising an artist’s own ambivalence with regard to these matters, but never disengaged from the claims of time or social order. (Diamond and Edwards viv)

Literature reflects and engages with a wider social and moral context of its time. Mühlbach saw her task as a writer of historical fiction: “To give an agreeable and popular form to our national history, which may attract the attention and affection of our people, which may open their understandings to the tendencies of political movements, and connect the facts of history with the events of actual life” (*Old* 2). I believe that in 1848 Mühlbach wanted to bring nineteenth-century inequities to the attention of the people and that her strategy in *Aphra Behn* involved the depiction of seventeenth-century Stuart England as a mode of disguise.
The power of persuasion has been recognised throughout the ages. In particular the influence of books on society was recognised by the Catholic Church who knew about their ‘potential danger’, and who discouraged reading by oneself (Sagarra, “Gegen” 117). For this reason the Church fostered in mid-nineteenth century the notion of reading aloud “good books” to an audience, be it the family circle, the convent schools, or in the salons of the aristocratic country castles (116). Renate Möhrmann points out that the female readership, who left school usually aged thirteen, generally lacked a “bildungsbürgerliches” (“middle-class intellectual”) interest ("Teilnahme” 385). Some Vormärz authors realised this and purposely developed strategies to educate receptive women readers, as for example Louise Otto-Peters:

"Es ist das Bestreben vieler und das meinige, durch Romane gerade diejenigen für die Zeitfragen zu interessieren, zu begeistern und sie über vieles in all unseren Verhältnissen aufzuklären, welche eben erst noch einer Anregung bedürfen, um geistig daran teilzunehmen. Willkommen geheißen wird diese Anregung von Tausenden, wenn sie im Gewande der Poesie, und dem Versprechen, Unterhaltung und Zerstreuung zu gewähren, zufällig kommt—gesucht wird sie nur von Hunderten. (“Teilnahme” 385)

It is my and many others’ endeavour to use novels to interest those who may only require a stimulus to participate intellectually in the questions of our times. This stimulus is welcomed by many thousands when it comes accidentally cloaked in poetry with the promise to provide entertainment and diversion—but only hundreds will search for it.

It would seem plausible that if the works of an author are widely read, its meaning will be absorbed by some of its readers, generate debate, challenge public attitudes, and foreshadow social changes and law making. In regard to Hahn-Hahn a number of contemporary and scholarly testimonies reveal the influence that her literature had on society, at times it was even perceived as a threat. Amongst her contemporaries Hahn-Hahn’s literary rival Fanny Lewald remarked that Ida’s books had an influence on the women’s movement (Kober 31). Felicitas von Hohenhausen provides evidence ("Gräfin" 267) that Hahn-Hahn influenced women’s emotions and caused more abductions and divorces with her pre-conversion novels than did George Sand in France. Bertha Witt contends that Hahn-Hahn’s early books “haben in der Gesellschaft teilweise geradezu revolutionierend gewirkt” (80) (“had partially an almost revolutionary effect on society”). In 1847 readers were publicly cautioned about her writing:

"One step, [. . .] which we strenuously recommend, is for all husbands and fathers in Germany, to commit to the flames the writings of the Gräfin Ida Hahn Hahn,
whenever they find them in the hands of their wives or daughters. (North British 582)

By declaring Hahn-Hahn’s writings to be a threat to the establishment, the author of this inciting review confirms the influence on, and the engagement with, social order that popular writing can have on readers, as cited also by Kontje. Amongst scholars Werner Suhge finds that Hahn-Hahn’s emancipatory novels influenced the public (144). Margaret Kober-Merzbach summarises: “Heute sind ihre (Hahn-Hahn) Bücher und sie selbst fast vergessen, ihr Einfluß dauert fort” (27) (“Today her [Hahn-Hahn] books and she herself are almost forgotten, [but] her influence continues”). In Kober’s assessment Hahn-Hahn’s post-Catholic conversion writing is significant in the shaping of present and future generations’ thinking, which was recognised by the clergy:

Der kluge Bischof von Mainz wußte, daß die Frauen, Katholikinnen und Protestanten, die in ihren kargen Mußestunden die langen Romane der Gräfin Hahn-Hahn lasen, die Mütter und Lehrerinnen künftiger Generationen waren. Wüßte er auch, was sie den Söhnen und Enkeln von den Worten der Gräfin mit auf den Weg geben würden? (Kober 37)

The wise bishop of Mainz knew that the women, Catholic and Protestant alike, who were the mothers and teachers of future generations, did read in their frugal leisure hours the long novels of Gräfin Hahn-Hahn. Did he know too, what and which words of the Gräfin they were to impart to their sons and grandsons?

Kober implies that Hahn-Hahn’s persuasion of public opinion was far-reaching. The wise bishop may have taken his prompt from the Vormärz women who had channelled their frustrated energies after the failed 1848 Revolution into educating the next generations towards democratic ideas. While Kober focuses on Hahn-Hahn’s post-Catholic conversion novels, in all feasibility, Hahn-Hahn’s pre-conversion writing was just as, or even more, influential, particularly since she was then at the peak of her popularity.

In very recent times Gesa Dane refers specifically to the conjugal rights situation depicted in Hahn-Hahn’s Gräfin Faustine, a situation that is also depicted in Mühlbach’s Aphra Behn, when she attributes the amendments to existing laws to literature: “Die Literatur vermag es, problematische Verhältnisse aus der Sicht der betroffenen Opfer zu thematisieren, lange bevor ein Wandel in den Rechtsvorstellungen und eine Veränderung in den Gesetzen eintritt” (265) (“Literature is able to take as its theme problematic circumstances from the point of view of the victims, long before changes will occur in social and legal perception and practice”). Gerhard comments on the late twentieth-century “unique” situation that can place women in violent

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14 In this sentence Suhge includes Fanny Lewald’s novels of emancipation.
situations in which “human rights violations against women [. . . ] often take place in the non-
public, intimate, private sphere of the family, where they are tolerated and go unpunished, and thus
are not subject to public law or protection by the state” (Debating 177). In 1841 this ongoing issue
was illustrated in Gräfin Faustine and in 1849 in Aphra Behn. Both novels depict the anguish of
marital rape, a topic, as Dane points out, that has thus far been overlooked in the literary analysis of
Gräfin Faustine:

In diesem Roman [Gräfin Faustine] wird der erzwungene eheliche Beischlaf
thematisiert, und damit ein Tatbestand, der in der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts
keineswegs gegen geltendes Recht verstieß. Auf diesen Roman muß schon
deshalb eingegangen werden, weil hier am Beispiel eines literarisch erstmals
thematisierten Sachverhaltes deutlich wird, wie auch der erzwungene eheliche
Beischlaf von der Frau als Vergewaltigung empfunden wurde, ohne daß er ein
Verbrechen im Sinne des damals geltenden Rechts darstellte. Auch von der
neuesten Forschung zu diesem Roman ist dieser Zusammenhang bislang weithin
übersehen worden. (257-58)

In this novel [Gräfin Faustine] forced marital sexual intercourse is taken as a
theme and with this the elements of an offence that in the middle of the
nineteenth century did by no means infringe valid law. One has to deal with this
novel if only, here, for the first time, with the example of a literary reality, it
becomes clear how forced marital sexual intercourse is experienced by the
woman as being also an act of rape. It is depicted as not being a crime in the
sense of the then valid laws. Even the latest research on this novel has thus far
overlooked this connection.

While Gräfin Faustine has been the focus of a number of scholars’ analyses, the important issue of
women losing their dignity in marriage has so far been “overlooked” (258). It would seem that more
scholarly work on this pertinent issue is justified. Hahn-Hahn, in Gräfin Faustine, and Mühlbach, in
Aphra Behn, acted courageously by bringing to public attention and possible debate in mid-
nineteenth century the important issue of physical violation towards women in the domestic sphere.
This represents not only a feminist, but also a legal issue. The unresolved issue of “systematically
separating public from private law” (Gerhard, Debating 177) has been the topic of debate among
international women’s rights campaigners and remains topical.

Even though Mühlbach’s oeuvre was voluminous, Aphra Behn has, with the exception of the
works by Möhrmann, Goetzinger, Tönnesen and Judith E. Martin, had less exposure to scholarly
scrutiny than Gräfin Faustine. Yet in this novel the author, like Hahn-Hahn, condemns the
prevailing social practice of enforced conjugal rights. The foresight of the two writers to recognise the relevance, and presenting for debate the ‘social reality’ of this violent but taboo issue, which was conceded by law, contributed to my choice of these two novels.

2.2 Positioning the two writers in relation to their peers

Since the spread of French revolutionary ideas throughout Europe a significant shift took place in women’s thinking. This is testified by the writing of a number of Vormärz women. The level of activism and the increase of socially critical novels during that period were to leave a legacy that would continue into the twentieth century. Goetzinger (88) examines published texts and novels from women during the period of 1830-1848 for the dual purpose of first identifying which new themes were being discussed and second of comparing the factual-argumentative language of mass communications such as journals with literary texts in order to develop some characteristic features of Vormärz women’s fiction.

Goetzinger observes that from approximately 1830 the oppressed self-image and self-perception of German women changed due to the influence of the French early socialist call for freedom, equality and fraternity (88). Uta Treder states that during the Vormärz many women developed political and social awareness (37). The 1840s focused on the lack of female education and political engagement, and marriage. According to Weigel many novels express opposition against the marriage of convenience, “ihre epische Spannung lebt aus dem Motiv des Gegensatzes von Liebe und Ehe” (“Schielende” 92) (“its epic tension lives out of the contrasting motive between love and marriage”). It can be assumed that the many discussions about women’s emancipation created a newly established female “Wir-Bewußtsein” (Goetzinger 90) (“us-consciousness”). Women questioned their secondary position in a society, in which “patriarchy as an institution is a social constant so deeply entrenched” (Millett 25) that non-ambiguity is complex.

In addition to Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach a number of women in early mid-nineteenth century expressed their social concerns in literature. Therese Huber (1764-1829) belongs to the pre-romantic pragmatists who examined issues concerning education (Möhrmann, Andere 36). Rahel Varnhagen (1772-1833) “das erste große, moderne Weib der deutschen Kultur” (30) (“the first great, modern woman of the German culture”) formulated the first document by a woman in which she articulates the “Unhaltbarkeit ihrer gesellschaftlichen Beengung” (30) (“untenability of her social restrictions”). Bettine von Arnim (1785-1859) enjoyed enormous success with her epistolary writing, Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde (1835). In 1840 she created a memorial to her friend Karoline von Günderrode with Die Günderrode (Hilmes 44). In 1843 Arnim voiced her sympathy for the disadvantaged in society. Her confidence in the King, to intervene in the social inequities, motivated her to publish Dies Buch gehört dem König (34).
Not much is known about the *Vormärz* author Louise Dittmar (1807-1884). Her first four publications (1845-47) were a satire, a political essay and critiques of religion in which she drew attention to women and their oppression (Wischermann 78-79). In Wischermann’s assessment Dittmar was one of the few women who attempted to develop a comprehensive analysis and critique of patriarchy (87). In 1845 she wrote in *Skizzen und Briefe*, which was probably a reflection of her life: “Wir wollen die Freiheit, aber die Flügel sind zu schwach und die Füße kleben zu fest an” (88) (“We want freedom but the wings are too weak and the feet are glued too tightly”).

Weigel talks about the “Infantilisierung” (“Schielende” 102) of women and the traces of fairy-story attributes in the writings by Fanny Lewald (1811-1889). In *Auf rother Erde* (1850) the heroine Clementine renounces her opposition to a marriage of convenience, and marries a much older man with whom, after some trials and tribulations, she experiences a “friedliche Ehezeit” (102) (“peaceful matrimony”). The love between two characters of unequal social standing, the higher class Anton with the lower class Marie, is set against the events of the Revolution and a hope for democracy. After its failure a happy ending sees Anton and Marie being married although they are required to immigrate to America (114-117).

Louise Aston (1814-1871) was an early feminist who, perhaps most daringly, defended the notion of equality and women’s emancipation (Wischermann 77), which touched a raw nerve in patriarchal society (67). Aston’s unconventional life, her publications, and her motto in *Wilde Rosen*: “Freiem Leben, freiem Lieben, Bin ich immer treu geblieben!” (64) (“Free living, free loving, I have always remained true to”) brought her to the attention of public and police. Becoming an object of persecution she was eventually banished from Berlin because of her “umstürzlerischen Ansichten” (65) (“subversive views”) and “unsittlichen Lebenswandel”) (65) (“immoral way of life”). She criticised the institution of marriage: “Ich verwerfe die Ehe, weil sie zum Eigenthume macht, was nimmer Eigenthum sein kann: die freie Persönlichkeit; weil sie ein Recht giebt auf Liebe, auf die es kein Recht geben kann; bei der jedes Recht zum brutalen Unrecht wird” (68) (“I condemn marriage, because it makes a possession of that which can never be a possession: the free personality; because it gives a right to love for which no right can be given; in this marriage makes a brutal wrong out of every right”). In her signed police statement of 1846 Aston’s declared:

I don’t believe in God and I smoke cigars, that’s perhaps why I’m an abomination for many ladies. I intend to emancipate women, even if it should cost me my heart’s blood; I consider marriage to be the most immoral institution since I don’t consider lasting love to be possible within it. If a man gets married he must be an imbecile. Belief in God and the institution of marriage must cease if we are to be happy. (Adler 199)
Hans Adler states: “Louise Aston was only to a limited extent interested in reducing certain male privileges. Her main intention was to expose and destroy the structures which made possible and legitimised those privileged in the first place” (202).

In her novel *Aus dem Leben einer Frau* (1847), Aston “has her heroine experience much of what she herself experienced. In this sense this novel does indeed have the character of a ‘confession’, as the author emphasises in the foreword. As it is, she strives to make her ‘social drama’ authentic and topical” (Adler 200). The plot explores the marriage and divorce of the protagonist Johanna Oburn (Weigel, “Schielende” 99). Johanna’s description varies from being an “Engelsbild” (99) (“picture of an angel”) to an object of sexual desire and economic calculation by her husband.

Her marriage is described as a “ununterbrochenes Opferfest” (Weigel, “Schielende” 99) (“continuous celebration of sacrifice”). “Johanna [. . .] empfindet sich als verkaufte Ware, als Opfer des gängigen Kuhhandels von Jugend kontra Reichtum, und entwickelt in diesem Zustand der Schmach eine seismographische Sensibilität für die Ermiedigung anderer” (Möhrmann, *Andere* 143) (“Johanna [. . .] considers herself to be a sold object, the victim of a common cow trade, of youth versus wealth. In this state of shame she develops a seismographic sensibility for the degradation of others”). Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach also express the analogy of cattle trading with that of marriage. Faustine feels degraded, shamed and as an object of negotiations in her marriage to Count Oburnau. Aphra’s husband Captain Behn threatens to sell her at the market with a noose around her neck. Indeed Aphra eventually tricks Behn into selling her to Oronooko.

In 1848 Aston wrote *Lydia* in which she portrayed the position of women (Richards, *Wasting* 6). The eponymous heroine, a depiction of innocence, is contrasted with the emancipated Alice (Weigel, “Schielende” 99-100). In her third novel *Revolution und Conterrevolution* (1849), Alice is depicted as the picture of a new woman, a “Superfrau” (101), who is the president of a political association, who climbs the barricades as leading “Freischärlerin” (101) (“irregular female soldier”). Rachel McNicholl and Kerstin Wilhelms consider this as Aston’s attempt of political “(Selbst)Verständigung” (“Liebe” 121) (“[self]communication”) in literary form. Aston imbued her heroine Alice not only with the “double bind” (Goetzinger 104) of her own phantasies and yearnings for an increased scope for political action but also the paradigmatic experiences that arise from the contradictions of ‘female’ action and the tension between love and politics (McNicholl and Wilhelms, “Liebe” 124).

While the *Vormärz* women generally criticise the machinations of the church and the opportunism of the liberals, they offer in their writing a sharp analysis of attempts to change parliamentary democracy (McNicholl and Wilhelms, “Liebe” 124-25). Aston’s protagonist is depicted as an “omnipotent” (125) woman who, independent of any male, follows her political
goals and acts mostly with success in all her revolutionary activities. Weigel concludes that heroines like Alice are rare. They are to be considered as figures of opposition: “gegen den Helden-Tod der Frauenbilder einerseits und andererseits gegen die Heldinnen der Romane von Frauen, die als Opfer gestaltet sind, weil nur dafür Stoff genug aus den Erfahrungen ihrer Autorinnen geschöpft werden kann” (“Schielende” 101) (“against the account of women’s depiction of the death of the hero on the one hand and against the heroines of the novels, who are created as victims, on the other hand. Its female authors have only sufficient experience for that which they can create out of their own experiences”).

Mit der Überschreitung der Grenzen der realen Teilnahme von Frauen an der Revolution realisiert die Autorin L. Aston weibliche Allmachtwünsche im literarischen Raum der Fiktion und phantasiiert wenigstens für eine Frau Macht und Ansehen und damit ein neues Frauenleben. (McNicholl and Wilhelms, “Liebe” 125)

By women in the Revolution crossing the limits of real participation, the female author L. Aston realises female wishes for omnipotence in the literary realm of fiction. She phantasises at least for a singular woman the attainment of power and high standing and, with that, a new life for women.

In contrast to the unequivocal radicalism of Aston the more subtle Mathilde Franziska Anneke (1817-1884) wrote religious books, and regional literature as well as writing as a journalist under the name Tabouillot (Wischermann 47). The press coined her as “Kommunistenmutter” (48). In 1847 she published Das Weib im Conflict mit den socialen Verhältnissen (48) (“The woman in conflict with the social conditions”). In this publication Anneke defended Aston against her banishment from Berlin. She also protested against the marriage of convenience and campaigned for the education of sons and fathers to abolish the slavery of women (50). Her second husband was jailed in 1848 because of his political activities, and in 1849 the Annekes fled to America. Mathilde continued her work as professional publisher, journalist, writer and women’s activist.

Louise Otto-Peters (1819-1895) fought for women’s rights. She was a writer and a publisher (Wischermann 89) who in 1843 published her first novel Ludwig der Kellner. Otto worked as journalist for journals in which she depicted social injustices and the weavers’ revolt. Moved by the poverty and exploitation of the lower working classes, she published in 1846 Schloß und Fabrik (91). While Aston and Dittmar demanded equal rights for men and women, Otto based her demands

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15 After the failed 1848 Revolution 1.2 million out of the 46 million German population immigrated to other countries for political reasons (Wischermann 57).
on “ächte weibliche[r] Emancipation”) (107) (“true female emancipation”). According to Otto women’s prime responsibilities were family and education.

Other writers of the time include Friederike Wolfhagen (1819-1878). Wolfhagen, had already published numerous novels in the 1840s (McNicholl and Wilhelms, “Liebe” 118). Dresdens Maitage. Ein Zeitbild appears in 1850 under the pseudonym M. Norden. In this three volumed novel, Wolfhagen describes, like Aston, Glümer, Lewald, Otto and Mühlbach the topics of class differences, a critical assessment of the aristocracy, the problems of bourgeois artists’ existence, sentimental family histories, and the lives and loves of different women (118). Claire von Glümer (1825-1906) wrote in 1851 Fata Morgana. Ein Roman aus dem Jahre 1848. In this novel the heroine Gertrud criticises the exclusion of women from political life (113). Glümer depicts, like its title, that the hopes for changes by way of parliamentary democracy and political reform prove to be a mirage (114).

It was in this milieu of women expressing their social concerns publicly that Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach created heroines in Faustine and Aphra who are neither obedient daughters or wives, nor “Superfrau” types instead they are free spirited and courageous women. Due to both authors’ great popularity, each heroine’s responsive social reaction to injustices may have been a contributing factor in influencing an interested readership. While it is not the purpose of this thesis to investigate the corollary of such a socio-politically oriented tenet, I nevertheless propose that these two novels render invaluable contributions in the analysis of pre-March social order.

2.3 Ida von Hahn-Hahn
2.3.1 Life
Gräfin Ida von Hahn (1805-1880) was born in Tressow, in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, of an old noble family (Böttcher, 9). Ida enjoyed the privileged upbringing of the German aristocracy but received the “most rudimentary” education (Möhrmann, Frauenemanzipation 231), yet it is reported that “she excelled” (Kraft 189) in the little tuition she did receive. Because of her ability to narrate stories with suspense and in lively manner at a very young age, Ida was often called “Scheherezade” (Hohenhausen, “Gräfin” 252). Her father indulged in thespian enterprises and his staging of plays and constructing of a state-of-the-art theatre soon diminished the family fortune. Following her mother’s wishes, Ida married in 1826 her one year older wealthy cousin, Graf Hahn.

16 The archivist G.C.F. Lisch traces Ida’s ancestry to around 1230 (Munster 9). At the turn of the eighteenth century Ida’s grandfather build the first observatory in Mecklenburg. Friedrich von Hahn discovered the central star of the Ring Nebula on the moon and was subsequently honoured by the naming of Moon Crater Hahn, at the NE limb of the Moon’s disk (Furst and Hamel 79-81).

17 The theatre accommodated seven hundred spectators and was furnished with extravagance (Schöder 6). In 1807 Carl-Friedrich von Hahn engaged the leading Berlin actor August Wilhelm Iffland (7) for three days for a fee of forty Friedrichodor (the annual fee was one hundred and twenty), and performances were staged for an illustrious audience that included Königin Luise of Prussia (8-9).
(Munster 46), for this reason adding the hyphenated second Hahn. The incompatibility of the couple soon became evident and her husband divorced her after three years, prior to the birth of their mentally retarded daughter Antonie in 1829 (Griephan 1). From then on Ida lived with Baron Adolf von Bystram (1798-1848) in an arrangement, which was unconventional for the time. With his encouragement she established herself as a popular writer. A number of modern scholars allege that Ida had a son with Bystram in 1830.

In 1836 Ida met and fell in love with the same aged democrat Heinrich Simon (1805-1860). As events in Ida’s life seem to be reflected to a great extent in her fiction a closer examination of her relationship with Simon seems warranted. Ida did not respond to Heinrich’s proposal of marriage. Hohenhausen writes that the reasons that prevented a marriage between the “gleichgestimmten Paares” (“Schöne” 17) (“harmonious pair”) are depicted in the novel Aus der Gesellschaft (1838). “Being the man” (Helene 38) in this relationship, Heinrich nominated himself as decision-maker. Aware that Ida felt obligated to Bystram, Heinrich emotionally renounced his love for her:

Ich habe Dir nicht von meinen Kämpfen erzählt, die sich seit der Mitte des vorigen Monats bis jetzt in entsetzlicher Progression gesteigert haben. Ich habe gewußt, daß Du mir gehörtest und ich habe Dir entsagt.—Du möchtest ferner von mir hören oder nicht, glaube an mich, wie ich an Dich glaube, fest und unerschütterlich. (Schröder 301)

I have not told you of my battles that increased in terrible progression since the middle of the previous month till now. I have known, that you belonged to me—and I have renounced you.—You may hear from me further or not, believe in me, as I believe in you, firm and unshakeable.

18 Kirstin Olsen claims that by adding her husband’s surname, Ida “starts a fashion among German literati for hyphenated married names” (111).
19 They shared apartments without being married until his death. In her numerous travelogues Hahn-Hahn depicted herself as a single traveller without referring to Bystram, in whose company she travelled. However, after nursing Ida for six months, due to complications after an eye operation, she dedicated Gräfin Faustine to him.
20 Bernd Goldmann claims that on 10.2.1830 Ida had, “unbeachtet von der Öffentlichkeit” (“Ida” 14) (“unnoticed by public attention”), a son Wilhelm by Bystram, whom, like her daughter Antonie, she gave into foster care. Goldmann has not provided evidence for this claim though he has been quoted by Gerlinde Geiger (Befreite 43, 376; “Hahn” 90) and subsequently by: Gisela Brinker-Gabler (117), Helga Kraft quoted 1831 as year of birth (189), Christiane Schulzki-Haddouti (“Biographische Dispositionen” 1), Sabine Doering (172) and Anna Richards (119). Joann Ohrlich refers to Schulzki-Haddouti (2) as do Ronald J. Zboray and Mary S. Zboray, who venture to state that Ida was: “a divorcee with several lovers who sired illegitimate children with her” (Ft 18). In contrast to Goldmann, Antonie is nominated as Hahn-Hahn’s only child by the following: Hahn-Hahn’s biographers in 1869 Marie Helene (19), in 1871 Alfred von Wurzbach (35), in 1880 Paul Haffner (5), in 1871 Felicitas von Hohenhausen (“Gräfin” 254), in 1984 Alinda Jacoby (76), the collections of her contemporary Luise Mühlbach printed in 1902 (157), the subsequent biographies in 1903 by Otto von Schachinger (10), in 1909 Carl Schröder (297), in 1919 Arthur Schurig (15), the very extensive research in 1929 by Katrien van Munster (49), in 1931 Lucie Guntli (4), numerous author lexica entries, and in the later twentieth-century in 1975 Gerd Lüpke (3), and in 1977 Möhrmann (Andere 93). In 2007 Beate Borowka-Clausberg proposes that thus far there is no published source to evidence that Ida gave birth to a child other than Antonie.
The story of their love is the subject of chapters in journals and a book\textsuperscript{21} and the ache of their renunciation is evident in the stanza of Ida’s poem “To Heinrich” that she dedicated to Simon on their parting:

\begin{quote}
Und jetzt! Ach jetzo sehe
Ich neben mir stets dich
Mit jenem tiefen Wehe,
Das du nun trägst um mich.
\end{quote}

(Hohenhausen, “Gräfin” 264)

And now, oh now so see
I next to me you always
With that deep sorrow

That you now carry because of me.

Marie Helene, who knew Hahn-Hahn, asserts that Ida took Simon’s renunciation badly, “for three days she was lying in a half-dead state on her bed” (39). Simon never married. In 1842 Ida requested a brief meeting with Simon: “Nur ein Mal will ich Sie sehen, nur einen Moment—weiter nichts! Dann will ich ruhig leben und sterben, ganz ruhig gewiß!” (Helene 40) (“Only once do I want to see you, only for one moment—nothing more! Then I can live and die quietly, surely quite quietly!”). They met for one brief moment and never saw each other again.

The debate about Hahn-Hahn using her writing as a vehicle to work through her emotional life continues. Sabine Doering comments that: “die Verquickung von Biographie und literarischer Fiktion über lange Zeit zu den Konstanten der literaturwissenschaftlichen Beschäftigung mit Hahn-Hahn gehörte” (173) (“the combination of biography and literary fiction about Hahn-Hahn was considered over a long period to be a constant factor in scholarly literary activity”). According to Schröder Hahn-Hahn’s writing after 1836 and before 1850 depicts the conflict and the scar that the relationship with Simon had left on her (301). Her association with the two men runs like a leitmotif through Gräfin Faustine and some of her early novels. Schmid-Jürgens claims that Hahn-Hahn’s love for Simon and its unhappy ending forms the kernel of her early works (55). Hohenhausen (“Gräfin” 264) suggests that whole sections of Simon’s letters to Ida, expressing true passion, are replicated in the novels.

Simon and Bystram influenced the triangular character structure of those of her novels, in which the heroine is courted by two males of opposing nature: an almost pedantic (Schurig 17)\textsuperscript{22} gentleman (Faustine calls Andlau a “Pedant” [HH GF 75]) with an “embarrassing sense of order” (Schurig 17) (Bystram), and a man full of vitality with a “nature of noble-mindedness” (23) (Simon). Hohenhausen (“Schöne” 17) suggests that Heinrich Simon can easily be recognised as Otto in \textit{Aus der Gesellschaft}, Mario Mengen in \textit{Gräfin Faustine}, and as Cecil and Sigismund Forster of the eponymous novels. According to J. Eckhardt, Simon eclipsed Bystram not only with intellect but with vivacity, which must have appealed to and impressed Ida’s nature, which has been described as passionate (259), “heißblüthig” and “leichtbeweglich” (Ebersberger 155) (“hot-blooded” and “easily flexible”).

Bystram,\textsuperscript{23} with whom Ida was to remain until his death in 1848, is depicted as Andlau in \textit{Gräfin Faustine} (Helene 24), as Gotthard in \textit{Zwei Frauen}, as Wilderich in \textit{Levin}, to name but a few instances of a “verkappten” (Munster 54) (“disguised”) Bystram. Eckhardt suggests that Bystram intuitively encouraged Ida to work through her turbulent feelings, he recognised that for her “writing was a surrogate for living” (263). Gerlind Geiger (\textit{Befreite} 217) proposes that in \textit{Gräfin Faustine} Hahn-Hahn works through the emotions she would have experienced if she (Faustine) had married Simon (Mengen). Doering comments that past and present time interpreters of Hahn-Hahn’s novels feel challenged to mirror her literary male heroes with real-life Bystram and Simon (172). Dane states that there is an “unbestreitbar” (262) (“undeniable”) parallel between the biography and the fiction of Hahn-Hahn. Conflation of fact with fiction is feasible when both are profoundly intertwined, and its allure is evident in the numerous critiques of its author and her novels.

In 1844 Hayward wrote: “it has been said, and is currently believed, that \textit{Gräfin Faustine}, and Ida, Gräfin Hahn-Hahn, are one and the same person” (167). In 1869 Marie Helene wrote that anyone who knew Bystram could recognise that Hahn-Hahn portrayed him through Andlau (25). Munster considers \textit{Gräfin Faustine} as a “Selbstbekenntnis” (104) (“confession”), a kind of “atonement, in which Hahn-Hahn depicts her tormented choice between her “old, faithful” friend Bystram (Andlau) and the “young, fiery” lawyer and civil rights advocate Heinrich Simon (Mengen) (104). Geiger, who draws attention to the shared birthday (22 June) of author and heroine, states that with \textit{Gräfin Faustine} Hahn-Hahn writes personal pain from her heart (\textit{Befreite} 217). Considering that Hahn-Hahn dedicated this novel to Bystram, and that she lived with him

\textsuperscript{22} Preface to Hahn-Hahn’s \textit{Faustine. Ein Roman aus der Biedermeierzeit}

until his death, it is not surprising that his characterisation is somewhat exalted. Interestingly, by having Faustine enter the convent, Hahn-Hahn also foretells her own decision nine years onwards.

Hahn-Hahn’s real life triangular love constellation became quadrantal with the appearance of Ida’s literary rival and “archenemy” (Kahn and Hook 46), Fanny Lewald. For twelve years Fanny Lewald had held an unrequited affection for Simon, who was her cousin (Helene 44). Simon’s revelation that he loved Ida motivated Fanny Lewald in 1847 to pen under the pseudonym Iduna Graefin H.H. Diogena, her biting satire of Hahn-Hahn’s oeuvre (Hohenhausen, “Gräfin” 263). Ida received an anonymously sent edition of Diogena, which caused her grief, and it took great effort on Bystram’s part to calm his companion (Schurig 49).

Hahn-Hahn travelled with Bystram throughout Europe and the Orient, an experience recorded in her successful travelogues. According to Richard M. Meyer, aristocratic Hahn-Hahn felt that culture and beauty were threatened after the 1848 Revolution (717). The death of Bystram in June of that year, and the earlier publication of Diogena deepened her depression (Künzel 667). After the adoption of her new Catholic faith in 1850, Hahn-Hahn founded, and lived until her death, in the convent Frauen vom Guten Hirten (Women of the Good Shepherd), without herself taking the order’s vows (Meyer 718).

2.3.2 Literary work
From 1839 to 1851 Ida was the most widely read and known female writer in Germany, with works translated into English, French (Lüpke 3) and Russian (Marsh 99). Some of her novels had a print run of four thousand, a large number in the mid-nineteenth century, when the average was between six hundred and one thousand (Burchardt-Dose 233). Hahn-Hahn published forty-eight novels, books of poetry and travelogues of which twenty-one predate her conversion to Catholicism (Oberembt 480).24 Weigel quotes Patricia Herminghouse who argues that in order to develop a “productive” “feminist reappropriation” (“Seeing” 267) of Hahn-Hahn’s work, an analysis of her complete oeuvre, rather than a segregated reading of her pre- and post-religious conversion division, should be undertaken.

In contrast, Marie Helene, Katrien van Munster, Charlotte Keim, Geiger, Möhrmann and Beate Borowka-Clausberg focus on Hahn-Hahn’s pre-conversion works. Following the mode of the latter five scholars, I too concentrate on Hahn-Hahn’s narratives before she assumed her new faith. This decision is based on Hahn-Hahn’s ideological volte-face following her conversion, when she embraced an opposing ideology to that of her pre-conversion writing. In following the Catholic Church’s instructions, Hahn-Hahn publicly divorced herself from her earlier works, as advertised in the German press in 1851:

24 Conversion to Catholicism was not uncommon. According to Williamson “a number of writers looked longingly to the Catholic liturgy, which appeared to offer a feast for the senses not available in Protestantism” (52).
To correct some misapprehension, I feel it to be my duty to declare that the new edition of my complete works announced by Alexander Duncker in Berlin is no new series, but an edition with a new title. A new series of those writings will never appear, as I no longer recognize as my own the spirit in which they were written.25

According to Hahn-Hahn’s new spiritual adviser, Cardinal Diepenbrock, her pre-1850 work “was offensive to the spirit of Catholicism” (Herminghouse, “Seeing” 265). Bishop Ketteler encouraged the converted Hahn-Hahn to henceforth write “in the service of her [Catholic] faith” (266-67). In my discussions I focus on the works that were written in the ‘original’ spirit of the author, before her public disassociation from her emancipatory endeavours and the social meaning and criticism of her earlier works.

The pre-conversion narratives may at first impression offer a portrayal of aristocratic ennui, frivolity, and hypocritical behaviour. Yet Hahn-Hahn’s detailed travel and social descriptions provide more than an informative insight. She effectively subverted and contravened the confines of the conventionally conforming German domestic genre. Indeed, due to its diversity, it is complex to categorise her style of writing. In her novels, Hahn-Hahn insisted on unhappy endings for her troubled, but conservatively emancipated heroines. She depicted strong women and emotionally, as well as financially, dependent men, and her proclivity to oppose conservative morality is clearly depicted in her provocative use of male and female role reversals.

This is evident in those novels in which the female heroine dominates her husband. The male protagonist Levin is, for example, financially supported by his wife, Josselinde (HH L 2: 96). In Sibylle, the eponymous female protagonist finances her divorced husband’s lifestyle while she lives with her tutor, Fidelis (HH S 2: 55). In Gräfin Faustine, the protagonist dominates her companion, Andlau. Such role reversals may have been considered daring, yet Hahn-Hahn made concessions. The dire consequences suffered by the heroines of her novels comply with conventional expectations. Hence these novels appear to end unhappily: Josseline remains lonely, Levin falls into madness, Sibylle dies in misery though, in my interpretation, Faustine finds liberation through death. However, while a heroine, such as Faustine, voices her consternation in the private sphere, she refrains from emancipatory activism. She is a conservative feminist.

Throughout the last two centuries, critics and scholars have claimed Hahn-Hahn, and in some instances Mühlbach, Aston and Lewald, as a German George Sand.26 Sand’s writing, as well as her

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25 This is reprinted from a German newspaper in the International Magazine of Literature, Art, and Sciences in June 1851. (“The Countess” 313)

26 In 1843 Jane Carlyle wrote to Jeannie Welsh: “She is a sort of a German George Sand” (Chambers 85); 1889 “Hahn-Hahn” (1018); 1904 Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie (718); in 1929 Keim compares Hahn-Hahn and Sand’s narratives and lives, and refers to contemporary critiques and literary historians who commonly juxtaposed the two writers (179-
controversial lifestyle, became the benchmark for unconventional German female writers. Yet even though Hahn-Hahn and Sand share a similar aristocratic background and literary success, their ideologies and texts subscribe to opposing political positions. Hahn-Hahn published her first collection of poems in 1835,27 and Gräfin Faustine was published in 1841. By this year Sand had already written twenty novels, *Indiana* (1832) and *Lélia* (1833) being the most popular.

Karl Gutzkow publicly proclaimed Sand’s work as: “das Genialste der neuer Poesie” (Möhrmann, *Andere* 49) (“the most ingenious of the newest poetry”), and similarly the Athenaeum’s Paris correspondent wrote in February 1844 that her work was that of a “genius” (Paris Correspondent 74). John Stuart Mill was “one of her earliest admirers in England” (Thomson 33) and Elizabeth Barrett Browning possessed “veneration [. . .] as large as a Welsh mountain” (43) for Sand. Significantly, Barrett Browning was also acquainted with Hahn-Hahn’s work. She wrote in reply to Robert Browning’s derogatory opinion of *Gräfin Faustine*: “But there is much beauty in Faustina—Oh, surely” (Chambers 85). Comparison between Sand and Hahn-Hahn may have been part of a public debate, for essayist and Faust translator, Abraham Hayward, wrote in the Edinburgh Review that the former possessed a greater genius than the latter (161). In contrast Meyer credits Hahn-Hahn as being a modernist:

Ihre [Hahn-Hahns] Psychologie ist sicher von George Sand beeinflusst; aber als Erste fand sie in der eigenen Seele jene erschütternde Wahrheit, die die moderne Poesie der Ibsen, Jacobsen, Maupassant and so vieler Anderer nicht müde ward, zu variiren: die traurige Erkenntniß von der Veränderlichkeit der Gefühle. (715)

Her [Hahn-Hahn’s] psychology is surely influenced by George Sand; but she was the first to find in her own soul that deeply moving truth, that the modern poetry of Ibsen, Jacobsen, Maupassant and so many others never tired to vary: the sad realisation of the changeability of feelings.

Ines Erna Schmid-Jürgens notes that Sand was “von Bedeutung” (“of importance”) (193) to Hahn-Hahn, while in 1929 Keim wrote a doctoral dissertation that examines Sand’s influence on Hahn-Hahn. A reprint from the *North British Review* in New York’s 1847 *Living Age* differentiates between Sand, who “lives too much in the external world,” and Hahn-Hahn, who has the “reflective and somewhat melancholy mind of the German woman” (*North British* 582). While both Hahn-Hahn and Sand strove for women’s emancipation, the different social strata to which they directed their endeavours divided what was in reality a common goal. Hahn-Hahn aspired to individual equality for an exclusively aristocratic heroine, who is a solitary figure in her upper-class

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180); 1930 Witt (77); in 1955 *Monatshefte* (Kober-Merzbach 28); 1975 Lüpke (3); and 1977 Möhrmann (*Andere* 85), to list a few.

surroundings. Sand, on the other hand, aspired to social change for all women including those less privileged in society. Thus Hahn-Hahn’s narratives reveal a liberally conservative feminism while Sand follows what was, to Hahn-Hahn, the antagonising socialist feminist strain with which she was confronted in France.

In her 1842 travelogue, *Erinnerungen aus und an Frankreich* (*Recollections from and about France*), Hahn-Hahn demonstrates her knowledge of French women’s industrial involvement. She observes with scepticism, and no doubt a level of ignorance concerning economic necessity, that French women are working in hotels, cafes, shops, workshops and “überall, überall!” (HH *EF* 1: 25) (“everywhere, everywhere”) and, apart from this overwhelming presence, they even aspire to electoral equality with men:

Wenn ich zuweilen die Emanzipations-Utopien lese, welche sich Frauen, vornehmlich Französinnen, für ihr Geschlecht entsinnen, wie es ebensogut wahl- und staatsdienstfähig und Gott weis was! sein soll als die Männer. (HH *EF* 1: 25-26)

When I at times read emancipatory utopias, which are conjured up by women, principally French women, for their gender according to which it [female gender] is as capable to vote and participate in matters of state and God knows what else! like men.

In a seeming paradox, Hahn-Hahn differentiates between the “utopian” aspirations towards equality of French women and those of her heroine Faustine, thus highlighting her inner support of social divisions. Her negativity about French novels may stem from the wars of liberation, different French and German cultural traditions, and from Hahn-Hahn’s aversion to democracy. While recognising the need to reform individual female roles, she is, because of her class distinction, “suspicious of the common crowd” (Kontje 13). It is understandable that as a member of the aristocracy she would feel the threat of losing her privileges with the implementation of democratic governance.

Ernest Bramstedt states that those authors who belonged to the aristocracy wrote under the unfavourable conditions of having their own class attacked due to political and social changes (291). “Education for all, democracy, and parliamentarism, were demands which the aristocracy disliked” (291). Hahn-Hahn unashamedly voices her abhorrence of democratic reform, a notion that Schmid-Jürgens aligns to the nationalistic characteristics of the Romantic Movement (36), and to the 1809 movement for nationalism, as advocated by the founder of the Turnbewegung (physical education movement), Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (*Duden Literatur* 295). Moreover the travel vignettes
in Jenseits der Berge (On The Other Side of the Mountains) reveal that Hahn-Hahn takes pride in being an aristocrat:

\[\text{denn ich bin eine gute Aristokratin, und weiß sehr wohl, daß der Liberalismus, unter dessen Banner und Agide der Mittelstand sich brüstet, weit weniger die Erhebung des Volkes, als die Erniedrigung des Adels zum Zweck, und die endliche Besitznahme von dessen Gebiet zum Ziel hat. (HH JB 1: 187)}\]

for I am a good aristocrat and know very well that liberalism, under whose banner the middle classes boast about themselves, has for its purpose not so much the elevation of the people as the humiliation of the aristocracy with the eventual seizure of their territories.

As an insightful political observer with strong monarchist leanings\(^{28}\) and in line with the German Romantic tradition, Hahn-Hahn further elaborates her anti-democratic sentiments to her mother in her Reisebriefe (Travelogues) of 5 April 1841, where she writes on the various social strata: “Mit der Gleichheitsstheorie macht man die Menschen elend, ja verrückt” (HH RB 1: 175) (“With this theory of equality people are made to feel miserable, even crazy”). Two days later she laments to her brother: “dem [Volk hat] man seinen alten Gott und seine alten Könige genommen—um ihm dafür nichts gegeben hat, als vage Ideen” (227) (“they took away the people’s old God and old kings in exchange for nothing but vague ideas”). And in a letter to a female friend she left no doubt about her feelings: “Ich hasse nun einmal die Demokratie aus [sic] Grund meiner Seele, weil Herrschaft der Masse nie Herrschaft der Tüchtigkeit sein kann” (Beyer 77) (“I really hate democracy from the bottom of my heart, because governance of the masses can never be competent governance”).

Hahn-Hahn’s views oppose in the main those of Sand, who expresses in her writing “a plea for democracy” (Thomson 19) and a longing “for social amelioration” (21). Sand’s characters, with leanings towards realism, are usually ordinary people and her criticism concerns the improvement of social conditions such as “laws, rules, and observances of all sorts” (Hayward 160). In 1839 the Monthly Chronicle published an article by Mazzini who pointed out “that she [Sand], like Goethe, is really attacking [. . .] the world of individualism and self-interest” (Thomson 18-19). This is in contrast to Hahn-Hahn’s world of writing, which prominently featured those two attributes.

\(^{28}\) She writes to her sister from Prague: “Doch königlich ist sie [Prague] wie keine in Deutschland, und das kommt daher, weil sie aus Zeiten stammt, wo das Königthum noch eine unangetastete Würde und gar keine Ähnlichkeit mit dem Zwitterzustand eines modernen Bürger-Königthums hatte. Alle Zwittergeschlechter sind der Fortpflanzung unfähig, das beruhigt mich ein wenig” (Reisebriefe 1: 3-4). (“But Prague is as royal as no other town in Germany and that is because Prague originates from a time in which the monarchy had unspoiled dignity and no resemblance with a bourgeois-monarchy. All hermaphrodites are unable to reproduce and that consoles me a little”).
The female heroines of Hahn-Hahn’s major works, *Gräfin Faustine*, *Sybille*, and *Ilda Schönholm* are living in a world of individualism and self-interest. These protagonists are concerned mainly with their own spiritual welfare. Theirs is both a cocooned and troubled upper-class existence devoid of involvement with social responsibilities or aspirations for the improvement of the common people’s conditions. This upper-class stance was noted by reviewers, as is evident in Hahn-Hahn’s response to journalistic accusations in her diary on 25 February 1845 that she does not write for the common people (Volk):

Wie kann man für etwas schreiben [das Volk], das man nicht kennt? Ich kenne nicht Bedürfnis, Denk- und Lebensweise des Handwerkers, Bauern oder Fabrikarbeiters. Ich habe nie in ihrer Sphäre gelebt, in ihrer Luft geathmet, in ihre Verhältnisse mich gründlich eingeweiht; und sich nur für sie interessieren heißt noch nicht sie kennen. (Schmid-Jürgens 79)

How can one write for something that one does not know? I do not know the needs, the thinking and the lifestyle of the working man, the farmer or the factory-worker. I have never lived in their sphere, breathed their air, familiarised myself thoroughly with their conditions, and to have an interest in them does not mean to know them.

This entry displays to a degree Hahn-Hahn’s elitist superciliousness or honesty on the one hand, and her lack of social interaction with the common people on the other. It is of little surprise that, as a proud aristocrat, her writing favours ancestral aristocratic governance while condemning the French Revolution. Hahn-Hahn opposed the establishment of a democracy, not only in defence of her creative output by modelling her aristocratic heroines on a milieu close to hers, but also as a justification of her own aristocratic existence and worldview. Some French novels that were written after the French Revolution advocated the abolition of the class to which Hahn-Hahn proudly belonged (“I am a model aristocrat”), and contravened all that she aspired to. For such novels to be written by a professional female rival, like Sand, may have added to her frustration. Yet while the “überaus selbstbewußte” (Borowka-Clausberg 17) (“extremely self-confident”) Hahn-Hahn was a staunch defendant of her aristocratic heritage, her social criticism and her unorthodox morality contravened the preaching of religious and state doctrine.

### 2.3.3 Reception

Between 1835 and 1850, reviews of Hahn-Hahn’s writing in German newspapers and magazines number, according to Munster, around one hundred (210-12), while Gert Oberembt enumerates over one hundred and fifty, including those of her post-conversion narratives (484-90). The problem of situating Hahn-Hahn in literary history may in part be due to the difficulty of including popular
fiction and women’s writing in a single genre, especially when new ideas and genres were introduced, and established forms not yet defined. Geiger refers to the divided reception of Hahn-Hahn’s works (Befreite 2).

Theodor Fontane accuses Hahn-Hahn of indulging in “obsessive emancipatory endeavours” (Geiger, Befreite 11). Mundt criticises her for missing the “essentials” (10). Barthel (11) and Sengle (12) bemoan her lack of “originality”, while Schmidt is generally “negative” (8). Menzel is more favourable in his review (12). Ironically, in spite of Hahn-Hahn’s aversion to French novels, Rudolf Gottschall critiques her “französierend” (435) style of writing but accredits her with “strokes of genius in the George Sand and Byronic tradition” (441). The American press ranges from unprofessional personal attacks on her appearance (“German” 531), to vague comparisons to George Sand (“Gossip” 379), and to references to “the famous Countess Hahn-Hahn as a type of the most interesting feminine individuals of the period” (“Culture” 442). Interestingly it expresses disapproval of her writing on the grounds of immorality as printed in 1847 in the United States Democratic Review: “From those books of hers [Hahn-Hahn] which we [editors] have read, we should not hesitate to pronounce their morality of at least a questionable tendency” (“Gossip” 379).

It would appear that the response of Hahn-Hahn’s contemporaries to her writing was either that of denigration or enthusiasm. The controversy surrounding Gräfin Faustine’s reception may account for some critical consternation, but may also contribute to the novel’s success. At a time when women were finding their own voices, Faustine, as the embodiment of the lone heroine, may have evoked sympathy and inspiration in the reader.29 Moreover the narrative depiction of the struggle of a woman, who not only lives outside conventional etiquette but also questions the established patriarchal social order, would have presented a defiance of the status quo.

Twentieth- and twentyfirst-century scholars are equally divided about the value of Hahn-Hahn’s literary works. In Otto Heller’s estimation she is “by virtue of her frankness . . . decidedly modern” (243). E.L. Stahl and W.E. Yuill compare Hahn-Hahn’s “freedom of feeling” (170) with that of the Young Germany movement. Eda Sagarra maintains that Hahn-Hahn holds a unique position in history (“Gegen” 111). According to the adage “all publicity is good publicity” (113) Hahn-Hahn determinedly created an outlet for her expressions of opinion with her scandalous novels in which she revealed, or seemed to reveal, her innermost thinking. She created notoriety as not every divorced German woman was accompanied by her “treuen Freund” (113) (“true friend”) to the Orient. Self-assured as a person, Hahn-Hahn supplied her provincial reading public with material that was eccentric and free. She integrated ‘real’ and topical themes that were discussed in upper middle-class circles and represented these with knowledge and confidence (117).

29 On 30 August 1845 the Living Age wrote: “The Germans think to bestow the highest praise on this lady (Countess Faustine personified in Countess Ida Hahn-Hahn) by saying that she writes as if she were talking to you” (“Lady” 436).
Herminghouse recommends a reassessment of Hahn-Hahn’s works in order to establish a feminist critique (“Seeing” 276). Rita Morrien appreciates Hahn-Hahn’s “radikalen Bruch mit dem in der Literatur des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts verbreiteten Typus der entsagungsbereiten und opferwilligen Heldin” (225) (“radical break with the common type of heroine in the literature of the 18th and 19th century, who is ready to renounce and willing to make sacrifices”). Doering attributes the sociological and feminist questioning that developed since the 1970’s with a rediscovery and intensified interest in Hahn-Hahn’s oeuvre (174).

Regarding a specific assessment of Gräfin Faustine Annemarie Taeger argues in her epilogue of this novel that this narrative is more than a historical curiosity, and that its analysis of subconscious emotional obstacles to female self-determination has outlasted the “äußeren Erfolge” (HH GF 264) (“superficial successes”) of the emancipation movement. Taeger categorises Gräfin Faustine as being socio-psychological (269). Christine Lehmann classifies this novel in the Young German literary tradition (82), noting that the text seems to vacillate between “romantic rapture and radical feminism” (81).

Helen Chambers values Hahn-Hahn’s depiction of “human behaviour and interaction” (86). While Chambers praises Hahn-Hahn’s analyses of the “ordinary human problems of the relationships of the self to the other, be that other accepted codes of behaviour, men or art” (87), she also argues for its acceptance into the literary canon “as a significant contribution to the German realist novel” (79), and draws parallels between the characters of Faustine and Effi Briest (87). Furthermore, Chambers sees the intentional ambiguity of Gräfin Faustine’s three narrative voices as a challenge to the “interpretative involvement of the reader” (83).

Anna Richards finds: “in fact it is Hahn-Hahn’s portrayal of love, and its link with illness and death, which make this novel [Gräfin Faustine] a largely progressive text” (Wasting 120). Dane draws attention to this novel’s depiction of accepted forced sexual relations in marriage that were at that time not recognised by society as a criminal act, and that, importantly, as a topic has thus far been overlooked by researcher (257-58).

The behaviour of Hahn-Hahn’s heroine, Faustine, may be seen as too self-indulgent and class conscious; however, the overall meaning of the text, that of a woman’s attempt for self-assertion, a right for individual freedom under the most unfavourable conditions, and an opposition to and questioning of inequitable social practices cannot be ignored. I argue that the narrative ambiguities of Gräfin Faustine effectively engage with a feminist ethos, as well as with those female readers who have similar concerns, be they notions of equality, emancipatory endeavour, social reflection, self-actualisation or other responses to social meaning and empowerment.
2.4 Luise Mühlbach

2.4.1 Life

Luise Mühlbach (1814-1873), pseudonym for Clara Mundt, nee Müller, was born in Neubrandenburg/Mecklenburg. The daughter of the Neubrandenburg lord mayor, Luise was “carefully educated” (Blackwell, “Muehlbach” 167). She was shaped by the discussions about literature and music that regularly took place in her parents’ salon, which was the cultural centre within the “Chinese wall” (Ebersberger 31) surrounding and separating Mecklenburg from the rest of the world. During one of these gatherings thirteen-year old Luise met twenty-two year old Hahn-Hahn, and both pledged to become writers: “und von Niemand in der Welt uns davon zurückhalten zu lassen” (Ebersberger 139) (“no-one in the world will be able to keep us back”). Luise sent her first literary manuscripts to Theodor Mundt, a Young German author whose liberal works were banned during a stage of particularly severe government censorship. After lengthy correspondence the two met and married in 1839, an arrangement that was not parentally contrived, and which was widely deemed to be happy (Möhrmann, Andere 61).

In Berlin Mühlbach was “politically engaged” (Tönnesen, “Überhaupt” 217). According to Judith E. Martin “liberal writers and critics” (“Oroonoko” 315) frequented her literary salon, this “Sammelpunkt der hervorragendsten Geister” (Lexikon, 83) (“meeting place of outstanding intellect”). In her salon “wurden Verbindungen von der Romantik bis zu den späteren Vertretern des bürgerlichen Realismus in der Literatur geknüpft. Alle literarischen Strömungen [. . . ] waren hier anzutreffen” (Wilhelmy-Dollinger 165) (“links had been established between the Romantic and the later representatives of the bourgeois realism in literature. One could encounter here all literary trends [. . . ] ”). Female writers such as Bettina von Arnim, Luise Aston (Edler, “Deutsche” 356), Ida von Hahn-Hahn and Fanny Lewald visited (Tönnesen, Vormärz 10). Mühlbach had social intercourse with the “höchsten Kreisen” (Kurth-Voigt 171) (“highest circles”). After the death of her husband in 1861, Mühlbach supported their two daughters entirely with her writing.

Mühlbach’s pro-democratic leanings were evident when she welcomed the 1848 Revolution and defended it against Hahn-Hahn, who considered revolutionary aspirations to be “Verbrechen und Nichtswürdigkeiten” (Ebersberger 166) (“crime and worthlessness”). Mühlbach did not agree with Hahn-Hahn’s attitude that the common people were “stupid and rough plebeians” (167). Indeed, after their political disagreement in 1849 when Hahn-Hahn condemned Mühlbach and her circle of friends for “following treacherous ideas” (167), their once cordial friendship dissolved and

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30 Mühlbach’s metaphor in her Recollections about the “politics of backward Mecklenburg-Strelitz” (Tatlock 55) and its cultural seclusion from the rest of the world. The Recollections were published in 1902 by her daughter Thea Ebersberger.

31 As a result of her connection to Graf Lehndorf, emperor Wilhelm I’s favourite, Mühlbach received in 1869 an invitation from the Khedive of Egypt to the opening ceremony of the Suez canal (Lexikon, 83).
the two writers did not see each other for many years. Their different political ideas about the ethos of democracy are shown in Gräfin Faustine and Aphra Behn.

### 2.4.2 Literary work

With Mundt’s encouragement, Mühlbach became “a successful and prolific author of social and historical novels, and travelogues” (Martin, Judith E., “Oroonoko” 315) with emancipatory tendencies (Tönnesen, Vormärz 1). Her novels contained “sozialkritische Ansätze, sprach[en] Probleme an wie freie Liebe, die Emanzipation der Frau und die Mißhandlung von Ehefrauen” (Wilhelmy-Dollinger 164) (“socially critical approaches, addressed problems such a free love, the emancipation of women and the ill-treatment of wives”). She “spotted a market for historical novels and successfully targeted her bourgeois readership” (Sagarra and Skrine 322). Mühlbach’s historical fiction reached a “height of popularity” (Kurth-Voigt and McClain 54) from the mid-nineteenth century until 1875.

Brent O. Peterson asks for recognition of the valuable contribution made by Mühlbach’s historical novels: “We overlook the influence and the challenge of historical fiction in today’s debates about representation, reality, and the nation at our peril” (“Historical” 64). In the preface to Old Fritz and the New Era Mühlbach expressed what she proposed to achieve by writing historical romances: “to bring forth from the silent studio of the scholar and to expose in the public market of life, for the common good, the great men and great deeds embalmed in history, and of which only the studious have hitherto enjoyed the monopoly” (1).

It may be argued that Mühlbach created an interest in history by fictionalising, dramatising and popularising it. While Peterson categorises over ten of Mühlbach’s works as social novels of the Young German movement, most of her oeuvre displays characteristics of the historical novel (“Luise” 206). Mühlbach’s works were translated into English and she had a considerable fan base in America (210). At times her novels exceeded Hahn-Hahn’s print run by a thousand, resulting in five thousand copies (207). According to Peterson, Mühlbach was “the single most popular German author” (“Historical” 50) between 1849 and 1888. For two years, both Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach vied closely for popularity amongst their readership.

Tönnesen credits Mühlbach with “extraordinary productivity” (Vormärz 2) (the most productive of Young German authors [Möhrmann, Andere 61]). Her modus operandi was like that of “a historian” (Kurth-Voigt and McClain 69), researching historical data, weaving it into her fiction, and quoting the sources copiously in footnotes. Lynne Tatlock lists her journalistic articles for the Austrian newspaper Neue Freie Presse (50) and for the New York Herald (61), and Peterson refers to her as a “publishing phenomenon” (Peterson, “Historical” 50). Scholars have not yet evaluated all of Mühlbach’s writing which, according to Tönnesen, has resulted in an absence of

32 In 1871 Mühlbach wrote travelogues from Egypt (Kosch 1399).
accurate bibliographic detail of her works (Vormärz 2). This contrasts with the more extensive scholarly studies of Hahn-Hahn and Lewald’s writing. While Conny Lausch-Jäger (65), Peterson (“Historical” 50), and McNicholl and Wilhelms (“Romane” 232) ascribe a literary output of two hundred and ninety novels, as well as numerous articles, to Mühlbach, in Tönnesen’s (Vormärz 2) and Lieselotte E. Kurth-Voigt’s and William McClain’s estimation “the total count would be slightly more than one hundred works” (53). This discrepancy seems to have occurred because Mühlbach had a tendency to rewrite her novels. One such example is Aphra Behn, which was published in 1849 and reprinted in a modified version in 1859 under the title of Karl der Zweite und sein Hof (Tönnesen, Vormärz 217) (Charles the Second and His Court).

Mühlbach’s novels involve a critique of arranged marriages, a demand for easier divorce, doubt about permanent love relationships, and a portrayal of the underprivileged in society (Möhrmann, Andere 62). Like Hahn-Hahn, some of Mühlbach’s heroines express strong notions of emancipatory endeavours though, as Möhrmann also points out, Mühlbach’s earlier novel Die Gattin (The Wife) (1839) promotes the “Status-quo-Moral” (67) of the wife’s silent suffering at the hand of her tyrannical husband. In Möhrmann’s evaluation Mühlbach’s narrative tendencies reveal a fluctuation between progressiveness and reaction (71). She is therefore not able to resolutely maintain a clear direction in her stance of emancipation, thus rendering her position ambivalent (79). However, the author’s progression into self-confident maturity is depicted in the 1849 edition of Aphra Behn. Perhaps the less critical and more conciliatory tone of her later novels can be attributed to being dependent, after the death of her husband in 1861, on the support of a broader readership and the good will of her critics and, with it, the income from her writing.

Möhrmann sees the reasons for the contradictory ideas of equality in Mühlbach’s and Hahn-Hahn’s novels partly in the fact that no social change occurred in Germany comparable to the French Revolution. Hence German women did not develop political solidarity (Andere 60-61). Möhrmann credits Mühlbach not only for portraying gender inequality but also—in contrast to Hahn-Hahn—class differences between the nobility and common people, the wealthy and the poor, the educated and the illiterate (72). From this perspective, in the two texts under discussion, the two writers epitomise on the one hand the women of the nobility, who focused on spiritual, personal and educational emancipation and on the other the women of the upper-middle class, who aspired to economic independence.

Various critics have compared George Sand not only to Hahn-Hahn, as discussed above, but also to Mühlbach. Robert Prutz refers to both writers as German representatives of the “Sandschen Ideen” (Möhrmann, Andere 164) (“Sand’s ideas”). The “Vizekönig” of Egypt announced in 1870 to the part-time Göttingen Professor and later Egyptian government official, Heinrich Brugsch, that “Madame Mulbaque,” the “German George Sand” (McClain and Kurth-Voigt 945), had been
invited to Cairo. Erich Edler draws attention to the influence of Sand’s “left” (Anfänge 13) persuasion on Mühlbach. These comparisons may be due to the tepid quality of the German revolution, as alluded to by Möhrmann above that through its lack of fervour fostered the adoption of George Sand as a role model for any writing opposing the status quo, as discussed above.

Mühlbach’s notion of emancipation runs like a leitmotif through the “unjustly neglected” (Martin, Judith E. “Luise” 586) three-volumed Aphra Behn novel. Möhrmann claims that Mühlbach’s protagonist, Aphra, arrives at a political awareness (Andere 82). Aphra’s confrontation with the Negroes leads to her questioning her privileged white position and her unreflective acceptance of the imperial politics of her government. As such, she rejects the monarchy, as it existed in Europe. This narrative theme has strong connotations in Mühlbach’s contemporary political milieu of the reign of Friedrich Wilhelm IV, the “prototype of monarch who refused to hear and see what the people demanded” (82). Revolutionary activism had reached its peak in certain circles, Mundt had been penalised for the criticism in his writing, when Mühlbach wrote this novel. As a result of the political upheaval, her determined and self-confident democratic leanings are reflected in her heroine, Aphra.

By depicting white Aphra as loving black Oronooko, Mühlbach resolutely rejected racism. Möhrmann elaborates further that in respectable society one could proclaim natural equality amongst all human beings and condemn racial discrimination in theory, but one could not apply it in practice (82). Möhrmann’s reasoning may explain why the historical Aphra Behn (1640-1689) depicts the hero of her same-named novel, Oroonoko, as without Negroid features and emphasises his Roman attributes, to make him more acceptable to English readers:

His Face was not of that brown rusty Black which most of that Nation are, but of perfect Ebony, or polished Jett. [ . . . ] His Nose was rising and Roman, instead of African and flat. His Mouth the finest shaped that could be seen; far from those great turn’d Lips, which are so natural to the rest of the Negroes. (AB O 8)

While Mühlbach also depicts Oronooko according to the beauty ideal of ancient history: “Belvederische[r] Apoll” whose delicate white marble was turned into “glänzendes Ebenholz” (LM AB I: 14) (“shining ebony”) by the burning sun, she does not overtly Europeanise him by denying him his African characteristics. Her expression of genuine solidarity for the colonised Oronooko and the oppressed blacks subverts a definitive Europeanising of an African race (Möhrmann, Andere 83).

This young heroine takes on the position of a woman and assumes a stance of fairness and self-assurance which never wavers, not even in her darkest hour: “Ich will mir selber meine Straße

33 Oroonoko is spelled differently: Mühlbach–Oronooko, and Behn–Oroonoko.
ziehen” (LM AB 1: 51) (“I want to find my own road”). Aphra realises that her mishaps are the result of social structures that do not allow individuality for women (Möhrmann, Andere 84). While Mühlbach’s narrative tendencies show that in the prevailing social climate the price of free love for most women was a place in the poor house (73), she dispels the cliché that women who strive for independence are morally inferior (69). This emancipatory tenet is clearly evident in Aphra Behn.

The historical Aphra Behn was a role model for Mühlbach because she actively participated in the political events of her time which found expression in her writing (Möhrmann, Andere 79). Both the factual Aphra Behn and Mühlbach had a preference for romantic action and melodramatic confrontation (81). They engaged in personal involvement on behalf of the underprivileged, and expressed an unreserved (as opposed to Hahn-Hahn’s measured) indignation in their critique of social conditions and the hypocrisy of the clergy (81). Möhrmann adds that any ideological inconsistencies are compensated by their graphic descriptions of milieu and circumstances. Moreover she considers the unreflective realism of the historical Aphra Behn to be closer to Mühlbach’s psychological outlook than George Sand’s more “artificial” (81) expression.

Thus Mühlbach created a new character with the timeless quality of “compassionate behaviour” (81). According to Judith E. Martin, “Mühlbach speaks her mind on female authorship, slavery, political reform, and the socio-political role of the artist” and “voices politically progressive views on [. . .] divorce and [. . .] corrupt monarchy” (“Luise” 586) through this heroine. While Möhrmann emphasises that: “[w]ith this novel [Aphra Behn] Mühlbach establishes a milestone in women’s emancipation” (Andere 84), Edler credits Mühlbach with being a “representative of women’s emancipation” (“Deutsche” 331). In Möhrmann’s evaluation, Aphra Behn is Mühlbach’s most significant work because it offers emancipatory “new territory” (Andere 79). Jeannine Blackwell suggests that this novel is “the epitome of 1848 women’s literature,” and recommends its reprint in German and “possibly translated in excerpt form in an anthology” (“Muehlbach” 168).

In addition to these scholars’ analyses, I concur with Tönnesen’s findings that: “Die Ereignisse der Märzrevolution werden in dem historischen Großroman Aphra Behn [. . .] reflektiert” (“Überhaupt” 235) (“The events of the March-Revolution are [. . .] reflected in this historical novel”). I suggest that Mühlbach’s determined effort to critique society (nineteenth-century German, disguised as seventeenth-century English society) and to draw attention to the exploitation not only of women, but also of other groups, anticipates some of Karl Marx’s social and political demands. Mühlbach’s satirical commentary on the widespread lethargic non-participation in the struggle of republicanism against the monarchy seeks to rouse the reader into a political awareness, and indeed a feminist consciousness-raising, if not activism. Her depiction of historical, economic
and social forces leans towards a socialist criticism, as well as showing the characteristics of advanced feminism.

2.4.3 Reception

According to Tönnesen, Mühlbach’s novels were reviewed in twenty-four German newspapers and magazines between 1838 and 1861 (Vormärz 247-48). In addition, reviews appeared in Britain and in the United States of America, amongst them the following American publications: Appleton’s Journal (Cooke 169-71), Old Guard (“The Publication” 714), New Englander and Yale Review (“Miss Mühlbach’s” 788), New Eclectic Magazine (“Louise” 188-90) and the New York Times on numerous occasions. Interestingly, the 1866 review of her novel Frederick the Great and His Court in the New York Times refers to “Herr” (“Mister”) Muehlbach as the author, concluding, “On the whole the story is one of the best historical novels lately published” (“Frederick” 2).

One of the reasons for the success of Mühlbach’s novels in America is “a growing fascination with the lives of European aristocracy and with Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon heritage” (Rainey 11). Another is the “aesthetic and social factors” (Kurth-Voigt and McClain 53) of her narrative. Her widespread appeal can be attributed to her portrayal of bourgeois characters who are faced with the social and economic challenges increasingly confronting those in “urban centres” (53), not only in Germany but also England and France.

Kurth-Voigt and McClain quote contemporary praise of Mühlbach’s narratives that varies from accounts of her “rare power of description and analysis,” her talent which “almost approaches genius” (64), and an enthusiasm that “no writer of historical fiction has secured so high a niche in the temple of fame” (65), to “very good light reading” (57). Möhrmann considers Mühlbach as being the only author amongst the Young Germans able to depict the underprivileged realistically (Andere 81). Tönnesen states: “Kontinuierlich übte Luise Mühlbach Kritik an der politischen Restauration und literarisierte die zentralen Ideen des Frühfeminismus” (“Überhaupt” 215) (“Luise Mühlbach continuously criticised the political restoration and put into literature the central ideas of early feminism”).

In contrast, Lydia Potts claims that critics accused Mühlbach of superficiality, profuse writing and “Phantasie-Luxus” (65). Unsurprisingly, Kurth-Voigt and McClain state that there was no “consensus on the artistic merits of her novels” (57). These varying reviews of Mühlbach’s writing indicate a controversy regarding the quality of her writing. In any event, Mühlbach had established a successful literary career by 1875, and, as Kurth-Voigt and McClain point out, was known internationally (58). In following Möhrmann’s, Tönnesen’s, Blackwell’s and Judith E. Martin’s evaluation of Aphra Behn, I propose that Mühlbach promotes in this novel feminist awareness by questioning the status quo of patriarchal institutional, social and personal authority.
Chapter 3  

Historical and Literary Background

3.1 Historical background

3.1.1 Social situation

At the beginning of the eighteenth century women were, to a degree, idealised for being ‘learned’, but this idealisation declined during that century (Nikisch 389) when women were relegated to the private sphere. There they were allowed epistolary writing, a private medium in which they excelled and which, in the main, did not impinge on men’s public territory (389). The three “K’s”: “Kirche, Küche, Kinder” (Sagarra and Skrine 157) (“church, kitchen, children”), signified the domain to which women were designated. In this environment men were “active, creative, powerful, superior public people” and women were “passive, imitative, submissive, inferior, domestic creatures” (Stimpson XVI), destined to ‘women’s work’ that did not make allowance for education. This doctrine is epitomised in Lucian Hölscher’s finding whereby in 1789 a lady from the upper classes claimed that education was a threat to marriage, “especially in its utility for a critique on religion” (40). After all, the apophthegm of the time for girls was: “You must be pious and chaste” (41).

Nor surprisingly, this servility influenced women, who had traditionally been denied access to “intellectual discourse” (Lerner 7). While men were able to gain an education and engage in (what Gerda Lerner ironically qualifies as) “cultural prodding” (11), women were excluded from this pursuit. Young women from the upper classes, whose main objective was to marry prosperously, attained a very basic education that ended before they reached their fourteenth birthday (Stimpson XVI). This is how Hahn-Hahn, Mühlbach and Lewald were educated.35 Women were underprivileged and had been in a rather fragile position since the Middle Ages when they were the focus of persecution and annihilation.36

Silvia Bovenschen describes the systematic annihilation of women’s Self as being a reduction to the status of those belonging to obscure sects or seeking asylum (21). Goetzinger points out that Louise Dittmar considered the self-depiction of women in novels to be similar—an attempt for the emancipation of an other, a hitherto excluded group from public life (104). Weigel suggests that unlike other excluded and marginalised groups, such as colonised peoples, who have a memory of

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34 Lewald, a brilliant student, bemoaned that while her brothers were able to continue with their education after their fourteenth birthday, she was refused this privilege (Diethe 81).
35 It was not until 1896 that German universities opened their doors to women, and even then not all professors allowed women into their lectures (Bithell 321).
36 The age of the witch-hunt spanned more than four hundred years from the fourteenth century onwards. Women were considered to be witches because they “represented a political, religious and sexual threat to the Protestant and Catholic churches alike, as well as to the state” (Ehrenreich and English, Witches 23). Any woman, who had knowledge of herbs or healing, possessed any talent or, indeed, were simply women, were subject to being accused of witchcraft. In Germany the last witch was executed in 1775, and towards the end of that century almost all opposition by women had been broken (Bächle 2.2).
their own history: “Sie [Frauen] haben keine Erinnerung an eine unabhängig vom Patriarchen/Kolonisator lebendige Existenzweise” (“Schielande” 87) (“They [women] have no collective memory of a mode of existence that was independent of patriarch/coloniser”). Women co-existed with men in a subjugated manner. Weigel concedes that thus far only very few traces of an equal relationship between men and women exist (87). 37

The novels Gräfin Faustine and Aphra Behn depict the result of the heroines’ revolt to society’s systematic gender “subordination.” Here I adopt Offen’s argument that “subordination can be identified historically by examining laws, institutions, customs, and practices, whereas oppression connotes a highly subjective psychological response” (European 20). Even though the doctrine of men subordinating women was deeply entrenched, as evident in demographics and religious dogma, women started to demand equal rights. The early to mid-nineteenth century demographics of the fragmented German confederation consisted of: nobility (including the clergy), middle classes, and others. The emerging bourgeoisie (Bürgertum) consisted of upper class professional (Bildungsbürgertum), the economic (Wirtschaftsbürgertum) bourgeoisie, and the lower middle classes (petit bourgeoisie) (Kocka 501-502). The others consisted of the peasantry and unspecified groups, like servants, miners, day labourers, journeymen, actors, beggars and, lastly—women (since the latter were dependent on either father or husband) (Sagarra, Germany 47-48).

The churches had the disciplining function of mediating between the private and the public spheres (Adler 200). From the point of view of church dogma, which influenced the social and institutional power structures, and which forms a strong criticism of Mühlbach’s Aphra Behn, women were considered to be a “supernumerary bone of Adam” (Beauvoir 16).38 Women’s role was to nurture, and to “sexually and emotionally service men” (Lerner 8). The principal tenets in Northern Germany were Martin Luther’s hypotheses, as expressed in Weimarer Briefwechsel that women cannot control their sexual urges and that God created them for the purpose of keeping a man company and of bearing children.39

This dogma was challenged in mid-nineteenth century when industrialisation and the growth of bourgeois society paved the way for the liberation of women. During the 1840s women’s social activities occurred “sozusagen ‘im Geist der Zeit’” (Twellmann, Spiegel 12) (“so to speak ‘in the spirit of the time’”). Growing capitalism led to exploitation and the developing proletariat

37 One known cohabitation arrangement in which women may have enjoyed more autonomy than in Western society is that of some of the pre-colonised Australian Aboriginal societies. Aboriginal woman had “significant” standing alongside their men in a “collective, co-operative endeavour” to maintain their heritage (Berndt 37).

38 Interestingly, Toril Moi claims that thus far the English translation of Beauvoir’s 1949 The Second Sex is still lacking a scholarly replacement (Moi, “While” 1033).

39 “Goth hoth ihren [Weib] leib geschaffen, bei einem man zu sein, kinder tragen und zeihen, wie die worth klar und di geliedmas des leibs von goth selbs dorzu vor außweisen” (Luther 327) (“God created her [woman’s] body to keep a man company, to bear and bring up children, as the word clearly says, and the limbs of the body from God himself are made for”).
experienced suffering and helplessness. Exact data of women engaged in income earning activities is not available since the recording of statistical data only occurred in the 1850s (Lipp, “Fleißige” 25). But women began to work as cleaners and servants in households, as washing women in washing institutions, and as seamstresses in factories (26-28). Middle-class housewives launched themselves into the important role as consumers by buying instead of growing their daily food supplies. They became an “active” partner in the German politics of national economy (Kienitz 313).

While the economically strengthened middle-classes fought for more freedom and democracy, and for participation in political events, the lower classes protested, in the main against pay cuts and price increases (Wischermann 28). Bettina von Arnim voiced her social conscience by describing in her 1843 book *Dies Buch gehört dem König* (Twellmann, Spiegel 14) (“This book belongs to the King”) the misery of Berlin’s poor quarters. Because of mass communication like journals the public became aware of economic human struggles such as the Silesian weaver’s revolt in 1844. “Hungerrevolten, örtlich aufflackernde Unruhen, auch Streiks markieren eine neue ‘sozial Frage’, die vom Klassenkonflikt beherrscht war” (Wischermann 28) (“hunger revolts, local flare ups of unrest, also strikes mark a new ‘social question’ that is dominated by class conflict”). Women attended Katzenmusiken, they protested in “Brotkrawalle” in which they were often instrumental: “Ja, oft scheinen sie [Frauen] sogar der Motor solchen alltagsbezogenen Protesthandelns gewesen zu sein” (29) (“Yes, often they [women] even seem to have been the motor of such everyday occurring protest actions”).

Carola Lipp draws attention to the extraordinary public involvement of women during the *Vormärz* period (“Frauen” 272):

Obwohl sich Frauen einerseits durch die kulturellen Definitionen des Weiblichen auf “das häusliche Leben verwiesen” sahen, traten sie in der Revolution 1848/1849 und zum Teil schon vorher über die scheinbar einengenden traditionellen Rollen als Mütter und Gattinnen verstärkt in die Öffentlichkeit. Dieser immanente Widerspruch prägte letztlich alle Frauenaktivitäten in der Revolution. (297)

Even though women saw themselves on the one hand due to the cultural definitions of the feminine “relegated to domestic life,” they entered with added strength the public arena during the Revolution 1848/49, and in part already

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40 “Bei diesen Veranstaltungen zog eine ‘tobende Menge’ vor dem Haus des kritisierten Beamten, wo sie im Chor schrie, pfiff und lärmte [wie Katzenmusik] . . . ‘dem Schimpfen der Frauen [kam] geradezu rituelle Funktion [zu]’” (Wischermann 30-31) (“During these organisations a ‘raging crowd’ moved forward in front of the house of the criticised official, where they in a choir screamed, whistled and kicked up a fuss [like cat’s music] . . . ‘the scolding of the women [took] almost a ritual function’”).
before, over and above the apparently restricting traditional roles as mothers and wives. Ultimately this inherent contradiction shaped all women’s activities during the Revolution.

While women showed an active interest and participation in what was happening at that time, and girls also discovered their interest in the “world” (Cornelius 201), the female sex was very much aware that if they participated too much they offended the rules of “Bescheidenheit” (200) (“modesty”).

The educational debate in 1848 was divided between the conservatives, who fostered a traditional “Bildung des Gemüts” (195) (“education of ones disposition”), and the political enlightenment of women (195). Louise Otto argued for a system of equal educational opportunities for women that incorporated domestic duties. In contrast Louise Aston, like Rahel Varnhagen and Karoline Schlegel some years earlier, advocated an education that encouraged the “höhere Leben des Gedankens” (Goetzinger 92) (“enhanced life of thought”) for which they considered woman to be equally equipped and entitled. In spite of a social and political regime of subordination women’s engagement with liberal ideas led to concrete political and charitable action.

During the March events of the 1848 Revolution women looked after the injured, made bullets and even fought on the barricades or were involved in military action. Women attended the Paulskirche events and some, like Emma Herwegh, Amalie Struve, Johanna Kinkel, Mathilde Franziska Anneke accompanied their men into exile and actively supported their revolutionary activities from there (88). Apart from taking part in meetings, rallies and revolutionary celebrations, women worked in welfare organisations and established their own clubs (88).

Zwischen 1848 und 1850 bildete sich eine Vielzahl hauptsächlich demokratischer Fraueninitiativen, Vereine und Gruppen, die in einem engen Wechselverhältnis mit den politischen Organisationen und Aktivitäten der Männer standen. [. . .] die große Zahl der Vereine war meist Ausdruck der nationalen und demokratischen Gesinnung der Frauen. (Kuby 248)

Between 1848 and 1850 a multitude of mainly democratic women’s initiatives, associations and groups were formed that stood in close interaction with the political organisations and activities of men. [. . .] the great number of associations was usually an expression of the national and democratic conviction of the women.
Inspired by a demand for “happiness, unity, freedom and equality” (Lipp, “Vorword” 9) women founded many associations with various aims: charitable,\textsuperscript{41} democratic, educational and free-religious, their common political background was to create a milieu of opposition. Some associations, like the Deutschkatholiken, granted women equal rights and the right to vote (Lotz 242). This, however, posed a threat to traditional church and government and eventually the government ordered that the Deutschkatholiken were not allowed to vote while being members of the association. In the resulting dilemma many members left the Deutschkatholiken. Only the lower classes, who had no rights to vote anyway, retained their membership (242). The specifics of everyday life, the work and the needs of the lower classes, the variety of associations and women’s activism were closely interwoven with forms of political resistance (Lipp, “Vorwort” 11).

3.1.2 Political situation

Goetzinger suggests that women’s self-image and self-perception changed from approximately 1830 when different forms of their political activism can be observed (93). Margrit Twellmann nominates this to be the first year in which the “Frauenfrage” (Anfänge 45) (“women’s question”) appeared in a newer version to that raised in the late eighteenth century by Theodor von Hippel.\textsuperscript{42} Lipp claims that the hypothesis that women are being excluded from active social and political participation by the middle-class public during the pre-March period and the 1848/49 Revolution cannot be supported (“Frauen” 272).

Women contributed significantly towards the formation process of the middle classes of the time. They positively influenced revolutionary activities and in times of conflict supported political refugees, an act of charity, and an important political action which was a positive experience for her. Revolutionary meetings included social events and all major political meetings concluded with social dialogue and dances (Lipp, “Liebe” 354). Marriages of convenience were met with rejection and “Freie Gattenwahl” (357) (“free choice of spouse”) was understood to be an important right of women. The idea of women being complementary to men seemed to have moved briefly into the background (365).

While many women’s activities were based on economic action, be it the campaign to buy “German goods” or in 1849 the “milk boycott,” (Lipp, “Vorwort” 11), they displayed no “pacifism” (Lipp, “Liebe” 377) in their political activism. In contributing to the “armaments” (372) of the middle classes some, like the women of Württemberg, called other women to arms to form a female “Freicorps” (377). Reminiscent of Lysistrata others threatened to withhold love favours as a means of enforcing their political persuasion (375). The breakout of women from the family, their threat to

\textsuperscript{41} Already in 1832 Amalie Sieveking had founded the “Verein für die Armen- und Krankenpflege” (Twellmann, Spiegel 14) (“Association for the care of the poor and sick”).

\textsuperscript{42} Lawyer, essayist, author of humorous novels and governing mayor of Königsberg (Hippel XXX).
leave the domestic sphere, which represented the nucleus of the state, in order to enter the public sphere, undermined the whole social structure—the family and the state. The political woman became a symbol of social disorder (Sterr 186). Even though the scope of possible female activity was still restrictive, women were nonetheless enthusiastic (Goetzinger 88).

The diverse political and emotional involvement of the Vormärz women resulted in euphoria: “Die Revolution war verbunden mit einem heute nur schwer nachvollziehbaren Gefühlsüberschwang und einer euphorischen Form der Geschlechterbeziehung. Politische Befreiung und nationale Vereinigung wurden antizipiert in einer Befreiung der Emotion.” (Lipp “Liebe” 358) (“The Revolution was combined with a, today difficult to comprehend, flood of emotions and a euphoric kind of relationship between the sexes. Political liberation and national unity were anticipated with the liberation of the emotions”).

The police coined women’s political participation “demokratische Umtriebe” (Goetzinger 87) (“democratic intrigues”). In this policed climate the press and book restrictions that were implemented in 1819 continued and the persecution of female and male dissenters and censorship of outspoken publications prevailed. For example, in 1835 the then future husband of Mühlbach had his controversial novel Madonna banned in May (Butler 64), and in July his “Habilitierung” (“postdoctoral lecturing qualification”) (Wülfing 60) was denied at Berlin University due to the religious criticism in this narrative. Mundt’s persecution continued for years. In 1835 Karl Gutzkow was imprisoned for writing and publishing the “most exciting emancipatory” novel Wally, die Zweiflerin (Wally, the Sceptic) (Möhrmann, Andere 69).

The works of the exiled Heinrich Heine had also been prohibited and in 1841 Karl Marx lost his prospects of an academic career in philosophy in Berlin because of his involvement with the Young Hegelians (Wood 524). Contact with this group was scrutinised by police as they were considered to be extreme “literary figures” (Adler 198), and as “critical outsiders were classified as criminals” (203). In 1846 Louise Aston was expelled from Berlin, and remained in Hinckeldey’s, the chief of Berlin police, active “secret files” (198) because of her radical attitude towards bourgeois morality and her personal stance of love outside the confines of marriage (Treder 38). In the same year the authorities confiscated Louise Otto’s Schloß und Fabrik (McNicholl and Wilhelms, “Romane” 232). While Otto was considered to be a Christian, and a “courageous, patriotic German girl” (Adler 203-204), she was subject to persecution until 1858 (213).

43 In a letter dated 21.11.1837 Mundt pleaded with the Königlichen Hochpreislichen Ober-Censur Collegium: “Ich bin dazu gezwungen, im Auslande, drucken zu lassen, weil ich schon seit einem Jahre kein einziges Manuskript, auch das allerharmloseste, unverfänglichste und beziehungloseste nicht, durch die hiesige Censur habe bringen können, indem die Censur, unter die ich gestellt bin, mit einem völligen Verbot alles Schreibens gleichbedeutend ist.” (“I am forced to have [my work] printed in foreign countries, because for the past year I could not get a single manuscript, not even the most harmless, un-incriminating and unrelated one past the local censors, whose censorship, under which I am placed, is synonymous with a complete ban of all writing.”)
44 Bruno and Edgar Bauer, Edgar’s fiancé Mirabella, Max Stirner and Franz Buhl were members.
Mundt, Gutzkow and Heine were members of the Junges Deutschland movement, a group of writers who sought to implement liberal ideas in politics, religion and morality by beginning “to speak out against aristocratic abuses of power, to question the authority of the Church, and to express concern for the plight of the poor” (Kontje 138). Their philosophies were built on the Enlightenment, the catchwords “liberty, equality, fraternity” (Field 58) of the 1789 French Revolution, and the Young Hegelians’ ideology. And, as Peter Hasubek points out, a frequent theme in their writing was the emancipation of women (327). Even though Metternich and the powerful Prussian political authorities rebuked the Young Germans’ endeavour for change, as they feared that their writing would undermine the status quo and agitate for revolutionary activism (Draeger 70), the Young Germans remained active for a while.

G. Wallis Field in a broad sense credits the Young Germans for providing “the springboard for Karl Marx” (58). Through her husband’s association with the Young German movement Mühlbach “made the socioeconomic situation of women a topic worthy of literary representation” (Horstmann-Nash 579). Moreover her familiarity with Marx’s radical social ideology is, to a notable extent, reflected in the politics of Aphra Behn. Against the historical background of economic industrialisation, the growth of bourgeois society, ideological repression and political restriction, the activism of Vormärz women gained momentum. “Der Aufbruch der Frauen in der 48er Revolution war somit Teil der gesellschaftlichen Bewegung des 19. Jahrhunderts, die Lorenz von Stein auf den Begriff der ‘sozialen Bewegung’ gebracht hat” (Gerhard, “Über” 207) (“The awakening of the women of the ‘48 Revolution was consequently part of a 19th century movement in society, which Lorenz von Stein 46 accommodated under the concept of a ‘social movement’”). This initially socially motivated involvement became politically oriented when women, as part of a democratic movement, established their own newspapers and wrote novels in order to be heard as socially conscious women in a society that denies them equality (Goetzinger 88).

In the first half of the nineteenth century literature and journals developed into a broadcast of social and political meaning in the German states (Sterr 166). Around 1848 the women’s journal, according to Gerhard, was the most important document and mouthpiece of a political movement

45 Here the difference between the liberal aspirations of the Young Germans from those of the French Saint-Simonians is worth mentioning, since there is a tendency to conflate both. While the aims outwardly appear to be similar, the latter’s “emancipation of the flesh” concept differs from the femme libre of the more politically focused Young Germans (Anderson, Bonnie S., “Frauenemancipation” 3). The two movements (because of emerging liberal tendencies around 1830, have been confused “by the German feminists […] in the 1830s and ‘40s” (3-4). In regard to Hahn-Hahn, such comparisons must have been drawn early since one critic had pointed out that she does not demand the Saint Simonian “emancipation of the flesh” (Kober-Merzbach 29), and that her basic ideas do not comply with the oft-made comparison of her work to that of the “jungdeutsche Schule” (Allgemeine Deutsche 716). Meyers Konservations-Lexicon states that while Hahn-Hahn’s topics concern the aristocracy, they were in the main influenced by the views of the Young Germans and reflected modern French developments (“Hahn-Hahn” 1017). (This comparison is misleading since Hahn-Hahn was a staunch defender of the aristocracy, as discussed above, and since she was opposed to the democratic elements of both these movements).

46 Gerhard quotes L. von Stein’s Die Socialen Bewegungen der Gegenwart (1848) in a footnote.
for women (“Über” 199). In evidence of literary and journalistic meaning the journals and newspapers reveal information about the politics and philosophies of the women’s movement. They presuppose a notion of women being aware of the women’s question and women’s problems (Gerhard and Wischermann 268).

The politically active Vormärz women used this medium of mass communication to integrate politics with female agency (Sterr 170). They communicated in their own newspapers with other women’s organisations, they expressed their opinion about the Revolution and they sought donations for their charitable organisations (167). For example Mathilde Franziska Anneke published the Frauen-Zeitung (1848) (which could only be published twice, and whose third publication was confiscated). Louise Aston published Der Freischärler—Für Kunst und soziales Leben (1848) and Louise Dittmar printed Sociale Reform (1849). Louise Otto published the Frauen-Zeitung (1849) (which, in spite of persecution and press ban, she managed to circulate for the unusually long period of four years) as the first collecting vessel of women’s interests and voice of the women’s movement. In this paper, whose motto was: “Dem Reich der Freiheit werb’ ich Bürgerinnen” (Twelmann, Spiegel 4) (“For the realm of freedom I enlist female citizens”), Otto staked a political claim with her democratic endeavours to not forget women, the other half of the human race (Gerhard and Wischermann 269).

“Feminists” like Otto, Dittmar, Aston, Anneke and Mühlbach “argued for women’s economic, legal, educational, and political emancipation” (Stipa-Madland 448). Otto demanded a vote for women (Goetzinger 93) and Dittmar analysed political and social backgrounds (94). Aston expressed her activism in journalism and meetings as “Politintrigantin” (94) (“political agitator”), and criticised the prevailing position of women: “Sie [die Frau] ist Nichts, er [der Mann] ist Alles” (92) “She [the woman] is Nothing, he [the man] is Everything”). In the political context, the breakthrough into literature by women who voiced a social consciousness (Hahn-Hahn, Mühlbach and Lewald amongst others) happened at the same time as the strengthening of the democratic movement.

Goetzinger (96) draws attention to the number of fictional characters who articulate a female right to self-determination: Hahn-Hahn’s Faustine, Lewald’s Jenny and Mühlbach’s Aphra. This is another example of fiction depicting problematic issues that reality ignores and/or denies. In their publications committed women called upon other women to participate in writing so to create a society in which the ideas of freedom and equality are justly realised for men and women.

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47 Publishing by women had begun in the eighteenth century when Sophie La Roche in Pomona für Teutschlands Töchter (1783-84) and Marianne Ehrhard in Amaliens Erholungstunden. Teutschlands Töchtern geweiht illustrated in these journals the attempts by women to search for their new role in society (Brandes 4452-468).

48 Gertrud Bäumer considers Otto to be the “Begründerin der deutschen Frauenbewegung” (Twelmann, Anfänge 9) (“founder of the German women’s movement) (Twelmann quotes Bäumer’s Gestalt und Wandel.)
Helga Meise writes that already in the eighteenth century the popularity of the Frauenroman was perceived as a threat by males who were concerned that women might neglect their domestic domain, or worse, might aspire to a life outside the bounds of marriage (“Frauenroman” 447).

The fictional texts of the nineteenth-century Frauenroman comprised the “neue feministische Bewußtsein” (Goetzinger 96) (“new feminist consciousness”) of the journals and newspapers. The same themes, same arguments, same slogans occur in both genres. One issue close to the heart of the female Vormärz-publicists was the ruthless exploitation of female factory and home workers (94). With the rise of political awareness during the Revolution the feeling of euphoric sisterhood continued (96) and some women maintained a political tendency in their novels after 1848. Apart from Aston and Otto (Treder 28), women like Kathinka Zitz-Halein (1801-1877), Louise von Plönnies (1803-72) and Betty Paoli (1814-1894) were politically active and developed a political and social consciousness in their writing (37-38). Luise Hensel (1798-1876) challenged society by proposing a female cosmology that was totally independent of male influence (40). However, the spirit of euphoria was not to continue.

After the failure of the Revolution politically active women were left frustrated, chastised, cynical and ridiculed. In 1849 Otto laments in the Frauen-Zeitung that: “die Geschichte aller Zeiten, und die heutige ganz besonders, lehrt, daß diejenigen auch vergessen wurden, welche an sich selbst zu denken vergaßen” (Gerhard “Über” 200) (“history of all times, and the present in particular, teaches, that those, who forgot to think of themselves, were also forgotten”). Otto emphasises that the Vormärz women had to act in order to change their demeaning conditions, that only they could end their degraded existence (Goetzinger 88). (Holding women responsible for allowing men’s domination had been Hahn-Hahn’s contention in 1839, before twentieth century Beauvoir, Moi and Lerner as discussed below.)

The radical Eßlingen democrat Katharina Authenriet commented on 30th August 1849 in an open letter to the Neuen Zeit about the conservative triumph after the failure of the Revolution: “Was uns nicht vergönnt ist, werden unsere Kinder und Enkel siegreich fortführen, es ist genug, daß wir den Samen gestreut, die Zukunft mag die Früchte pflücken.” (Lipp, “Liebe” 379) (“What is not granted to us, our children and grandchildren will victoriously continue, it is sufficient that we have scattered the seed, the future may pick the fruits”). Astute women recognised that the family is an instrument for political education: “Wir Frauen aber wollen bis dahin unsere Söhne zur Freiheit

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49 Sophie La Roche pioneered the first German Frauenroman with Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim (Meise, “Frauenroman” 435). Henceforth a number of women published their writing (441-48): Maria Anna Sagar (1727-1805), Susanne Knab (1741-1792), Friederike Helen Unger (1741-1813), Eleonore Thons (1753-1807), Marianne Ehrmann (1755-1795), Therese Huber (1764-1829), Sophie Liebeskind (1765-1853) and Wilhelmine Karoline Wobeser (1769-1807) amongst others.
erziehen und zum glühenden Haß gegen jede Unterdrückung und rohe Gewalt” (379) (“But until then we women want to educate our sons towards freedom and with passionate hate against any kind of suppression and brute force”). Women knew that their good work and efforts would have to bear long-term results. Those who were still alive were to witness that the 1848 defeat of girls’ improved educational opportunities was not to last. The seed that had been planted with the establishment of the private “Töchterschulen” (Cornelius 203) (“schools for daughters”) in the early nineteenth century came into fruition in 1870 with the establishment of public higher education system.

The effect that the first women’s movement organisations and the women’s journals had on the various German states, and the fear engendered by it, is evident in the diverse reactions (Gerhard, “Über” 217-18). The “emancipated woman,” the “wild amazon” and the “horror image” of the woman who demanded political equality was now the subject of ridicule in caricatures (Sterr 186). More drastic was the prohibition after 1850 that women were not allowed to work as editors (Kraft 190). The journals and newspapers original content and intent were now replaced with cooking recipes, knitting patterns and stories about marriage and family (Sterr 170). Women “were not even allowed to gather in public” (Kraft 190), nor were they permitted to participate in associations that discussed “political subjects” (Drewitz 144). This law remained in force in Prussia until 1908 (Gerhard, “Über” 218).

3.1.3 German Feminism

As is evident despite a historical climate of repression, supportive voices for the feminist German cause surfaced. In 1792 von Hippel published Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Weiber (On Improving the Civil Status of Women), in which he advocates equal rights. Hippel even suggests, “Auch der beste Mann ist neidisch auf große Eigenschaften seines Weibes, die ihm gefährlich werden können” (Hippel 102) (“Even the best man is envious of his wife’s great qualities, that could become a threat to him”). Highlighting women’s supreme qualities, Hippel published this work anonymously, Robin Schott refers to Hippel as “the only feminist German man of his time” (276). New influences from abroad also reached Germany.

In 1793 the German translation of Mary Wollstonecraft’s A Vindication of the Rights of Woman appeared (Hippel IX). Timothy Sellner suggests that the works of Hippel and Wollstonecraft complement each other, and together comprise “the first truly complete manifesto of feminism” (22). Hippel, like Hahn-Hahn, Beauvoir, Storkey and Dolby, as noted below, blamed women’s inferior position on social conditioning which Lange and Bäumer assess as: “life style, customs and conventions” (10). By questioning whether “the oppression of women is the cause of all the rest of the oppression in the world” (Sellner 188), Hippel appeals to the insight of educated men to improve the situation of women—by contrast Wollstonecraft petitions women to gather in
solidarity (Hippel XXXVI). Yet only a minority would have been aware of both these works, one contributing factor being that writings seen as “inflammatory or seditious” (Sellner 40) were banned by local censors.

While men can be and are feminists, most feminists are women and their goal is the achievement of a complete humanity that is free of pre-existing male dominance, and that is imbued with an equal rebalancing of social, economic and political power. As discussed the first German women’s movement was a social movement that developed into a political movement during the Vormärz period (Wischermann 7). The women of the Vormärz fulfilled an important role towards establishing a fairer society with their demand for freedom and equality. Their political publishing worked towards creating a significant shift in women’s awareness, thinking and level of activism. Möhrmann (Frauenemanzipation 3) dates the beginning of women’s emancipation in the decade before 1848, while Gerhard nominates 1848 (“Über” 196). Women presented to a greater public the serious shortcomings concerning the inequity of women in the form of lectures and newspaper articles (Möhrmann, Frauenemanzipation 10) and they expressed their opinion also in pamphlets, poems and novels (Goetzinger 87).

An explicit feminist theme developed in the first half of the nineteenth century. In today’s view, this can be considered to be a preliminary stage in the formation of the organised women’s movement half a century later (Goetzinger 95). Generally there was a more radical element involved than the restricted and tamed semantics of the later women’s movement. The early feminist publications were based on an assumed equality of the sexes that negotiates a new image of women to that of the suppressed women. Goetzinger poses the question (95), could what became legally recoverable in the objective argumentative language of the mass communication also be redeemed in fiction. I believe the examples above provide evidence for an affirmative answer.

According to Möhrmann two distinct directions emerge in the early stages of women’s emancipation (Frauenemanzipation 11). The first is voiced by those who see marriage as woman’s vocation and who plead only in the case of a woman being unmarried, for female employment. As noted, authors such as Lewald, Otto and Malvida von Meysenbug (1816-1903) are amongst the most prominent proponents of this movement. The second are those who consider the institution of marriage to be a shackle that serves only to suppress women more effectively. Anneke, Aston and Hahn-Hahn are representatives of this movement. Aston and Anneke’s writing in particular reveals ideas of emancipation that could today be catch-phrased as “feministisch” (Möhrmann, Frauenemanzipation 12).

For Aston “women’s emancipation was, in the first analysis, emancipation of the whole person, regardless of sex” (Adler 202). Based on my interpretation of Aphra Behn I would suggest that that writing phase of its author belongs to the latter group. Tönnesen suggests:
Mühlbachs Heldinnen sind Ausnahmepersönlichkeiten, die wegen ihrer Opposition zur traditionellen Frauenrolle in eine Lebenskrise geraten—die zentralen Ideen des zeitgenössischen Frühfeminismus kristallisieren sich heraus. Dies sind im wesentlichen die Forderung nach der rechtlichen Gleichstellung der Frau und das Postulat verbesserter Erziehungs- und Bildungsmöglichkeiten. ("Überhaupt" 230)

Mühlbach’s heroines are exceptional personalities who, due to their opposition to traditional women’s roles, are caught in a life crisis—the central ideas of contemporary early feminism become evident. This is fundamentally the demand for both, women’s equal rights in law, and improved educational and professional opportunities.

Möhrmann also considers Mühlbach to be fundamentally emancipated (Frauenemanzipation 232). Despite the two groups’ divergence, overall the authors discussed in this thesis significantly contributed to the betterment of women’s fate: “Doch bleibt es das Verdienst der Vormärzauthorinnen, eine erste Bresche geschlagen zu haben in das Dickicht der herrschenden weiblichen Misere” (12) (“All the same it remains a credit to the Vormärz-authors to have, as the first, given their backing to cut into the thicket of prevailing female misery”).

The feminist movement is often described in waves; so far history has recorded three. Waves claim some ground in a crash only to lose some in its recoil. Using this analogy it is not surprising that the ground work and determined radicalism of the Vormärz authors, like the foray of a wave and its withdrawal before the next crash, became more subdued in the second half of the nineteenth century before the explosion of the next wave of feminist action in 1896. This recession is evident in a declaration of the Verein zur Förderung der Erwebstätigkeit des weiblichen Geschlechts (Association for the Promotion of Gainful Employment for the Female Sex) which was formed in Berlin in 1866. The association’s dual aims were cultivating female employment away from the domestic sphere, and to encourage professional trade education (Drewitz 145). Perplexingly, in spite of these progressive targets, its committee maintained a very restrictive view of emancipation.

Indeed the overt stance that Mühlbach advocates in Aphra Behn, for women to claim responsibility for their lives, does seem utopian considering that fifteen years later this association advocated:

> War wir nicht wollen und niemals, auch nicht in noch so fernen Jahrhunderten wünschen und bezwecken, ist die politische Emancipation und Gleichberechtigung der Frauen. [. . .] Der alte Satz der christlichen Kirche
‘mulier taceat in ecclesia’ gilt für alle Zeit nicht blos für die kirchliche, sondern auch für die politische Gemeinde. (Obschernitzki 2)

What we do not want and never, not even in far away centuries, wish and aim for, is the political emancipation and equality of women. [...] The old tenet of the Christian church ‘mulier taceat in ecclesia’ [woman should be silent in church] still applies for all times not only for the clerical, but also for the political community.

While many factors contributed to and caused inequitable conditions for women, one seemed to be a continuing matriarchal powerbase that complements patriarchy and that opposed emancipation. Here I refer to the cyclical historical role in which a young girl is indoctrinated to obediently follow her parentally and socially predetermined role as an accommodating wife. In her subsequent position as mother, she functioned as an important channel in ensuring the continuation of future patriarchy through her male offspring. Having produced an important cog, “an heir and a spare” (Johnston 8), in the wheel of patriarchy she maintained her powerbase and could bask in the glory of her achievements. Since any feminist endeavour unbalanced her matriarchal function threateningly, she was opposed to the liberation of women and gender equality, and thus sustained the status quo in cohort with, and with the vested interest and blessing of, the patriarchs.

Hahn-Hahn’s matriarchal characters Frau von Stein and Faustine’s twin sister, Adele, in Gräfin Faustine exemplify this function of ensuring that the structure of oppressive masculinity and suppressed femininity is maintained within the accepted social, political and legal framework, in a similar manner to the aims of the above association founded in 1866. The ostensibly puzzling message of that association to their female members runs in tandem to Adele’s and Frau von Stein’s stance of upholding patriarchy for their own matriarchal survival. Were they to “cease to reproduce the power mechanisms” (Moi, “Appropriating” 1032) and support feminist activism for emancipation and gender equality, they would reduce and lose their own powerful positions in society. This may also explain the lack of a concerted effort for women’s solidarity in achieving equality.51

Hahn-Hahn’s embryonic ethos of feminism is reflected in Gräfin Faustine’s first narrator who, albeit in third person, foreshadows women’s potential release from patriarchal subordination, not as a wave but as a volcanic emission:

50 Nietzsche was to concur unambiguously with this Christian tenet in his book Beyond Good and Evil, published in 1886, by adding to the above, “woman should be silent in church”: “mulier taceat de muliere!” (164) (“woman should be silent about woman”).

51 It took the German abortion paragraph 218 in the 1960s and 70s to powerfully unite some groups of women (Novero 155).
Sie [Faustine] schloß Andlau mit jener Kraft in die Arme, welche den Mann schauern macht, weil er darin die Herrschaft der Seele über den Körper wahrnimmt. Er ist von Kindheit auf gewöhnt, dessen Kräfte zu üben, er führt die Waffen, er theilt die Wellen, er bändigt die Pferde; Ernst und Scherz, eiserne Nothwendigkeit und fröhliche Erholung machen ihn stark. Neigung, Gewohnheit, Erziehung machen heutzutage aus der Frau ein gebrechliches Wesen; aber man stelle sie mit einer Leidenschaft dem Manne gegenüber, und er wird zittern—so wie man beim Erdbeben zittert. (HH GF 74-75)

She [Faustine] embraced Andlau with a force that makes a man shudder, as he perceives in this the power of the soul over the body. He [the man] is used since childhood to exercise its strengths, he carries the weapons, he cleaves the waves, he tames the horses; earnestness and jest, stern necessity and cheerful recreation make him strong. Inclination, habit, upbringing make these days a fragile being out of women; but were passion to ignite her [woman] and confront her with a man, he will tremble—as one trembles when confronted with an earthquake.

This female narrator draws attention to the social conditioning of women as fragile beings and, in Faustine’s case, a sexually frustrated being. However, like the underlying bubbling lava, if women’s passion is aroused (in other words, if she is driven into action, like Hélène Cixous’s prediction of an “explosive” and utter destruction when the “repressed” [886] of society arise), and were she to lose control over her temper, or arise to resistance, the ensuing eruption will make the earth tremble. Cixous’s poetic passage predicts a looming, explosive emancipatory eruption; here the outpouring is not suggestive, but a warning to be aware of the dormant lava (emancipatory struggle) before it erupts to claim that to which women are rightfully entitled—equality. Thus Hahn-Hahn’s narrator forecasts a romanticised rebellion and a modern notion of a liberated, or perhaps radical, feminism. Interestingly, her volcanic metaphor for women’s activism predates Cixous’s contemporary image which talks of “a force never yet unleashed” (886) in a manifesto-like text. Offen also employs a volcano metaphor for feminism when she writes:

in terms of eruptions, flows, fissures, molten lava [. . .], looking at feminism as a threatening and rather fluid form of discontent that repeatedly presses against (and, when the pressure is sufficiently intense, bursts through) weak spots in the sedimented layers of a patriarchal crust, the institutional veneer of organized societies. (European 25)

Feminism encompasses many forms. Nancy Cott points out that the “multifarious ways” of women’s protest against dominance throughout history cannot readily be “captured” in the “one
word—feminism” (809). Indeed, a single feminist theory does not exist. The diverse branches of feminism that incorporate liberal, moderate, conservative, material, domestic, relational, social, advanced, radical, extreme, political and socialist movements, to name but a few, are testimony to the varied ideologies present in the movement. Examples of these different theories include the conservatism of Hahn-Hahn and Lewald, and the more advanced feminism of Aston and Mühlbach. The restraint of Hahn-Hahn’s feminism can be seen in her reliance on a conservatism which, according to Anthony O’Hear, is defined as supporting traditional values, and the egoistical tendency with which one “develops [one’s] own little platoons” (157).

For one, this is evident in Faustine’s support of the generational and hierarchical structure of her aristocratic existence that precludes any interaction with or even acknowledgment of the lower classes. For the other, this tendency is evident in the accommodation of her individual decisions and freedom within these conservative traditions. Hahn-Hahn expresses sensitivity to centralised bureaucratic control in her criticism of established institutional traditions, like marriage and education, or authorities, like the military. Without missing out on the “decent drapery of life” (O’Hear 156), Faustine is able to live, due to her privileged status, unconventionally and enjoy emancipatory freedom. Thus her conservatism, to use O’Hear’s terminology, is depicted in her heroine as “neither an anarchist nor a laissez-faire liberal” (157), but as class-conscious. Faustine can proclaim the utterances of her own class’s inequity from a safe pedestal, from her “own little platoon.”

Similarly, the conservatism of Lewald’s Jenny is evident in the heroine’s activism within the limits set by patriarchy. In contrast, Aphra actively petitions for the slaves in Surinam. To gain freedom from marriage, she takes risks but skilfully achieves her goal. This indicates a more advanced feminism. But whether the two writers’ strands of feminism were conservative or advanced, their feminist endeavours were voiced publicly. The heroines of Hahn-Hahn, Lewald, Mühlbach and Aston personify aspects of the various forms of feminism, be it the desire for personal emancipation (Faustine), the rejection of an arranged marriage (Jenny), aspiring for professional equality (Aphra) or daring to be “Superfrau” (Alice).

The union of all the diverse branches of feminism may occur when the “central dilemma” is resolved: the question of “whether feminism should press for egalitarian and even ‘androgynous’ solutions” or “build on existing differences between women and men” (Woolf X) in its endeavour for a non-discriminatory society. The differences between the activities of the various feminist movements may also cease to be of significance when women thinkers unite (Lerner 12), and when the unequivocal “commitment to justice for all” (Johnston 20), for ultimate equality and empowerment, is achieved. While feminists are still challenged by unsettled gender equality issues, their valuable contribution since the radical beginnings of the Vormärz period for the betterment of
education, childcare, health, working conditions, justice, economy and other opportunities for ‘the second sex’ and society, cannot be denied. Enormous achievements have been made, to which the *Vormärz* works of authors like Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach have made a significant contribution.

### 3.1.4 Institutional situation

Susanne Kord states that while in the early nineteenth century a woman was recognised as a “Bürgerfrau” (“woman of the middle classes”), she did not have “Bürgerrechte” (“civil rights”) and was thus not an equal “Bürgerin” (79) (“citizen”). Sagarra’s categorising of women with the unspecified groups of “others,” discussed above, aptly reflects the second rate citizen and demeaning position to which women were delegated by church, state and law.

Women, who dared to leave the domestic realm for the public sphere, threatened not only the family but also the state, the political woman became the symbol of social disorder (Sterr 186). Even though women like Dittmar and Otto argued for an immediate abolition of the “Geschlechtsvormundschaft” (Goetzinger 93) (“sexual guardianship”) in marriage, many contradictions are evident in the process of modernising the bourgeois law (Vogel 255) which encountered some hurdles (Möhrmann, *Andere* 27) not the least under the French influence of Rousseau (27).\footnote{On the one hand Rousseau fostered women’s self-confidence by accrediting them with emotions and even passion but on the other hand by confining women to these attributes he denied them access to other avenues. Early German Romanticism sought in women an “ebenbürtige Gefährtin” (Möhrmann, *Andere* 28) (“equal companion”) as depicted in Schlegel’s *Lucinde* (1799). This novel is representative of a new love concept, in which the young hero enters a satisfying relationship with a divorced woman. *Lucinde* was subject to criticism at a time when the popularity of the fourth edition of Wilhelmine von Wobeser’s *Elisa, oder das Weib wie es seyn sollte*, which praised the subdued domesticity of the heroine, was at its height (29). *Lucinde* represented the first public male encouragement for spiritual and sexual equality (29).}

Anthropologists assume that in “most societies and during most of human history, romantic love has not been the means by which spouses are selected” (“Marriage”). The selection of marital partners has taken place for political, monarchical, religious, economic, institutional, and other reasons. Marriage serves to unite communities and nations, it: “links different social groups through relations of affinity” (Bullock and Trombley 504). The powerful institutions of state and church have for centuries promoted, legitimised, sanctioned, and enforced the contractual agreement in marriage. Many religions still consider marriage to be a commitment to a spouse “till death do us part,” and seem to propose for the bride an ideal of “complete merging of ego and loss of separateness [. . .] and [. . .] individuality” (Maslow 157).

Wedding rituals follow the long established cultural custom whereby the bride gives up part of her identity, by assuming her bridegroom’s surname or by subsuming herself into her husband’s identity, and that of his family. In fairytale-like custom, marriages are celebrated in every stratum of society to uphold and enforce the customary self-denial demanded of the bride. For people “to have children out of wedlock without the blessing of the Church was thought to be sinful” (Singer, *How
The marriage contract creates a patriarchal family in line with social institutions. Apart from other reasons, marriage promotes the situation that one party, the husband, is responsible for the other, the wife, and any resultant offspring, since such a pact eases the church’s and state’s burden of social and economic responsibility. The exchange of women between families in marriage establishes this act of commodification.

In the nineteenth century, the desirability of virtuous German women as suitable wives was praised even in England. In 1799 a London book said: “To crown all, they [German women] generally become patterns of conjugal tenderness and fidelity” (Friend 114). These women were like merchandise whose function is to please: “in whatever can recommend them to the notice of mankind,” (113) devoid of a personal identity. The literary expression of such chaste ideals is demonstrated in the perils to which the heroine of Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela, Or, Virtue Rewarded* was subjected. Pamela’s model of virtue and integrity, or perhaps determination to get married, is an inspiration for Mr B.’s haughty sister and her surrounding circle of admiring friends. The didactic aspect of Pamela’s exemplary life serves to convince readers that the institution of marriage should be respected and maintained.

Some German popular fiction displays similar tenets. Wilhelmine von Wobeser cultivates the theme of men’s dominance over women in her immensely popular *Elisa oder das Weib wie es seyn sollte* (1795) (*Elisa, or the Wife as she ought to be*) (Möhrmann, Andere 22-3). Another popular example of that time is Margarete, in Goethe’s *Faust*, who loses her mind after being seduced and deserted. She kills her child, because of the shame and ostracism of her loss of chastity. A second example is the eponymous heroine of Johanna Schopenhauer’s novel *Gabriele*, who dies when her love as a married woman to a man other than her husband cannot be consummated. Cindy Brewer argues that Gabriele dies in “feminine resignation” and “submits, sacrifices and suffers all for the sake of duty” (181). This kind of literature serves two rather contradictory purposes. It idealises women’s demureness, their dependence on men, and the sacrosanct importance of marital vows, but it also examines the position of women.

Hahn-Hahn too depicts the virtues of female renunciation in her 1839 novel, *Der Rechte*. In a narrative strategy she engages the fictional Faustine to discuss the fictional characters Vinzenze and Ohlen of *Der Rechte*. Mengen debates Vinzenze’s spiritual attainment by means of immolation (GF HH GF 343) with Faustine. In *Der Rechte*, Herr von Ohlen loves Vinzenze. She is married to a much older man but sacrifices her love for Ohlen, as revealed in a letter she writes to him on her deathbed:

> Was will denn die Liebe, als das Geliebte beglücken und im Geben selig sein?
> Das muß’ ich opfern, und nur der weiß, wie schwer solch ein Opfer ist, der es gebracht hat. Aber ich mußte es, um mir selbst getreu, und die Vinzenze zu
bleiben, die Sie lieben: die Siegende. Darin liegt mein Glück, und glücklich muß der Mensch sein, durchaus! Jeder, wie ers versteht . . . (HH DR 257)

What does love want other than to delight the beloved and to be sanctified and blissful in giving? That I had to sacrifice, and only he who has made such a sacrifice knows how difficult it is. But I had to do it in order to remain true to myself and to be the Vinzenze whom you love: the victorious one. In that lies my happiness, and happy a human being has to be, absolutely! Each to her own . . .

The novel explores duty versus love in marriage. Vinzenze epitomises having made the “right” choice; she gains victory by denying happiness for the sake of duty. In spite of a potential legal tolerance with regard to divorce she honoured the patriarchal institution of marriage above her own sensitivity.

While a climate of political repression prevailed, Prussia was paradoxically the first state in Europe to introduce a more liberal divorce law. This was in 1794 the Allgemeine Landrecht (ALR), which “gab der Frau einen wesentlich größeren Handlungsspielraum (Möhrmann, Andere 26) (“gave the woman a significantly greater scope for action”). However, the Church adhered to a doctrine of: “Er-soll-dein-Herr-sein-Standpunkt” (26) (“He-shall-be-your-lord-point of view”). Ursula Vogel discusses the “radical confrontation” between the “liberal self-image” of bourgeois legal thought and the “institutional traditions of feudalism” that survived “virtually unchallenged” in Germany from the second half of the eighteenth century until the end of the nineteenth century (241). Referring to the Prussian Civil Code, Vogel notes that even though after 1807 certain liberalisations took place, such as the abolition of personal servitude, the land ownership feudalism, and the “integration of Jews and aliens into the legal community,” “the legal condition of women” remained unchanged (244).

Vogel points out that while there was a difference between the legal status of single and married women, both were considered to have a “natural weakness and [a] need for protection” (246). Unsurprisingly, being attributed with intrinsic weakness and sensuality disadvantaged women. Dane evaluates the legal position of women according to the ALR: “Der körperlichen Schwäche entsprächen mindere Seelenvermögen und geringere Fähigkeiten zu Verstandes- und Vernunfttätigkeiten. Zugleich ging man davon aus, daß die Frau mit einer ausgeprägteren Sinnlichkeit ausgestattet sei” (80) (“The physical weakness was supposed to correspond to lesser spiritual powers and lower capacity for intellectual and rational activities. At the same time it was presumed that the woman was endowed with a distinctive sensuality”).

While the ALR recognised rape as a punishable crime, separating the criminal act into being physical as opposed to being cerebral, it does not advance the victim’s right to justice. Considered
to be a “fleischliches Verbrechen” (Dane 74) (“crime of the flesh”) in contrast to a crime of “Geist” (“mind and intellect”) the act of rape is associated with being “human and sinful” (75). The gender polarity that considered men to be active and to engage the mind while women were passive and physical, disadvantaged women as the crime was considered to be one concerning ‘only’ the flesh. Even though the ARL prescribed distinct punishment for varying crimes of the ‘flesh’, rape in marriage was not amongst them. It only became a punishable offence in recent times.

The patriarchal marriage arrangement relegated women to a position which subjected her first as daughter and then as wife (Chew 303). As women in marriage were still subject to “Geschlechtsvormundschaft” (Vogel 246), their rights to equality lacked a legal foundation. Upon marriage the husband had a right to his wife’s property and to any earnings she received outside the home (248). A wife was “the subject of patriarchal and paternalist concerns” (249) and the rule “He shall be your lord” (250), as bemoaned in Gräfin Faustine and Aphra Behn prevailed.

While a new concept had developed in Europe since the second half of the eighteenth century that advocated marriage on the basis of mutual compatibility instead of convenience (Goetzinger 92), the institution of marriage was considered to be the “basic principle of civil order” (Taeger, Angela 20). As a small social unit, it mirrored in miniature the “ruler-subject relationship” (20) of the German states. Vogel compares some aspects of the married woman’s legal status to that of “minors under guardianship [...] it recalls the conditions of feudal dependence” (249). The parallels between women and serfs are evident. The prevailing institutional environment and the turbulence of the social and political events during the Vormärz period affected society as reflected in the reality of the literature by some women.

3.2 Literary background

3.2.1 Effect of the historical environment on women’s literature

According to Ulrike Prokop, from approximately 1750 onwards more women than men read non-academic writing (326). Eighteenth-century women’s writing was expressed in the form of poetry, epistolary writing, drama and the Frauenroman. Intellectual discussions took place in the private

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53 It was not until 1977 that the marriage law was reformed in Germany, and only then were women granted rights equal to those of men in marriage (Chew 304).
54 In 1790 Marianne Ehrmann advocated in her journal Amaliens Erholungsstunden that the family unit is the basis for the structure of the state: “Die Frauen sollen für ‘das Wohl der einzelnen Familie’ sorgen, denn ‘dieses ist die Grundlage des Staats’” (Brandes 464) (“Women should care for ‘the wellbeing of the individual family unit’, since ‘this forms the basis of the state’”). In 1849 Louise Dittmar compared the institution of marriage with the state in miniature: “Der Mann gleiche dem Patrizier, die Frau dem Plebejer” (Wischermann 86) (“Man is like the patrician, women like the plebeian”).
55 While in 1820 serfdom was abolished in Mecklenburg (Lee 79), the noblemen of Silesia maintained their feudal rights until 1848 (Clark 47).
56 Towards the end of the eighteenth century women very successfully expressed themselves in epistolary novels, practically the only writing activity “welche die ‘aufgeklärte’ Gesellschaft der Frau zubilligte” (Nickisch 408) (“which the ‘enlightened’ society allowed a woman”). By engaging the medium of letter writing women succeeded in the emotional and moral achievement of “literary emancipation” and in a contribution to the emancipatory development of
The complexity of establishing a concrete picture of writing women is in part due to the custom of using a pen-name or writing anonymously. To publish under a real name created a double bind. If a female author used her authentic name, she risked an attack on her gender identity. If she published anonymously, she denied significant spheres of her conception of self (Tebben 27). Using a pseudonym overcame the contradictory situation between “self-protection and self-expression” (Weigel, “Double” 67). To publish under a real name was not without risks and not all women or authors were consistently courageous enough to stand by their convictions openly.

For writers to critique traditional roles and gender segregation, without the protection of anonymity, could be an act fraught with repercussions. This occurred when Hahn-Hahn’s writing was the target of public criticism, as is evident in a literary review in the North British. To avoid public gaze, scrutiny and criticism some writers endeavoured to disguise their identity. Otto signed her articles in the Vaterlandsblättern and Vorwärts as Otto Stern, and Dittmar commenced her publishing in strictest secrecy of authorship. Clara Mundt used the pen-name Luise Mühlbach, Lewald published her first two novels anonymously and Hahn-Hahn’s first biographer was known as Marie Helene.

Pseudonyms or anonymity were not unusual at this time. Male writers like Hippel, Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, and Luther also followed this custom (Kord 16). Kord discusses this widespread phenomenon and cites many women writers in German-speaking countries who, between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, used pen-names (13). It is therefore difficult to ascertain the identity of some writers. Kord also points out that the custom of women adopting their husband’s name after marriage may exacerbate the problem of confirming female authorship. Nonetheless, a sufficient number of writing women maintained their identity and, since the 1830s, female writing developed into a professional activity (Goetzinger 88). Otto observed: “The political poetry awakened the German women” (102).
While eighteenth-century journals generally had strong moralistic leanings, one important function was the betterment of women’s education and a premise of gender equality. Another was the foreshadowing of woman as an equal intellectual partner, which in part predated the social reality (Brandes 455). This is an example where something that has not been implemented in actuality is forecast in literature. In popular literature women writers presented the reader with alternatives. Mühlbach, Hahn-Hahn, Lewald and Aston took a stand on concrete questions of their times. They declined the status quo of Metternich’s “Provenienz” (Möhrmann, Andere 1) (“provenance”) and instead fostered an “ideological interest” (2). Some of their writing retained value as “Signaturen der Nichtanpassung, als Dokumente progressiven Denkens, die als Leitkonzeptionen für ein humaneres gesellschaftliches Zusammenleben ihre Gültigkeit behalten” (2) (“signatures of non-assimilation, as documents of progressive thinking, that maintain their validity as a central idea for a more humane social life together”).

In the 1840s, for the first time, a number of writing women expressed with independence and self-confidence their own interests in literature (Möhrmann, Andere 3). However, in the multi-layered and divided era of the “Restaurationsepoche” (3) there was no unity amongst women. It is thus not surprising that women encountered negativity in the reception of their writing. Critics such as Barthel and Schmidt condone women’s writing as long as it remains feminine and “die Schranken, die seinem Geschlecht von Natur und Sitte gezogen sind, nicht überschreitet” (4) (“does not cross the barriers that are drawn by nature and custom”).

Women had voiced the social, political and legal concerns of their reality in the form of poetry. They expressed in poetry their secret desires, for example in 1800 Sophie Mereau had published the poem “Erinnerung und Phantasie” (31) (“Memory and Fantasy”) in which, like an imaginary place, wishes and dreams unfold that, which reality denies in life (31). Subconscious feelings and repressions can also be encountered as demons in many women’s poetry (36). Treder suggests: “Der Dämon vereinigt alles, was eine Frau, solange sie eine Dame war, sich nicht einzugestehen wagte: erotisches Verlangen, Sinnlichkeit, Leidenschaft” (36) (“The demon combines everything that a woman, as long as she is a lady, would not dare to confess: erotic desire, sensuality, passion”).

According to Treder, Annette von Droste-Hülshoff’s (1797-1848) “devotion to nature contains demonic traits that are foreign to the female lyric of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In her writing one often reads the demonic expressed as erotic repression” (36). It is my belief that Hahn-Hahn too alludes to erotic desire when she depicts the sexual frustration of her fictional

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60 The journals Die vernünftigen Tadlerinnen (The rational censors) (1724-25); Die Patriotinnen (1724), and Die Hofmeisterin (The mistress of ceremonies) (1755), depicted women in these title roles long before this became a reality (Brandes 455).
characters Faustine and Cunigunde. The novel’s concluding warning about Faustine being a demon (HH GF 368) corresponds with Treder’s theory which would assume Hahn-Hahn to be too ladylike to overtly “confess” Faustine’s erotic repression.

Due to the extraordinary expansion of women’s literary production the Frauenroman became a positive medium of mass communication (104). Meise suggests that: “Der Frauenroman ist ein literarischer Diskurs über die Verbesserung der Frau vor allen Forderungen nach Gleichberechtigung und Freiheit auch für die Frau” (“Politisierung” 56) (“The Frauenroman is a literary discourse about the improvement of women ahead of all demands for equality and freedom also for the woman”). The political paradigms in the Frauenroman can be decoded not only as covert metaphors for the traumatic situation of women they are also future oriented ciphers (Goetzinger 102). They contain, in part metaphorically, a draft of a new picture of women, which however, like the depiction of the feminist rebellion of the novels’ heroines, or feminist desire, often appears ambiguous and as brittle utopias (102). Lacking a traditional and solid foundation, women wrote as outsiders (103).

Women expressed themselves with several approaches in their writing. Goetzinger writes about writing women not being able to assert themselves as women, but being forced to maintain themselves as authors by creating characters that assert themselves. The other place for women is only contained implicitly in a utopia, only “schielend” (104) (“squinting”) as Weigel coined it, can it be recognised. Writing does become an act of liberation as: “[d]isguise in the form of literature gives protection as well as the chance to overstep the boundaries of the real and to postulate utopias” (Weigel, “Double” 67). “Within the fictional space of the plot, escape is imagined, resistance is tested, indignation formulated” (71).

Brinker-Gabler comments about the dual dilemma, whereby women’s writing was considered to be insignificant, or to belong to “a literature of their own” (Deutsche Erster 15), though Brinker determines the reality somewhere mid-way. Male critics felt on the one hand insecure that women impinged via their own literature on a male dominated social and political sphere (Goetzinger 86-87). On the other hand, men put women in their place by ridiculing their writing. As long as their writing was restricted to domestic affairs in a “romantic, honourable and demure” (87) manner, it was acceptable. Goetzinger points out that women, who wrote, posed a threat to patriarchal order by potentially cutting the bonds with their designated three “K’s” domain (87).

In spite of all these hurdles women contributed in an important manner to the history of novel writing before the emergence of poetic realism (104). “Es ist der Ausdruck einer offenen,

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61 Weigel’s German title “Der schielende Blick” is ambiguous. The footnote states that it can mean: “‘the cross-eyed gaze’, ‘the surreptitious gaze out of the corner of the eye’ or ‘the gaze directed in two divergent directions’” (“Double” 59).
inhomogenen Massengesellschaft, in der auch bis dahin unterdrückte Minoritäten ihre Artikulationsmöglichkeiten finden” (104) (“It is the expression of an open, non-homogenous mass society in which also hitherto suppressed minorities were able to find articulation possibilities”). In this way this era represents an important preliminary stage in the literature of the twentieth century (104).

3.2.2 Literary examples that reflect the historical milieu

A frequent theme in the writing of published novels by women during 1830-1848 is a desire for education, equality and less restrictive marital arrangements. The inability to achieve such a positive reality is at times expressed in the literary theme of the heroine’s self-destruction.

Goetzinger gives examples of how writing women expressed the restrictions of the historical milieu in a rebellious heroine (96-100). Lewald’s Jenny breaks off her engagement when her gentile fiancé insists on her Protestant baptism; for Jenny love is based on the axiom of equality (96). This act of female liberation may have motivated Möhrmann to nominate this protagonist as typically Young German (Andere 137). In contrast to Jenny, Clara follows conventions, buries her affection for Jenny’s brother, and enters a marriage of convenience (97). Aston’s protagonist Johanna saves her “better self” (97) by leaving her bankrupt husband instead of following his instructions to give herself to the prince for 10,000 Reichstaler. Aphra is probably the heroine who most fiercely rebels. Goetzinger refers to Aphra’s “utopian” (97) emancipatory attempt to free herself from the shackles of being married to Captain Behn. Behn epitomises the oppressive male attitude that enabled a husband to tyrannise his wife:


You are a woman, and as such your independence is annihilated and your freedom buried! The law protects my rights and because of the power of these laws you have to succumb to my will and submit to my authority!

Here Mühlbach depicts in an unambiguous manner Behn’s personal and social power over his wife. He bases his bias on her sex and on the institutional legal system that is endorsed by society. However, his lack of confidence is revealed in his recourse to the structure of the law in order to subdue his wife. Foucault discusses the precariousness of subordination that depends on society’s support. Instead of regarding power as “a structure,” “as an institution,” or “a mode of subjugation,” Foucault conceptualises it as a “multiplicity of force relations” (History 92), for one is reliant on the other; power is “a name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society”
(93) because it is, and comes, from everywhere. With his well-known phrase, “where there is power, there is resistance” (95), Foucault argues that subordination implies resistance for without resistance there is no power.

Aphra reacts to Behn’s imposed power by leaving the house, even though Behn’s orders are not to. Furthermore, she ingeniously plots her divorce where this option is denied to women. In Aphra’s case, the link that Foucault identifies between power and knowledge, a link already discussed by Louise Otto “Erkenntnis ist Macht”62 (“knowledge is power”), is evident in her ability to turn adversity to advantage, that is, she acquires the knowledge to extricate herself from the institutional power of a marriage contract, represented in Behn. Thus Aphra delegates the “force relation” from power to knowledge or intellectual skill, and uses it to her benefit.

Aphra’s positive activism is in contrast to the common people’s indifference, who, with their inactivity, enable the monarchy and clergy to determine their fate and to subjugate them. The majority of the population, unlike Aphra, do not resist, but due to their passivity, contribute to the power structure. In this sense Mühlbach’s Aphra Behn suggests an analogy between men and women, and the governing monarchy and the oppressed population. Through the character Aphra the above Foucauldian dictum is demonstrated (History 92). Mühlbach’s direct exposure to the political criticism of the Young Germans through her husband and his circle no doubt increased her perception of emerging social concepts.

Goetzinger points out another issue in this novel: Mühlbach’s critique of marriage is linked to a critique of bourgeois double morality, whereby in the case of adultery, this deed is accepted if performed by the husband but condemned if performed by the wife (98). On the one hand these fictional heroines offer alternatives to the traditional pattern of the patriarchal image of femininity. On the other hand, while the escape from the conventional role of women is demanded and discussed by the heroine, it is seldom executed even in fiction (98). Thus it can be observed, that most of these novels are marked by a double structure: the emancipatory endeavour of the heroine is contrasted with her failure: Faustine and Jenny self-destruct, and even Aphra experiences loneliness and embitterment as reward for her success as a celebrated writer (99).

According to Goetzinger, there is hardly one Frauenroman that depicts the picture of a liberated and happy woman, hardly a depiction of a feasible way to transformation of gender polarity (99). Disappointment, inconsequence, denial, and atonement often dominate the scene. The end of the novel points to uncertainty and grief, the outlook is dark and pessimistic. The heroines do not remain faithful to their own draft of action or they destroy them (99). The relationship with their men is ambivalent: on the one hand they suffer in marriage, on the other they cannot overcome the loss of the man. “Die selbstquälerischen und selbstzerstörerischen Romanschlüsse erscheinen dann

62 1851 edition of Frauen-Zeitung (Twellmann, Anfänge 60).
Geradezu als Reparation für die anfängliche Rebellion” (99) (“The self-tormenting and self-destructive novel endings appear then almost as reparation for the initial rebellion”). Goetzinger cites Regula Venske, who sees writing as a medium for Fanny Lewald to develop and take back liberties. In Lewald’s writing rebellion and conformity occur, and she formulates and disciplines phantasies of rebellion (99-100).

In Gräfin Faustine and Der Rechte Hahn-Hahn expresses a different kind of rebellion—the rebellion against the traditional portrayal of women through the male gaze that denies her due credit for her vital contribution to the history of human kind. Lerner suggests that the absence of recognised female historical recordings “is a manifestation of the basic limitations” (12) that have curtailed the development of women’s enhanced self-perception. Hahn-Hahn conveys historiographic masculine bias through Faustine who suggests that the fragmented historical depiction omits the important role that women performed in society:

> Uebrigens—da Männer die Geschichte schreiben, und da die Geschichte sich überhaupt mehr mit Darstellung der Thatsachen, als mit Entwicklung der Motive beschäftigt—kann niemand wissen, ob nicht, während ein Dutzend Männer auf der Lebensbühne agirt und tragirt, eine Frau im Souffleurkasten ihnen ihre Rolle vorspricht. (HH GF 146)

By the way—since men write history, and since on the whole, history is concerned more with the depiction of facts than with the development of motives—nobody is able to know whether a dozen men, who gesticulate and play tragic roles on life’s stage, are not taking their cues from a woman in the prompter’s box.

Faustine points out that men distort history by neglecting to give credit to women who stand beside them, as aptly expressed by Karin Hausen: “Frauen hat es in der Geschichte immer gegeben. Diese Aussage ist banal. Weniger banal, however, is the addition that women hardly occur in recorded history”). Yet towards the end of the eighteenth century, some, like the outspoken enlightened male, von Hippel, acknowledged women’s abilities: “Der Einfluß der Deutschen Weiber in Staatsgeschäfte war wichtig” (87) (“The influence of German women in state matters was important”).

While the aspirations for a new social order (and its consequences for women) were debated largely by privileged males, women attuned to their marginalised roles questioned the bias with which they were regarded by society. In the narrative Der Rechte, Hahn-Hahn’s character Catherine
bemoans this bias in dialogue with Mr von Ohlen. Commencing with Catherine’s statement as preamble to this significant passage, men’s domination is established:


[Catherine] Men invented the law; they are taught to interpret and apply it; it involuntarily works for their benefit. Naturally men are allowed to do Everything, know Everything, learn Everything. They sit in judgement and decide, just like God himself, over souls, and over life and death. They stand on the pulpit among the multitude, at the cradle and the grave of the individual, and they dispense heaven and hell. They defend the fatherland, they circumnavigate the world and we . . . we stand by as onlookers! Oh, I hate them!

In this passage, Hahn-Hahn ironically acknowledges and accusingly condemns male-instituted governance without yet challenging the status quo. Importantly, she blames women for allowing men to rule and to allow this subordination to happen. This kind of sentiment is sympathetically echoed by Simone de Beauvoir: “[I]f woman seems to be the inessential which never becomes the essential, it is because she fails herself to bring about this change” (19). Moi notes that Beauvoir did emphasise that “there can be no liberation until women themselves cease to reproduce the power mechanisms that confine them to their place” (“Appropriating” 1032).

Lerner observes that women paradoxically contributed to this ineffectiveness, for change can only occur through “the collective efforts of women” (12). In order to derive “woman-centred” (12) alternatives, women needed to engage with the texts of female philosophers like Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Astell and nineteenth-century Quaker feminists rather than debating “patriarchal values” (12) with male thinkers like Rousseau, Marx, Freud, Camus and Sartre. Lerner suggests that the early feminist analyses could have become more “woman-centred” by offering an alternative to the “basic mental constructs of patriarchal thought” (12). The women of the Vormärz had already courageously engaged in “woman-centred” activities and had prepared the foundation for the first official wave of feminism in the late nineteenth century. Interestingly, Mühlbach also proposes such a “woman-centred” alternative by describing an alliance between her female
protagonists Aphra, Barbara and Nelly. Through collective action they plan to avenge womanhood on men.

Hahn-Hahn also tenders an unusual proposal when the above quoted protagonist Catherine of her novel, Der Rechte, suggests a gender role reversal for the duration of three generations. Catherine does not want to remain an outsider, an “onlooker.” She is roused out of her resigned state when Herr von Ohlen responds with sarcasm to her sigh that women stand by as “onlookers”:

[Ohlen] “Weil sie Dinge thun, die den Frauen unmöglich sind? Wie ungerecht!”
[Catherine] “Unmöglich?—schickt die Mädchen auf die Universität, und die Knaben in die Nächschule und Küche: nach drei Generationen werdet ihr wissen, ob es unmöglich ist und was es heißt, die Unterdrückten sein”.
[Ohlen] “Also wenn ich zugeben könnte, daß eine solche Umwandlung der Natur durch Erziehung und Bildung hervorzubringen sei, so würden Sie zugeben, daß die Frauen ihre Oberherrschaft mißbrauchen würden?”
[Catherine] “Ganz gewiß, Herr von Ohlen! Sie haben alle Fähigkeiten der Männer.” (HH DR 278)

[Ohlen] “Because they [men] are doing things which are impossible to be accomplished by women? How unfair!”
[Catherine] “Impossible?—send girls to universities and boys to needlework courses and into the kitchen: three generations later you will know if it is impossible, and what it means to be the suppressed.”
[Ohlen] “Well, if I could admit that such a transformation of nature is possible by way of upbringing and education, would you admit that women would misuse their supremacy?”
[Catherine] “Most certainly, Herr von Ohlen! They possess all the capabilities of men.”

Hahn-Hahn’s protagonist Catherine propounds a sustained gender-role reversal to prove her premise that we are the product of institutional conditioning. Feminist anthropologists assert that: “sex roles and gender concepts must be seen as products of history and society, not as reflections of inherent human sexual natures” (Atkinson 245). Elaine Storkey proposes that disparity in “social relationships” is not based on anatomical reproductive differentiation but is “caused by what society does with those differences” (26). Beauvoir argued in 1949 that one is not born a woman but becomes one (Beauvoir 273).

This would suggest that, historically, Western civilisation conditions women to be identified as marginalised, and as ‘other.’ Nadine Dolby poses that identity is not intrinsic but instead is the
result of societal expectations. Notwithstanding its “fragile, mutable, and uncertain nature” (Felski 74), identity is formed through an “interaction” (Dolby 900) between individuals and their community. It is not a focal quality inherent in human beings for self and other are mutually relational standpoints that are established through contact with society (901). Broadly speaking, individuals in communities are categorised as ‘self’ or ‘other’ due to gender, race, religion, class, and so on. Here, excessive identification with certain categories can produce fanaticism and essentialism. Numerous historical incidents provide examples which show that obsessive affirmation of identity can lead “to the policing of identities and attempts to regulate and control the richly varied spectrum of human behaviours and desires” (Felski 76).

Hahn-Hahn’s narrative case for a societal conditioning through a sustained three-generation gender-role reversal is a theme depicted in varying and less drastic forms throughout Hahn-Hahn’s pre-conversion novels. In her travelogues from France, Hahn-Hahn even states boldly, no doubt light-heartedly, that women will only achieve their “Emanzipations-Utopien” (HH EF 1: 26) when men give birth to children: “trefft die Veranstaltung, daß statt Eurer die Männer ins Wochenbett kommen, und Ihr werdet gewiß Eure Pläne durchführen können . . . aber sonst nicht” (26) (“make the arrangement that instead of you, men bear the children, only then will you be able to carry out your plans . . . but not otherwise”).

For Hahn-Hahn, the medium of fiction is a vehicle to reflect and express her disagreement with the male-caused inequity that prevails throughout social and personal power relations. Through Catherine, Hahn-Hahn suggests that ambition and greed corrupt all human beings who are in power, regardless of their sex. Catherine makes no excuse for women and denies any perceived intrinsic difference between women and men. Most importantly, she states that society shapes women’s identity, conditions them for inferiority but, significantly, only as long as women consent to it. This is a well-known argument in discourses about gender: Dale Spender points out that the legacy of male dominance is the attempted continuation of masculine-indoctrinated ecclesiastical, political and social propaganda that can only be maintained by promoting a womanhood that is silenced (“Women” 24). By establishing feminist narrative voices that responded to the reality of life both Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach, and the Vormärz women broke this enforced silence and pointed out social inequities.

Another method of silencing women was categorising women as suffering from a mental disorder if they broke the boundaries of ‘normality’. Society chastised women for being rebellious if they did not obey male established social rules, as reflected in Gräfin Faustine’s plot. The male character, Feldern, accuses Cunigunde of suffering from madness, eccentricity or hysteria for breaking their engagement without any apparent reason. Significantly, the word hysteria is derived
from the Greek word for uterus (Ehrenreich and English, *Good* 125). In the 1840s, women’s unorthodox behaviour was subject to social scrutiny. Anna Richards observes that, from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century, “aspects of female behaviour out of keeping with society’s perception of femininity, such as hunger, sexual desire, intellectual work, or a refusal to submit to men, were pathologized. This is something of which Hahn-Hahn, ahead of her time, is aware” (*Wasting* 121), and which foreshadows her modern approach. The creators of the fictional characters Faustine and Aphra respond to some of the dilemmas and social attitudes that confronted mid-nineteenth-century women. In Hahn-Hahn’s case, the critics considered this to be a threat to the establishment, in Mühlbach’s the disguise of another era and location may have prevented such criticism.

Goetzinger highlights another aspect of the *Vormärz* women writers’ protest: “Das Protestpotential dieser Romane entsteht nicht dadurch, daß das Bild der emanzipierten Frau gestaltet wird, sondern indem das Scheitern des emanzipativen Anspruchs, des humanitären und sozialen Engagements oder der Liebe den Lesern Schmerzen bereitet” (100) (“The protest potential of these novels is not due to the creation of an emancipated woman, but due to the ability to evoke a feeling of pain in the reader for the failure of an emancipatory demand, for a humanitarian and social engagement, or for a love”). The air of lament that is often found at the conclusion of the novels has in Goetzinger’s opinion no connotations of resignation but it shows a perspective that is coupled with a typical kind of political activity of the novels (100). Even though many novels lack political involvement, the novels develop in varying degrees new, political interpretation about the position of women.

This happens often when women’s emancipation is placed “auf die Folie eines politischen Paradigmas” (Goetzinger 100) (“onto the folio of a political paradigm”). Goetzinger points to Mühlbach, who combines in *Aphra Behn* the women’s question with the slave question; and Otto, who shows how the position of the middle-class woman combines with the social question. Möhrmann refers to Aston, who depicts the degrading situation of women as well as the misery of the proletariat (*Andere* 143). Lewald describes her story about Jenny against the background of the political emancipation of the Jews (Goetzinger 100). While death and the failure of the heroines may bring pain in these novels, the appeal of the protagonist becomes evident through the hopeful ending of the novel, where the Jewish father and son stand at Jenny’s grave. Edward concludes:

63 ‘Hysteria,’ thought to belong to the field of gynaecology, was regarded as a nervous condition specific to women (Splett). Male doctors perfected ovariotomies (removal of the ovaries) as a treatment for women who were deemed to be hysterical. This medical procedure was practised towards the end of the nineteenth century by gynaecologists such as Alfred Hegar (1830-1914), Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902), who was also a representative of the “Degenerationslehre”, and Paul Flechsig (1847-1929), who was the director of the Leipzig University psychiatric clinic (Splett). Tatjana Splett credits Sigmund Freud as working towards the abolition of this practice.
“We want to live, in order to see a free future and an emancipation of our nation” (100). In each case the novel’s political paradigm becomes a substitute for the unutterable oppression of women (101). The illustration of women’s oppression through differing aspects assists in attaining a picture of how far women have travelled in the process of gaining equality in the last hundred and fifty years.
Chapter 4  Gräfin Faustine—Personal Non-Conformity

4.1 Introduction to the novel

The foreword to Gräfin Faustine, which Hahn-Hahn dedicated to Bystram, indicates that the novel’s second last draft was completed in February 1840. As mentioned previously, Gräfin Faustine was first published in 1841 and reprinted in 1842, 1845, and 1848, before being included in the 1851 edition of Hahn-Hahn’s pre-conversion narrative collection. The novel was translated into English under the title of Countess Faustina in 1844. A French version appeared first in 1864, and then in 1882 (Oberembt 482). Renewed interest resulted in a 1919 (Guntli 95) and 1986 reprint. Geiger doubts if Hahn-Hahn could have foreseen that the critique of patriarchy in her pre-conversion works would be the subject of scholarly debate more than one hundred and fifty years later (Befreite 366). She also points out that the far-sighted subtext of Hahn-Hahn has become evident today due to feminist reading strategies. Indeed Geiger refers to Hahn-Hahn as a “befreite Psyche” (Befreite ix) (“liberated psyche”).

In Gräfin Faustine I perceive four underlying subtextual themes which suggest Hahn-Hahn’s modern approach, or ‘feminist awakening’. The first theme is Faustine’s personal dilemma in her search for self-fulfilment. This involves having to make a choice between a non-sexual but harmoniously spiritual relationship with Andlau, and a phallocentric sexual marriage with Mengen. Second, lesbian torment is perceived in the character of Cunigunde, who enters a marriage with dour prospects, depicting an equally controversial theme. Third, the topic of marital rape, which is also portrayed in Aphra Behn, was a taboo. Juxtaposing Gräfin Faustine with Goethe’s epic Faust reveals, as my fourth theme, Hahn-Hahn’s feminist endeavour to illustrate her heroine’s liberation. Faust dominates, and leaves Margaret, who eventually contributes to his salvation. In Hahn-Hahn’s narrative Mengen initially dominates Faustine. She leaves but, contrary to Faust, who needs Margaret, Faustine does not need Mengen to find salvation.

Prominent in Gräfin Faustine is the protagonist’s search for self-fulfilment. Catherine Gimelli Martin describes the typical quest novel search as “fulfilment that will deliver [the self] from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality” (106). The heroine of Samuel Richardson’s “best seller” (Doody 7), Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded, exemplifies a type of quest which is motivated by resisting and protecting, a personal honour that has its origin in “a sense of duty” (106) and morality. Despite the anxiety caused by Mr B.’s lecherous harassment, the fifteen-year old servant, Pamela maintains her virtue, which is the basis and, to quote Martin, the reality, of her quest. She steadfastly defies his sexual advances by refusing to become his mistress even though Mr B. keeps her imprisoned for forty days at B.-Hall. She achieves her ultimate fulfilment when she becomes the legally married Mrs B., her honour remaining unblemished.
Faustine’s yearning stems from a desire for personal self-fulfilment and is not as socially defined as Pamela’s single-minded quest of protecting her virginity at all costs, and perhaps reforming Mr. B. as well. Instead, because of Faustine’s complexities, her yearning seems indeterminate and deviates from a conventional path. If, as in my interpretation, *Gräfin Faustine* depicts Faustine’s life journey as a search for self-fulfilment, then each step towards its achievement or failure can be regarded as a phase in this quest. As such, I identify five distinct phases in Faustine’s quest in life. The first is her marriage to Count Obernau. Her relationship with Andlau is the second, her marriage to Mengen the third, and her artistic expression the fourth. Lastly, Faustine’s entry into the convent and her subsequent death, which I interpret as symbolic liberation, is the fifth phase of her quest.

*Gräfin Faustine* has three narrators with differing viewpoints. The first narrator appears to be female due to the, at times, quixotic description of the heroine, the sardonic observations of the group of young men, and the warning to women never to pity men (HH GF 258). This narrator characterises not only the widowed young aristocratic artist, Countess Faustine, but also questions her actions in asides such as: “Hätte sie den Mut [. . .] gehabt” (256) (“Had she had the courage. . .”), in the possible scenario to end her courtship with Mengen. The second female voice is an unnamed Countess, who introduces Count Mengen as third narrator. His dominance is evident in remarks such as “Meinen Erziehungsprojecten zufolge . . .” (343) (“According to my educational projects . . .”), when he wants to shape Faustine into a being of his expectations. The Countess concludes the narrative by sending out a warning to men: “Frauen wie Faustine sind . . .” (368) (“Women like Faustine are . . .”). The narrative framework is interspersed with dialogues that are, in the main, introductory conversations and serve as a starting point for Faustine’s lengthy monologues, soliloquies, and letters.

Engaging three voices ingeniously deviates from a literary style of either first person and/or omniscient narration. This method enables Hahn-Hahn to present various points of view, which complement—and contradict—one another, without overtly imposing her own stance. It also allows her to compare and critically reflect upon a number of attitudes and approaches to life. The scope for purely emotional identification with any of the characters is limited, and the reader is challenged to engage intellectually with the text without diminishing the heroine’s importance. In my chapters four and five I discuss Faustine as introduced by the first narrator. Chapter four ends with Faustine’s relationship with Clemens. Chapter five concludes with an analysis of social norms to discern Faustine’s non-conformity. In chapter six I discuss Mengen’s marriage proposal and follow events after Faustine’s death from the perspectives of the Countess as second, and Mengen as third, narrative voices.
There are three foci in each of my *Gräfin Faustine* chapters. The first focus in chapter four discusses the carefree chauvinistic disposition of a group of young men that exemplify the masculine attitude towards Faustine’s extraordinary position in society. The social compliance of Faustine’s sister, Adele, and other female characters shows Faustine as incongruous and isolated in a milieu of complaisance. Her misplacement culminates in a personal power conflict with her patriarchal brother-in-law, Walldorf. Here, Faustine reveals, in an accusatory manner, her defiance of masculine society. The relevance to Goethe’s character Faust is discussed. The second focus is the arrangement with her partner Andlau, which creates awareness of the existence of a harmonious but unconventional alternative to an otherwise socially-prescribed marriage. The relationship also depicts the second of the five phases of Faustine’s quest (her first being her unhappy marriage to Obernau). The complex liaison with Andlau is highlighted. In my interpretation Andlau, as non-sexual partner, causes Faustine’s sexual frustration. This topic is rarely depicted in nineteenth-century literature and its innuendo adds credence to the progressive approach of the author. The third focus is Faustine’s friendship with Clemens (Walldorf’s brother), a personality, not unlike hers, who is non-conformist in society. Clemens’s misreading of Faustine’s feeling for him leads to his suicide, foreshadowing her fate.

The first of my three foci in chapter five juxtaposes society’s norms with the heroine’s arranged first marriage to Count Obernau. This marriage typifies what a majority of women at that time experienced and what Hahn-Hahn unambiguously condemns. The second focus highlights Faustine’s discontent with values imparted in the educational system. The third focus historicises the concepts of love and marriage in contrast to those depicted in the narrative, namely the questioning of everlasting love, the topic of sexual frustration (Faustine and Andlau) and Cunigunde’s lesbian love for Faustine. In chapter six I focus firstly on Faustine’s acquiescence in Mengen’s courtship. In spite of the couple’s overt incompatibility, Faustine’s strong physical attraction to Mengen clouds her judgement. This leads into Faustine’s third phase in her life’s quest, her marriage to Mengen. This phase is narrated from Mengen’s point of view in conversation with the second narrator, the Countess.

The second focus of this chapter depicts Mengen’s overpowering endeavour to shape Faustine into conformity. Yet her artistic genius comes, as the fourth phase of her life’s quest, into full fruition. Due to increased personal incongruity Faustine enters the fifth phase of her life’s quest by entering a convent. My third focus is the supposition surrounding the cause of her death, which I interpret as liberation from patriarchal society. In the novel, carefully and pertinently chosen locations provide the backdrops which structure the narrative thematically and allegorically. Here Hahn-Hahn develops the correlation between location and narrative action. Imagery and cultural
connotations correspond to different elements of Faustine’s character and are representative of the diverse aspects of the society in which her character is situated.

4.2 Faustine in her social circle

Middle- and upper-class Dresden society was considered to be ‘chic’ in the early nineteenth century. Anton Eigner calls this city the Florence of the river Elbe, with a cultural climate incomparable to any other in Germany (48). The monarchs of Dresden were patrons of the arts, which gave rise to a bohemian sub-culture that serves as a fitting introduction to Faustine’s unconventionality. The first narrator’s introductory description is interspersed with a conversation between young men. This sets the prefatory scene in a twofold manner. It portrays the patriarchal attitudes of the young men, and it also presents clichés that the narrator can in turn critique with irony and humour. The group’s gossip provides information about the main characters Faustine, Andlau, and Mengen, their society, and what is currently in vogue in dandyish Dresden. The young men bemoan that most of Dresden society leaves during the summer season to spend time taking the waters: “Es ist unerträglich, nichts als gemeine unbekannte Gesichter zu sehen” (HH GF 2) (“It is unbearable to see nothing but common unknown faces”).

This and other comments by the young men, establish that their behaviour is dictated by fashions, people, and events such as horse racing which are their pastimes. One character, sardonically nicknamed “Centaur,” propagates his misogynistic ideas: “die Pferde sind kluge, schlaue, pfiffige, tueckische Bestien, haben viel Aehnlichkeit mit den Weibern” (4) (“horses are clever, cunning, smart, malicious beasts, they are very similar to women”). Centaur and his cohorts aspire to drill women in the same manner that they tame their animals: “[Frauen und Pferde] müssen gehorchen lernen, auf den Wink, der geringsten Bewegung” (4) (“[women and horses] have to learn obedience on command, at a hint, at the slightest movement”). This farcical self-importance continues with a proposal to instruct women: “Es gehört viel Verstand dazu, ein tiefes Studium und ernste Beharrlichkeit, ihnen [Frauen] Gehorsam einzupfenn” (4) (“It requires much sense, deep study and earnest persistence, to inject them [women] with obedience”). The author reveals her satire by describing as “geistreiches Gespräch” (5) (“ingenious dialogue”) what was evidently empty-headed chatter.

A young man, by the name of Feldern, draws the group’s attention to the individuality and dominance of his friend, Count Mengen. He relates the comical situation of how, some years earlier, Mengen, in spite of students at university following the trend introduced by a prince to carry an expensive walking stick, contravened this fashion by exclaiming: “Bah! wer mag denn den Tambour-Major spielen und einen Stock mit blankem Knopf tragen!” (10) (“Ha! Who would want to play the drum major who carries a baton with a shiny knob!”). By not following, but instead critiquing the prince’s whimsical fad, Mengen influences and steers the uniformity of his followers
in another direction, that is, to abandon their prized walking sticks. Thus the students, like the group of young men, are portrayed as conformists, unable to stand out as individual beings, always ready to follow a leader. Collectively they are carefree and thoughtless, but Mengen seems to contravene this behaviour.

The shallowness of the young men is further expressed in the suggestion that Mengen must “pompös zu Pferd sitzen” (4) (“sit grandiosely on horseback”) instead of enquiring about his personal attributes. Their attitude towards Mengen, the newcomer in their circle, is intrusive but their interest is only superficial (5). As soon as Mengen leaves their circle, they interrogate Feldern: “heraus damit! erzählt, erzählt! von seinen Verhältnissen, seinen Umständen, seiner Carriere!” (10) (“out with it, tell us, tell us! of his circumstances, his situation, his career!”). Their banter characteristically displays the immaturity of a cohort of gossiping individuals and, as such, they draw attention to the custom that elegant ladies remain indoors during the afternoon. Moreover, while watching Countess Faustine painting in the park, the young men observe that she had worn the same outfit more than once during the social season.

While frowning over such an occurrence generally, they accept Faustine’s deviation from such etiquette and so convey her independence and non-conformity. Their query as to whether Faustine’s decision to dress for comfort is “natürlich bei einer Frau” (7) (“natural for a woman”) further demonstrates their superciliousness. One male alludes to the enigma presented by Faustine by concluding that if one were to pose over one hundred questions about this woman, each answer would be different: “sie [Faustine] hat ihre eignen und eigentümlichen Allüren” (6), (“she [Faustine] possesses her own and peculiar affectations”). Thus Faustine is introduced as a woman of complexity, shrouded in mystery. She disregards social protocol and the whims of fashionable society, but also generates interest amongst the young men. Paradoxically these men, who express denigrating opinions about women in general, grant Faustine respect and accept the liberties of her liaison with her companion Andlau by admiringly discussing her. Although the group does not condone Faustine’s behaviour, they refrain from ridiculing her. Their attitude displays a common human duality where actions are condemned in principle only to be excused in particular cases, due to mitigating or personally known circumstances. A fascination with Faustine is also felt by her brother-in-law Walldorf, who shows signs of a desire to endear himself to her.

Walldorf respects Faustine enough to write her a letter rather than delegating this task to his wife Adele, who is Faustine’s twin sister. In cohort, Walldorf and the young men generally deny the other sex any aspiration for an existence other than that of married life. “‘Die Weiber mögen doch nichts lieber als selbst heirathen oder wenigstens Heirathen stiften’—sagte Walldorf und lachte donnernd über seine Bemerkung, die ihm eben so neu als geistreich vorkam” (63) (“Women don’t like anything better than getting married or at least to make marriage matches”—said Walldorf and
laughed thunderously about his own words, which seemed to him innovative and clever”), a mocking comment on the part of the narrator. In their all-powerful and righteous position, Walldorf and the group of young men publicly disparage women and privately relegate them to a position in married life where men remain the major agents. The narrator’s shrewd insights into the masculine psyche characterise behaviour and attitudes that maintain the patriarchal status quo.

In the comfort zone of their circle the young men can compete with each other, and their masculine culture nourishes and preserves their sense of supremacy. Ostensibly incongruous, this sense of clan supremacy may be juxtaposed with the aristocratic position of singular Faustine, an attribute that would appeal to their mindset. She moves only within and upholds the customs of her own circles. She does not display concern for those outside her privileged class and the inequity displayed by the young men towards women is not unlike Faustine’s disregard of the lower classes. Ignoring those of other or lower social standing displays prejudice as the characters’ common denominator. Such an underlying cultural opinion inadvertently depicts a society whose masculine-based social prejudices are complemented by the heroine’s class distinction. Thus the emancipatory aspects for which Faustine strives apply only to a select group in the hierarchical social structure, thereby highlighting a feminist conservatism that seeks equality for the few with hereditary economic means.

4.2.1 Domesticated Adele and autonomous Faustine

The social expectations that dominant men have of women are depicted in an idealised version in Adele. After the early death of their parents, Faustine and Adele grew up in an institution. On entering the household of their forty-year old socialite aunt (who does not want to be outshone by two young ladies), both young girls’ early marriages for financial prosperity are actively fostered and then promptly and dutifully executed. While Adele thrives in rural domesticity, Faustine’s marriage with Count Obernau ends in disaster. She now lives in her own apartment but sees Andlau constantly, travels with him regularly, and indulges in painting and thoughtful contemplation. Adele has accepted and internalised the role prescribed to her by a patriarchal tradition. Embracing the marital tradition, she ensures the continuation of her husband’s lineage by being mother to his rowdy “Kinderschaar” (43) (“horde of [seven] children”).

She is an accomplished housekeeper who sews, mends, cooks, and strives for perfection, albeit from a position that is inferior to her husband’s. After all, at that time women were delegated to the “subjektiven und persönlichen Lebensraum” (Joeres, “Nebel” 319). Adele’s husband effectively encourages this supplementarity by concurring with the aunt’s estimation of Adele’s attributes: “Und so anspruchslos, so einfach, so genügsam, so freundlich—das wäre eine Frau für jeden verständigen Mann” (HH GF 26) (“And so undemanding, so unassuming, so modest, so friendly—she would be a good wife for any understanding man”). The humorous mockery of Walldorf’s
utterance almost brings to life the dead author’s twinkle in her eye. Such an understanding man as Walldorf will gladly elevate an undemanding woman like Adele onto a pedestal and, from there, she is allowed to reign as a domestic goddess, as long as she fulfils her conventional role as a ‘good woman’. Adele has achieved such a status, and desires for herself and her daughters good housekeeping as the epitome of domestic bliss. In her practicality Adele is astounded that Faustine goes on walks for pleasure because, to her, a stroll has to have a material function, such as inspecting the crops. (Admittedly keeping house for her husband and their seven children would leave little time for activities that are not functional.) Remaining true to his character Walldorf also considers walking for leisure to be “Zeitverderb” (49) (“a waste of time”). Yet despite the inherent distinction between the two sisters, Faustine’s presence on their estate noticeably empowers Adele, who starts to speak when usually she would remain silent:

“So? Ei!” sprach er [Walldorf], ungemein erstaunt, daß seine Frau ihn in dieser Unterhaltung störte, denn sie war so daran gewöhnt, daß sie für ihre Person nicht mehr darauf achtete, als auf fallende Regentropfen; doch jetzt hörte sie mit dem Ohr ihrer Schwester. (48)

“Well, there!”, said he [Walldorf], totally surprised that his wife had disturbed him during this conversation, as she was so used to it, that she did not make any more allowances for herself than for a falling rain drop; now, however, she was listening with the ear of her sister.

Faustine’s influence on Adele impinges on Walldorf’s patriarchal reign. His expression, “Well, there,” suggests that he considers Adele to be a child, or immature. Yet while his authority infiltrates Adele’s sense of self worth, he fosters and enhances her matriarchal position. After each confinement, Walldorf presents Adele with a block of land that she can administer according to her inclination. On the birth of a son she receives a double-sized allotment, causing Faustine to predict that her “Schwager nur noch Oberlehnsherr seines Gutes sein wird” (33) (“brother-in-law will be reduced to being only an overseer of his estate”). The situation, though, as presented by the narrator and Faustine, suggests that in this eventuality Walldorf’s training will ensure that Adele is acting according to his viewpoint. Thus the cyclical role of idealised womanhood is typified: men manipulate their pliable women into a matriarchal role in which the woman (Adele) has been moulded to think, react and execute in accord with male-dominated society, despite her accumulated wealth, potential autonomy and position on a domestic pedestal.

In the first half of the nineteenth century the Civil Code stipulated that the husband, as legal guardian and “indisputable head of the household [. . . ] was the sole owner of the family’s assets” (Frevert 29), including any dowry that his wife brought to the marriage, or wealth that she
accumulated during the marriage. She had few rights. If the wife wanted to gain employment, she needed his permission, and if she earned an income, as Sophie La Roche did from the publication of her books, she was not allowed to spend it without the approval of her husband (50). It follows that women were dependent on the benevolence of a male guardian for financial and social independence. It was not until 1908 that girls from all social strata had access to higher education (317), and not until 1918 that women in Germany were granted the right to vote (Quataert 25). Thus Walldorf’s generosity did not diminish his powerbase, but it created good will and encouragement in Adele.

The polarity between the two sisters is emphasised in their appearance. Adele’s orderly life is perfected by her “kugelrunde” (HH GF 43) (“round like a barrel”) figure, while Faustine exudes a picture of gracefulness that complements her artistically carefree and non-maternal nature. Focusing on her lone stand, the narrator presents the public image of the heroine in a highly romanticised manner. Faustine’s appearance is noted as: “kein Shawl zerschnitt die Gestalt und störte den harmonischen Eindruck ihrer statuenmäßigen Proportionen” (7) (“no shawl disrupted her appearance or disturbed the harmonious impression of her statue-like proportions”). Her distinction from other women is pointed out: “Es sah aus, als bildeten die grünen Bäume ein Laubdach für Andere, einen Tempel für sie” (7) (“It seemed as if green trees built a leafy roof for others but a temple for her [Faustine]”). Here the description overflows with quixotic feelings. Faustine’s interaction with other women is also flatteringly depicted, and it is pointed out that generally women liked Faustine, and that she had neither enemies nor rivals. Women, be they elegant or intelligent, do not compare themselves to Faustine, who maintains a solitary position:

Keine [Frau] verglich sich mit ihr [Faustine], so wie prächtige Gartenblumen sich vielleicht nicht mit einer Alpenpflanze vergleichen möchten. Ein Wilder sagte einst, als er das Gemälde eines Engels sah: ‘Er ist meines Geschlechts.’ Civilisierte Leute haben nicht mehr diesen sublimen Instinct. (22)

None [woman] compared herself to her [Faustine], just as magnificent garden flowers would perhaps not dare to compare themselves with an alpine plant. A savage said once upon seeing the painting of an angel: ‘he is of my kind.’ Civilised people no longer have this sublime instinct.

Women accept Faustine’s individualism which, like a rare wildflower, is born of a certain social isolation. These women intuitively accept Faustine’s strength and unworldly ‘superiority’. In true romantic style she is the ‘most lovely of all.’ The comparison suggests that unlike the ‘savage’

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64 While the Prussian Civil Code made it clear that a married woman’s property was under her husband’s “control,” a wife theoretically could have this right “reserved [for her] by contract” (Frevert 43).
mentioned in the passage above, who retains a universal clarity by categorising angel and
humankind as belonging to one species, rather than to a species with supernatural attributes, these
women exclude the ‘angel’ Faustine. The savage does not divide humanity into a tri-fold
Rousseauian concept of theological, natural, and psychological components (Lange and Bäumer 4)
that can be transposed into the angel, savage and man. Instead, he recognises one species that
encompasses all three conceptual elements as being human thus presumably equal and without
privileges. However, Faustine is segregated from the society that she lives in; she is incongruent. In
revealing Faustine’s individualistic personality further, her defining features are described as
courageous, and as bearing the consequences of her impulsive decisions:

> Sie that sehr oft Schritte, die gewagt, regellos, nicht zur Nachfolge einladend
> waren, doch war es einmal geschehen, so stellte sie sich fest und sagte heimlich:
> “nur nicht zaghaft! nur immer vorwärts! wer gelenkige Glieder hat, muß
> springen und klettern, darf sie nicht einrosten lassen.” (HH GF 52)

She often took steps that were daring, irregular and no invitation to follow; however, once she had taken them, she placed herself firmly and said secretly:

> “Never be half hearted! Always strive forward! She who has flexible limbs,
> must jump and climb, must not allow them to get rusty.”

Faustine stubbornly and secretly follows her instincts. Here her trust in nature is romantically
highlighted during a walk with Walldorf’s brother Clemens. After they realise they have lost their
way, she stays behind while he tries to find a way back. Impetuously, she adopts the attitude: “Nur
nie auf Menschen sich verlassen, immer auf die Natur!” (70) (“Never rely on people but always on
nature!”). Thus Faustine decides not to wait for Clemens and follows the stream back to the point of
their earlier departure. Adele cautions Faustine that she should have waited for Clemens instead of
returning on her own. However, Faustine’s self-determination, which is not devoid of selfish
unreliability—after all, Clemens out of concern for Faustine had organised a search party—depends
on her single-mindedness, a trait with which we are already familiar in the young men’s earlier
comments.

Without delving into details we are told that as Faustine’s complexities unfold, many
“anomalies” (19) and some “shadows” (19) present puzzling aspects of her character. These
observations alert the reader to Faustine’s future volte-face decisions. They may also allude to her
unusual relationship with Andlau. The “shadows” may refer to demons or a demonic attribute, an
observation made by Clemens who compares women, while talking to Faustine, as being “angel-
like” and yet so “demonic” (241). In a description of Faustine’s relationship with Cunigunde
“Lucifer” (171) is evoked. As discussed earlier expressing the repressed longing for “erotic desire, sensuality, passion” (Treder 36) as demonic was not unusual.

Yet generally Faustine’s predominant disposition is described as pleasant and untainted. In addition she sets high standards for herself, is non-demanding of those around her, and:

Sie blickte weder rechts noch links auf Wege, wo Andere gingen; sie wandelte unbekümmert auf den ihren: das gab ihr Sicherheit. Sie griff nicht hier und dort nach Haltung umher, nach Liebe und Freundschaft suchend: sie war begnügt im tiefsten Wesen. (HH GF 20)

She looked neither left nor right to paths trodden by others; she walked unconcernedly on hers: that gave her security. She did not grasp here and there for composure, looking for love and friendship: she was content at the centre of her being.

Faustine is an attractive and interesting character. She is apparently untroubled, non-conforming, impulsive, a little mysterious and sometimes reckless. She relies on her own resourcefulness without the need to seek guidance, and does not shy away from expressing her wishes. While staying as a guest in Adele’s house she asserts: “Ich bin nicht blöde und werde fordern, was ich brauche” (47) (“I am not stupid, I shall demand what I require”). While not an outcast, Faustine’s public persona is unique in Dresden society, to the young men whose mind she occupies, amidst Adele’s domesticity, and among the women who know her. Faustine’s self-assured image is reinforced by the respect she enjoys in her interactions with those around her. Feldern too appreciates and acknowledges her strength, but warns his fiancée, Cunigunde, not to adopt Faustine’s mode of behaviour:

Die Gräfin Obernau [Faustine] ist zwar eine äußerst anmuthige Person, aber da nicht jeder die Kraft und die Selbstständigkeit hat, so frei das Leben zu beherrschen, so dürfte sie nicht als Richtschnur für allgemeine Verhältnisse dienen. (153)

Countess Obernau [Faustine] is certainly an extremely charming person, but as not everybody possesses the strength and the independence to govern life freely, she must not serve as a guiding principle for society at large.

This passage shows the narrator’s strategy of critiquing her protagonist through another character. It also emphasises again that individually Faustine, as the main character, can be tolerated. Were her example to be followed too widely though, her behaviour would become a threat to society, as Feldern points out to Cunigunde. Yet in his ensuing impasse with Cunigunde, he agrees for Faustine, as third party, to mediate. His admiration of Faustine’s forthright attitude motivates him to
organise a meeting between the two young women. Faustine warns him, however, that her advice will be truthful:

Aber, mein bester Feldern, vergessen Sie nicht, daß ich nicht die Person bin, welche je ihre Meinung zurückhält, und daß, wenn man mich um Rath fragt, keine Rücksichten mich hindern, ihn nach meiner Überzeugung zu ertheilen. (166)

But, my best Feldern, do not forget, that I am not someone who ever withholds her opinion, and that, if asked for advice, no considerations stop me giving it according to my conviction.

Fearless of the consequences, Faustine expresses her opinion. She disregards polite society’s rules and passes judgment as she deems appropriate. This foreshadows the dissolving of Feldern’s engagement. Conventionally this may be seen as a warning to men not to allow their women to be influenced by an independent female. This is all the more evident when Faustine, in a circle of men that includes Mengen, Clemens, and Kirchberg, discusses the delight of young girls and the dullness of men. Here Faustine attacks the conforming ideology of men who weigh up every decision thoroughly with reason and who therefore lack spontaneity:

Freilich!—so unfrisch, so gleichgültig, so ohne Meinungen, die ihnen wie Blut in den Adern pulsieren! denn was gibt’s zu sagen über Dinge, die dem innersten Wesen fremd bleiben? Gemeinplätze, Hypothesen, vage Theorien, Sophismen: die ganze Bagage des exercierenden Soldaten—Verstand. Wir aber ziehen als echte Krieger ohne alle Bagage in die Schlacht und kämpfen begeistert. (144)

Of course, so unoriginal, so indifferent, so without opinions, which pulsate like blood through their veins! For what is there to say about issues, foreign to the innermost being? Platitudes, hypotheses, vague theories, sophistry: the whole baggage of the exercising soldier—the mind. But we move as genuine warriors without baggage into the battlefield and fight enthusiastically.

Faustine condemns all men as being mindlessly critical creatures, while women use their emotions and fight with conviction. Condemning male hierarchy bluntly in all-male company displays Faustine’s inner detachment and fearlessness. She does not represent the majority of women like, for example, matrons who follow, agree to, then dictate and influence their world with their husband’s decrees. In oblivious isolation and perhaps naivety, she is a romantic character who charges forth with her challenge to men.
4.2.2 Faustine’s confrontation with Walldorf

The urbanity of Dresden’s lifestyle is contrasted to rural Oberwalldorf, where Faustine’s countrified brother-in-law, Walldorf, has his estate. It is worth pausing over the significance of these denominations as this alludes to the author’s irony. The estate of Oberwalldorf, where Faustine questions traditional gender roles and therefore male domination, is camouflaged. We are told that Faustine had travelled with Andlau from Dresden to Coburg, where they part company. Andlau travels on to Kissingen, while Faustine arrives in Oberwalldorf later in the day (15). Oberwalldorf is described as being located at the entrance of a valley, where a rivulet can be found on which timber was floated into a tributary of the river Main (45). There is no evidence of a present-day Oberwalldorf being within a day’s journey of Coburg. However, Weitramsdorf (Landkreis Coburg) is situated near the Rodach stream and is still renowned for international river rafting events. If the confrontational dialogue between Faustine and Walldorf takes place in a fictionalised version of Weitramsdorf, the significance is that, as part of the Coburg county, Weitramsdorf was converted to the Protestant faith in 1528-29. Furthermore in 1530, fearing imprisonment by the Catholic authorities, Martin Luther took six months refuge in the Coburg fortress. Thus Walldorf’s Lutheran stance in the following dialogue geographically and historically corresponds to Weitramsdorf’s pastoral Protestantism.

The choice of Walldorf’s surname is also worth pondering over, for its combination of Wall with Dorf. “Wall,” according to Collins, means bulwark, and as such denotes a defensive wall, especially one made of earth (475). “Dorf” means village, so the composition of those two nouns connotes a sense of insularity. To add the prefix of “Ober” (“Upper”) to the locality points to the upper class of rural landowners as well as higher upstream but, in a burlesque and perhaps determined twist, may also emphasise a certain narrow-mindedness. Therefore the choice of Oberwalldorf and Walldorf suggest restrictive remoteness, both rural and walled-in. On this assumption Hahn-Hahn’s literary strategy is innovative in using a geographically significant name to suggest institutionalised misogyny in a dialogue among the characters Faustine, Walldorf, and Adele. The country estate of Oberwalldorf is an ideal setting for a collision between Faustine’s feminist aspirations and Walldorf’s very traditional, masculine rural views. The passage commences with Walldorf’s delight that Faustine has not altogether forsaken the possibility of marriage:

nehmen Sie’s nicht übel, ich dachte, Sie wollten ganz auf gleichem Fuß mit dem Mann leben—und das geht doch nicht an. Darum mein freudiges Erstaunen bei Ihrer demüthigen Aeußerung, die vom Gegenteil zeugt. Ja gewiß! der Mann muß herrschen und die Frau gehorchen—dazu ist sie geboren. (HH GF 65)

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65 Gemeinde Weitramsdorf.
don’t take offence, I thought you wanted to live entirely on an equal footing with men—and that is out of the question. Therefore I am joyfully surprised that your humble utterance shows the opposite. Most certainly! Man must rule and woman must obey—to this she is born.

Walldorf’s use of the adjective “demüthig” (“humble”) emphasises his preference for subdued womanhood. He expresses ecclesiastical sentiments, for his last sentence is a direct reference to Martin Luther’s doctrine: “God created her body to keep a man company” (Luther 327). Thus Walldorf adheres to the predominant Lutheran tenet of Weitramsdorf at that time. He seeks to naturalise the oppression of women, which has its origin in history, with religious authority. Faustine strongly opposes Walldorf’s stance: “Gott,” rief Faustine, “wie komisch sind die Männer! ganz ernsthaft bilden sie sich ein, der liebe Gott habe unser Geschlecht geschaffen, um das ihre zu bedienen!” (HH GF 66) “God,” cried Faustine, “how peculiar men are! To assume in all earnest that the good God created our sex in order to serve theirs!” “Zu beglücken!” verbesserte Walldorf” (66) (“‘To give joy to!’ Walldorf corrected”).

In Walldorf’s opinion women are created solely to serve and please men. Cast as benevolent dictator, Walldorf is shown to manipulate language, or perhaps his use of it demonstrates his real sentiments, in order to mask his interest in maintaining male dominance. Again, Faustine retains her line of argument and insists on the reality of female experience: “Das kommt Euch gegenüber auf Eins heraus! [...] Und die eine Hälfte des Menschgeschlechts wäre geschaffen, damit die andre sie brutalisiere?!” (66) (“For you it is all the same! [...] And one half of the human race had been created so that the other can brutalise it?!”). Walldorf reveals the extent to which he feels challenged when he calls upon stylistics in his reply: “Welch ein Ausdruck” (66) (“What an expression”). Faustine’s clear analysis disregards his good manners and exposes his morality in calling female subjugation the achievement of selflessness and humility. She dissects all this. He falls silent, while Faustine continues to explain the process of sex role conditioning:

“Ihr wollt winken, und wir sollen kommen—ein Wort sagen, und wir sollen anbeten—lächeln, und wir sollen auf die Knie fallen—zürnen, und wir sollen verzweifeln—Alles auf allerhöchsten Befehl, den ihr von Gottes Gnaden decretiert. Was ist das anders als uns brutalisieren?—ich frage. Das ist Euch schon zur Natur worden! in diesem Sinn richtet Ihr die bürgerlichen Verhältnisse ein, erzieht Ihr die Kinder, schreibt Ihr Bücher. Himmel!” (66)

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66 This sentence echoes Hippel’s treatise: “Was hätte die Natur veranlassen können, die eine Hälfte ihres höchsten Meisterstücks zu beglücken und zu ehren, die andere dagegen zu verkümmern und zu vernachlässigigen, und zwar gerade in umgekehrtem Verhältnisse?” (21-22) (“What could have prompted nature to delight and honour one half of its highest masterpiece, and against this and namely, in fact in inverse proportion, to let the other become stunted and neglected”).
“You want to beckon and we are supposed to come—say a word and we are supposed to adore—smile and we are supposed to fall on our knees—get angry and we are supposed to despair—all by the divine order which you decree by the grace of God. What else is this than brutalising us? I ask. This has already become second nature to you. With this persuasion you institute civil society, you educate the children, you write books. Heavens!”

In the first sentence of the passage above, Faustine satirises the patterns of idealisation in the roles ascribed to women in cultured society by juxtaposing male actions with idealised female reactions. She shows the absurdity of these exchanges and expectations, and moves on to give further evidence of the inanity with which these rules are instituted, on no other basis than an imaginary authority granted by an equally imaginary (one is bound to suggest) God. Then Faustine states that the system of oppression and the limitations it generates are norms from which she distances herself. Walldorf remains quiet from this point on. Faustine has explained the situation in all clarity and he has no argument left in his favour. But Adele comes to his rescue: “‘Willst Du denn, daß die Frauen das Regiment führen?’ fragte Adele” (67) (“‘Do you want then that women give the order?’ Adele asked”). Here Adele agrees with and restates Walldorf’s mindset. Hahn-Hahn’s sense of humour surfaces with Adele’s contribution, that the highest achievement for herself and her young daughters is an ability to ensure that the husband’s meals are not too salty (64). But the character of Faustine is not given to humour, or theorising, and remains insistent on the ills women suffer:

“No, I just want men to treat them as they do each other, and not as bought female slaves, to whom, if you are in a bad mood, you put the boot in the neck, and if in a good mood, throw a necklace or a similar trinket. That demoralises women, it blunts their sensitivity. Today they put up with brutality, in order to get a new hat tomorrow.”

Here Faustine describes graphically and metaphorically the yoke that suppresses upper-class women. She deplores the demeaning dominance of men over women by means of abuse and material rewards. She emphasises this with an incident in which her friend Charlotte endured her husband’s bad temper to barter for a piece of jewellery. Charlotte did not appreciate Faustine’s
comparison with Esau, who sold his right as first-born for a dish of lentils (67) and who, with this deed, earned himself a reputation for being immoral and irreligious. The analogy to prostitution is evident. Faustine’s friend knew the rules of her marital arrangement and accepted the motto: endure to receive. She is not motivated by an act of desperation or poverty, but by a desire for jewellery.

In her upper-class existence Charlotte engages in this transaction to enhance her position in a society based on a patriarchal value system. After all, her husband proudly takes the credit for his wife’s new piece of jewellery, which is the envy of other women, irks their husbands, but nonetheless impresses all alike. Hahn-Hahn implies that in this society it is the effect that counts, not the means of acquiring the merchandise, however debasing or unethically transacted. In her protagonist’s dialogue Hahn-Hahn subtextually evokes feminist notions of equality in a fictionally hostile social environment that is, however, not completely intolerant. After all Walldorf, notwithstanding his firm ideas about a woman’s position, welcomes Faustine as a guest in his house, despite their opposing opinions about the position of women. Likewise, in the introductory passage of the novel, the young men express their respect for her, while being fully aware of her close relationship, as an unmarried woman, with Andlau. Thus the depiction of Faustine’s unconventional lifestyle is a complex one, interwoven with instances of tolerance. With a captive and benign audience, Faustine continues her monologue in front of Walldorf and Adele:

“Wenn ich neuer Romane aufschlage, besonders französische, was erdulde ich für Ager! In ewiger Anbetung, wie der Pater Seraphicus im Faust, schweben die Frauen vor ihren Geliebten, und die lassen es sich gnädig, zuweilen auch ungnädig, gefallen.” (66)

“When I open more recent novels, particularly French novels, how indignant I feel! In eternal adoration just like Father Seraphicus in Faust, women float before their lovers, who put up with it graciously, but sometimes ungraciously.”

Faustine uses a Faustian metaphor to condemn male dominance. In Goethe’s Faust II, Pater Seraphicus provides the choir of blessed baby boys with vision. They were born at midnight and, because of their brief earthly existence, were devoid of knowledge: “Sag us, Vater, wo wir wallen, sag uns, Guter, wer wir sind!” (Goethe, Faust II, 11895) (“Tell us father, where we are, tell us kindly one, who we are”). A common myth in the Middle Ages held that babies born in the middle of the night would not live long. Thus Seraphicus’s revelation of eternal love (“ewigen Liebens Offenbarung”) (11925) turns into salvation for the infants. Faustine’s allegory suggests that men rescue women as long as they are submissive, just as Pater Seraphicus provides vision and salvation.

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67 “Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.” (“Hebrews” 12:16.)
for the dependent baby boys. But, unlike the benevolent Pater Seraphicus, men accept women’s submission at times graciously and at other times ungraciously. They do not possess the wisdom to allow women the freedom for development. (Here it is useful to bear in mind this allusion to women’s freedom when granted by men, in view of the power relationship between Faustine and Andlau discussed below). Instead men abuse their power, by way of abusing the female adoration offered to them.

It is debatable why Hahn-Hahn has Faustine express indignation with French novels, though we are familiar with her dislike of French women’s aspirations to equality. The antagonism voiced by her protagonist in stating that French women unquestionably submit to their lovers’ caprices presents a particular view of the conflict that structures sentimental social novels of early to mid-nineteenth-century France. While in the 1740s “Empfindsamkeit” (Richards, “Era” 273) (“sensitivity”) novels emerged in Germany with works such as Messias, by Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, sentimental novels were predominantly written by French women such as Germaine de Staël, Adélaïde de Souza, Stéphanie de Genlis, and Sophie Cottin, to name a few. With her first novel, Indiana, Sand made her debut in this genre (Cohen 123). Typically, sentimental social novels engage with the “contradiction between individual freedom and collective welfare producing her [the heroine’s] moral anguish” (143). Cottin’s eponymous heroine Claire d’Albe embodies this “anguish” in a dialogue with her admirer, Frédéric: “Yes, I love you, ardently, violently; and in this very moment, when I forget my most sacred duties to tell you this, I delight in the excess of weakness which proves to you my love” (144). Here Claire’s “conflict between collective welfare [her arranged marriage] and individual freedom [her true love interest with Frédéric] reaches an unbearable pitch” (144). This passionately indulgent conflict does not seem to harmonise with the more philosophical temperament of Faustine, who maintains her verbal barrage:


“If only I could write books—I would reverse this thing and bring back to honour the good old idiom that is now totally nonsensical: ‘He adores her.’ I most certainly will still do this, if only to air my indignation, and perhaps anger will provide me with lovely inspirations.”

In exasperation, Faustine threatens to make her feelings public. But other than verbalising her sentiments, Faustine does not engage in action for social change, again emphasising what I see as
her feminist conservatism, which is compatible with the “little platoon” of her free-living arrangement, as mentioned above. Keim points out that Hahn-Hahn is a “Dame” (183) (“lady”) while Sand is a “Frau” (“woman”), and that this basic difference represents the problem of the “distinction” in the fictional love relationships of the two writers’ works. Hahn-Hahn’s heroines refrain from obsessively sentimental outbursts and action. In contrast, the woman depicted in Claire d’Albe is sentimental, and her active emotional outburst culminates in a stark decision between her husband and her lover.

Faustine has to be persuaded into marriage with Mengen whereas Claire, through her arousing activity and conflict, forces a decision and upsets the status quo of her marital arrangement. It would seem that, in ladylike Faustine’s perception, the passionate love declaration of a Claire would assume the image of “floating before her lover” in submissive manner. However a woman, in contrast to a lady, does not have to conform to the restrained expectations of a lady. She can climb barricades, she can ardently and actively confront her lover with a display of emotions that may seem acquiescent to a more refined person. Frevert states that the role of a lady of the nobility in that era was carefully cultivated (28). As was customary, a protective and financially providing guardian (father/husband) supported a lady, who distinguished herself by passive restraint. In marriage, she maintained decorum and adhered to the social etiquette of this arranged union that was not based on “personal preference but family strategy” (29). In keeping with her rank, a lady had to be supportive of the male provider in order to maintain her status as a lady. As long as she fulfilled her duty of continued ancestral pedigree by providing an heir, she was generally allowed the freedom to indulge in “galante Kultur” (30) (“gallant culture”), and “engage in the art of amour passion without loss of honour” (30). Providing she pandered to these rules a little, she could “cultivate an erotic, seductive femininity” (30).

In the case of the fictional Faustine, however, it is not in character for her to partake in frivolity or in games for the enhancement of her own or men’s social status. Due to her strong personal views, she may be regarded as an activist of ideas. Faustine, the lady, may view with disdain those French novels that depict a heroine’s emotionally-charged decisive action, however detrimental. On the one hand, Faustine’s emancipatory aspirations include her outspoken critique of society and her demonstrable free-living arrangement outside the rules of society. On the other hand, the limits of her conservatism restrain her from taking action at this stage in her life. It is therefore of little surprise that in this psychological framework Faustine strongly advocates the ladylike, chivalrous concept, “He adores her.” Since, as discussed above, authors write in part as a means of expressing their wishes, this proposition may also provocatively satisfy Hahn-Hahn’s hidden objectives. Because her singular heroine, Faustine, does not offer concrete advice on how to proceed in the gender struggle, apart from her verbal criticism, her defiant outburst may seem ineffective or, as I
suggest, her feminist endeavour conservative. In the circumstances I consider Faustine’s public criticism of a milieu that fostered the denigration of women in upper-class society to be a courageous act in the feminist struggle. It is of little surprise that Hahn-Hahn depicts this kind of criticism of established and accepted conventions as resulting in isolation. It is important to note that Faustine’s isolation is due to choice rather than social infliction. Thus the young men, Adele, Walldorf and the other women do not exclude Faustine; it is she who excludes herself.

4.2.3 Faustian striving

Doering argues that in Gräfin Faustine Hahn-Hahn wrote a fictional female biography in the mould of Goethe’s Faust (170). This is evident in both protagonists’ restless striving. As it is a complex literary task to depict female behaviour that is based on masculine characteristics, the origin of the name Faustine is at this point worth noting. Two Faustinas, mother and daughter, lived in the first century; both had a “lively temperament” which authorities misinterpreted “as a sign of faithless and disloyal character” (The Oxford Classical 432).68 With her keen interest in history, as disclosed in her travelogues, Hahn-Hahn may well have fashioned the blueprint for the fictional Faustine on the free-spirited individuality of the historical Faustinas. This characteristic, in combination with a Faustian striving for high personal achievement: “nach der Vervollkommnung des eigenen Wesens” (Doering 42) (“for the perfection of one’s own being”), provides interesting material for the creation of an unusual character—Faustine. Faustine sheds some light on the origin of her uncommon name:

Mein Vater hatte eine solche Liebe zu dem Goetheschen Faust, daß er, um in jedem Augenblick seines Lebens an dies Meisterwerk erinnert zu werden, seinen beiden ersten Kindern den Namen Faust und Faustine beizulegen beschloß. Meine Mutter bebte vor diesen barbarischen Namen, sie hatte ganz andere Lieblinge. (HH GF 260)

My father had such a devotion for Goethe’s Faust, that he, in order to be reminded of this masterwork during every moment of his life, decided to give his first two children the name Faust and Faustine. My mother trembled at these barbaric names, she had quite different favourites.

To the delight of Faustine’s mother, twin girls were born enabling her to name one child: Adele. Thus the difference between the twins is established not only by the parents’ attitudinal preference but also in their names. While Adele is satisfied in the realm of domesticity, Faustine searches for

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68 Their husbands, Emperor Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius, loved the two Faustinas, who were consecrated and had charities founded in their memory (The Oxford Classical 432). In an unrelated and separate parallel, after the death of her companion Bystram and her conversion to Catholicism, Hahn-Hahn founded the charitable “Kloster der Frauen vom Guten Hirten” (“Convent of the Ladies of the Good Shepherd”) (Allgemeine 718).
something like her namesake, of whom Mephistopheles says: “Und alle Näh und alle Ferne/ Befriedigt nicht die tiefbewegte Brust” (Goethe 306-307) (“And all nearness and all distance/ Does not satisfy the deeply stirring breast”). Heffner, Rehder and Twaddell point out that:

Faust wagers his life that Mephistopheles cannot persuade him to give up his striving. One of the essential qualities of the human spirit is its drive to higher things, its aspiration toward perfection. Faust knows that if this drive is lost, all is lost. (2: 1698)

In the final phase of her life’s quest, Faustine symbolically wagers her life to God when she enters the convent. Until that time she moves from one endeavour to another in her search for a higher achievement, for an absolute. Faustine’s individualistic nature is not in harmony with the domesticity of her patriarchal times—she is a misfit in this social milieu. She has a soul partner, but lacks sexual satisfaction. She is a companion, but likes to keep her autonomy. She is autonomous, but relies substantially on her companion. She is a painter, but not an artist whose art encompasses her total existence. She lacks the total “dedication to intellectual and artistic striving which is the lot of the mature [wo]man of genius” (Heffner, Rehder, and Twaddell 2: 9835). Lacking insight and guidance, the adolescent Faustine fashions her nascent self on her male namesake, as she explains to her guests:

Für mich hat aber mein Taufpathe, Faust, stets ein ganz besonderes Interesse gehabt, unabhängig von dem Zauber seiner Poesie und seiner grandiosen Weltanschauung. Ich wollte immer mein eigenes Schicksal in diesem rastlosen Fortstreben, in diesem Dursten und Schmachten nach Befriedigung finden. (HH GF 260-61)

For me, however, my godfather Faust has always been of very special interest, independent of the magic of his poetry and his grandiose philosophy of life. I always wanted to find my own fate in this restless striving, in this thirsting and yearning for satisfaction.

Here Faustine refers to the first part of Faust. At this stage she is unable to find fulfillment since she, like her model, Faust, apparently “shows no consistency in ‘strivings’” (Heffner, Rehder, and Twaddell 1: 67). Faust oscillates without achieving his “mental or moral equilibrium” (68). Similarly, Faustine is unable to achieve her goal. In response to Feldern’s challenge to write her own Faust ending, Faustine replies that she would rather live the second part of Faust, for writing is only a surrogate for living (HH GF 262). Perhaps a clue to Hahn-Hahn’s purpose in writing this novel may be found here. Rather than specify the motive of her alter ego’s free-living arrangement
and ambitions, Hahn-Hahn blends certain autobiographical aspects into the protagonist’s inner workings.

It is surprising that Faustine, with her artistic imagination, rejects the second part of Faust’s fantasy-rich journey through antiquity to his final salvation. Aware of her own restless spirit, she dismisses Faust’s deliverance through Margarete’s love: “so gehe er [Faust] heim nach Gretchen’s öde Hütte, und suche dort im Tode, was er im Leben umsonst gesucht: ein Haus für die Ewigkeit” (262) (“so let him [Faust] go home to Gretchen’s dull hovel, and search there in death what he sought in vain in life: an abode for eternity”). Faust is old, tired and blind. He did not achieve “perfection” (Heffner, Rehder and Twaddell 2:1698). However, with his last earthly breath he looks towards the future with hope: “Im Vorgefühl von solchem hohen Glück” (Faust 11585) (“In anticipation of attaining such high satisfaction”). Faustine is young and vital though her vision may appear to be clouded. Yet the origin of her contradictory behaviour may well lie in her sexual frustration. She is still searching for and experiencing life’s offerings, and her mounting conflict is comparable to Faust’s journey. The inter-textual tension between Faustine and Faust is evident in the reversal of power in the relationships: Faust dominates Margarete, but Faustine dominates Andlau.

4.3 Andlau

4.3.1 Faustine’s influence

Walldorf and Adele’s marriage is very different to the relationship of Faustine and Andlau, whose liaison alludes to “the core Kantian idea of [living in accord with] mutually respecting autonomous rational wills” (Downie 438). Their declared love for each other (HH GF 104) seems to have its basis in a deep affection. In my interpretation, after the sexual brutality of her first marriage to Obernau, Faustine finds sanctuary in spiritual intimacy with Andlau that does not include a sexual relationship. Scholars generally do not refer to a platonic relationship, Nonetheless there seems to be a fine balance of making mutual concessions in this relationship. I believe that the textual evidence does not infer a physical relationship, especially in view of the sexual frustration that Faustine experiences while being with Andlau as expressed in contradictory imagery before their longest and final separation. Moreover, there is an impression of cohabitation which is, in turn, contradicted by a number of factors. Here, close attention to the novel provides a convincing explanation for Faustine’s otherwise puzzling decision to marry Mengen. Andlau is introduced as

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69 Andlau is described as Faustine’s: “friend and lover” (Chambers 80, Geiger, “Hahn” 92), a “Lebenspartner” (Doering, 176) (“life companion”) and a “receptor into whom Faustine channels the abundance of her innermost being” (Guntli 19). Faustine’s relationship with Andlau is: an “enges Verhältnis” (Doering 175) (“intimate relationship”), a free “Verbindung” (Schmid-Jürgens 59) (“arrangement,”) “living openly” (Kontje 141), a “relationship” (Diethe 113), a “lasting relationship” (Herminghouse, “Seeing” 260), a “freies Neigungsverhältnis” (Möhrmann, Andere 105) (“free affectionate relationship,”) “leben in einer Art Naturzustand” (Taeger, Annemarie 258) (“living in a kind of natural state”) and an “idyllic non-marital partnership” (Veber) (309). Finally, Faustine “hegt gegen zwei Männer gleiche Liebe” (Gottschall 436) (“loves two men simultaneously and equally.”)
waiting in the salon for Faustine. It is easy to overlook or misinterpret the point that it is “Faustine’s” apartment (12). Equally concealed is the brief mention that, after a walk at night, Andlau takes Faustine back to her apartment before going to his own (40). Since they travel together and are portrayed as a couple, it seems natural to assume they have a physical, heterosexual relationship. Yet I see indications of a platonic relationship that accentuates their spiritual connection:

Da ihr Geist immer Nahrung und Anregung bei Andlau fand, und seine Seele für sie der Inbegriff aller Vollkommenheit war, so drückte seine Ueberlegenheit sie auch nur in den seltenen Fällen, wo ihr Wille sich durch den seinen beeinträchtigt glaubte. (17)

Since she always found food for the mind and stimulation with Andlau, and his soul was for her the epitome of sheer perfection, his superiority depressed her only in those rare moments when she believed that her will was impeded by his.

At this stage Faustine is satisfied with Andlau’s mentally inspiring company, and she does not need a physical relationship. This non-sexual interaction may have several causes. However, the lightning rod metaphor, as discussed below, could suggest that Andlau may be impotent, although this is not directly or openly discussed. In the relationship between Faustine and Andlau the conventional roles represented by Walldorf and Adele are reversed. When Faustine paints in the park, Andlau waits in Faustine’s apartment (even though Faustine is mentioned as the owner, Andlau is depicted as waiting there) with a headache. His agitation is evident by his leafing through a book without concentration and by the anxious anticipation with which he awaits her arrival, like a woman impatiently waiting at home for her lover or husband to arrive. This first sketch of Andlau creates the impression that in this relationship he lacks confidence and that he is effeminate. Furthermore, he deliberates on the reasons for her absence: “Warum kommt sie nicht?” (12) (“Why is she not coming?”). This amusing description counter-caricatures the conventional image of women who feel they are in danger of losing an arrangement to which they have become accustomed.

In another example of role reversal, Andlau hands Faustine a letter, saying that it is from her brother-in-law (13). Customarily at this time, the wife at home would note the addressee of a letter and hand the mail to her homecoming husband. (The fact that the letter is written by the brother-in-law emphasises Faustine’s prime position because, as discussed above, this letter should have been

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70 Peter Cryle, focusing on eighteenth century French literature, says, that “male impotence is virtually taboo in conventional erotic narrative.” (4) It is not unreasonable to assume that if this topic is taboo in clandestine literature, it may also be taboo in popular nineteenth-century German literature. Freud pioneered the publication of research on sexuality, as discussed below.
written by her sister). In this instance Faustine sets the terms with Andlau, and tells him that he must accompany her at night so that she can paint a scene in moonlight (13). She also plans their travel itinerary and decides that she will pick Andlau up on her return from Oberwalldorf. Andlau agrees with Faustine’s behaviour:

Andlau machte keine Einwendung. Er war mit Allem zufrieden, was ihr angenehm war, und da sie meistentheils auf nichts und Niemand in der Welt Rücksicht nahm, als auf ihn allein, so muß man ihm diese Zufriedenheit als ein außerordentliches Verdienst anrechnen; denn die Masse der Menschen ist am verdrießlichsten, wenn man die größte Rücksicht auf sie nimmt. (15)

Andlau had no objection. He was satisfied with everything that pleased her, and as she usually never took anything or anybody in the world into consideration except for him, one has to grant him this satisfaction as an extraordinary merit; because most people are most put out when one treats them with the greatest consideration.

The first impression imbues Faustine with attributes of leadership in this relationship. She is self-assured but nonetheless always takes Andlau’s feelings into consideration. In a puzzling manner another aspect of their relationship is alluded to. Not only is Andlau satisfied with all of Faustine’s decisions made in consideration of his feelings, but this satisfaction is a credit to him. This is explained as being an accruing credit. Here human nature is related to dissatisfaction and to continuous Faustian striving. To provide great consideration may be as rare as its graceful acceptance. Such accomplishment eliminates conflict and thus unsatisfied desire, an almost perfect state only bearable to a balanced mind. Andlau knows how to accept gracefully and appreciates Faustine’s deliberations about his feelings without experiencing a motionless equilibrium, as unpleasant stagnation, perhaps due to the non-sexual nature of their relationship. An imaginative character, he is portrayed as intuitively knowing that Faustine’s outspokenness is a role that she reserves for her public image, while on a personal and spiritual level she depends on him. His wisdom allows her to act playfully in the public arena because:

allein er liebte sie so sehr, daß er weniger Freude darüber hatte, sie in ihrer Herrlichkeit zu sehen, als er Furcht empfand, daß die häufige Wiederkehr oder die Dauer solcher Momente das irdische Leben aufzehren könnten. (75)

alas, he loved her so much, that he had less pleasure to see her in her magnificence than he feared, that the frequent return or the lengths of such moments would devour earthly existence.
Knowing that their arrangement cannot last forever, he treasures the time they spend together. As in Greek mythology, in order to avoid the punishment of the gods, who penalise those who become too self-important or who are endowed with too much good fortune, he wants to pace out their temporal togetherness. Andlau, in his way, loves Faustine and is protective. Their relationship is complex and less straightforward than Walldorf’s, whose simple dogma, “Man must rule,” leaves no doubt about Adele’s or indeed any other woman’s position, thus ensuring that a marriage lasts by force, should the wife not be naturally so inclined. While Andlau and Faustine’s companionship initially seems ideal, it is not without complications. In his detachment Andlau is neither jealous nor possessive and, as a consequence, gives up easily.

In doing so, he treats Faustine like a commodity: “bei mir kann darum nie von Eifersucht die Rede sein, weil ich keinen Rival anerkenne. Ein Gut, wonach ein Andrer die Hand ausstreckt, überlasse ich ihm gern” (33-34) (“to be jealous is never an option for me because I do not recognise any rival. I gladly relinquish a commodity for which another holds out his hand”). Because any ‘normal’ relationship is bound to involve sexual intercourse, Andlau has no rivals. He knows that if Faustine embraces a relationship with another man, then the ensuing heterosexual arrangement will outweigh his, and therefore he will readily retreat. (It is interesting that in this instance he reduces Faustine to “ein Gut” (34) (“a commodity”). Not surprisingly Andlau consents to freedom of personal development, unlike Faustine’s generalisation about men in the Seraphicus passage above.

Because of his sexual abstinence Andlau instigates an enhanced level of asceticism, of which Faustine becomes a willing pupil. Andlau ethereally idealises in Faustine: “ein Geschöpf [. . .] das, wie von silbernen Flügeln getragen, über die staubige Erde hingeht” (129) (“a creature that is walking across the dusty earth as if carried on silver wings”). This idealisation brings out her submissive side. Before visiting her sister’s household, Faustine is saddened by the prospect of separation. She laments that only death could part them and that if Andlau should die, she would follow (16). This statement signals her fate. It also reveals her ambiguities, for here she ceases to be emancipated and independent, as the dependable Andlau fulfils a guiding function. While Andlau creates the impression of being stern to outsiders, Faustine knows his softer side:

denn für sie war er alles, w a s sie bedurfte, und in jedem Augenblick, w o sie es bedurfte: Vater oder Freund, Lehrer oder Geliebter, lächelnd oder warnend, ermahnd oder scherzend, sorgend oder liebend, und wie an ihre sichtbare Vorsehung lehnte sie sich an ihn. (16)

because for her he was everything, w h a t she required, and in every instant w h e r e she needed it: be it father or friend, teacher or beloved, smiling or warning, reprimanding or joking, caring for her or loving her, and she leaned on him as if he were her own visible providence.
I believe that in this passage, being a “beloved” or a lover (“Geliebter”) does not necessarily imply sexual contact. Andlau’s reliability and Faustine’s dependence suggest a liaison that forms an alternative to marriage, at least for an unconventional upper-class woman. Frevert describes the Romantic writers’ depiction of men and women of that time as “shunning regulation” (57) by living in a liberated manner. In Faustine’s living arrangement, Hahn-Hahn espouses a higher morality than that of state and church. The suggestion of a free and harmonious arrangement based on mutual respect and tolerance illustrates the writer’s progressive thinking. This kind of living arrangement is, however, only possible because Faustine receives a small inheritance from her deceased aunt.

Faustine, by her own admission, complements Andlau’s leadership by behaving like a subjugated slave with him: “[ich] habe eine aechte Sclavennatur, und liebe da am meisten, wo ich am meisten tyrannisiert werde” (HH GF 17) (“[I] have the nature of a slave and love the most where I am being tyrannised the most”). She responds with passivity to Andlau’s guidance: “Sie that wie und was Andlau wünschte, sobald seine Meinung die ihre überwog” (18) (“She did what and how Andlau desired, as soon as his opinion outweighed hers”). Faustine is also capricious: “Außerdem handelte sie nach Laune, aus Leidenschaft, aus Eingebung” (18) (“In addition she acted according to her mood, out of passion, out of inspiration”). She is unpredictable, impractical and flighty. Andlau represents the stable, practical, rational and spiritual component, prompting Faustine to use the cliché: “Du bist wie ein Felsen; daran rank’ ich mich als Epheu mit geschmeidigen Armen empor” (34) (“You are like a rock on whom I curl around with smooth arms like ivy”). This metaphorical description of their relationship conforms to society’s vision of marriage and may be another reason for the oversight of the true nature of their relationship. As is evident, this relationship consists of many psychological layers.

4.3.2 Faustine’s yearning

From Oberwalldorf Faustine writes to Andlau that she is bored without his company and that she hungers for his intellectual inspiration, which is lacking in her sister’s household. Andlau acts as a mentor for her longing for insight, revelation, and knowledge. This is further confirmed in her letter to him about the orderly life in her sister’s household:

O Anastas [Andlau], wie dank’ ich Dir, daß Du nicht auf meine Schultern die Last eines solchen betriebsamen, sorglichen, schaffenden Lebens gewälzt hast.
Ich würde gar nicht wissen, wie ich mich dabei benehmen sollte. (60)

Oh, Anastas [Andlau], how I thank you, that you did not put upon my shoulders the load of a busy, caring industrious life. I would not know how to behave in it.

Here Faustine assumes the role of a child. She misses Andlau’s guidance and succumbs to weariness: “Antworten nach meinem Sinn giebt mir niemand, als Du. Ich sehne mich, sie zu hören.
Sie zu lesen—bin ich überdrüssig. Der fatale Überdrüß! muß er sich überall einschleichen?” (61)
(“No one other than you gives me answers to my liking. I long to hear your answers. To read
them—I am weary. The fatal surfeit! Does it always have to creep in everywhere?”).
Unsurprisingly, her sense of despondency is due to the lack of thought-provoking stimuli in
Oberwalldorf. The signs of Faustine’s Faustian yearning intensify her singular and ambiguous
position: “und ach! ich lebe so gern! Wie ich mich fürchte, sterben zu müssen, ohne gesehen,
gekannt, erkannt zu haben!” (58) (“alas! I love life! How it scares me to have to die without having
seen, without having known, without having understood!”). This letter reveals an aspiration for
philosophical understanding, and a pondering over the meaning of life. She is not satisfied with an
existence dictated by practicality, like her sister’s. Instead she seeks an insightful experience, a deep
understanding of life. Faustine’s need for spiritual guidance becomes compelling in her
continuation of this letter:

Doch die Sehnsucht bleibt. Dann sehe ich mit unaussprechlichem Erstaunen
Menschen an, die so gar nichts davon empfinden. Zuweilen beneide ich sie, und
denke, eine unendliche Fülle von Glück mache sie unempfindlich für das, was
außerhalb ihrer Sphäre liegt. Aber wenn ich mich besinne, so sehe ich wol ein,
daß ein enger Gesichtskreis nur für den taugt, dessen Auge darauf eingerichtet
ist, und dann erstaune und beneide ich nicht mehr. (59)

But the longing remains. Then I look with unspeakable astonishment at people
who have absolutely no perception of this. At times I envy them and think that an
infinite amount of luck makes them insensitive towards that which lies beyond
their sphere. But when I ponder this further, I realise that a narrow point of view
is only useful for him whose eye is accustomed to it, and then I wonder and envy
no longer.

Not surprisingly, Faustine suffers a degree of alienation from those who follow collectively modish
trends, a practical life or sexuality. In one way she feels displaced in a world in which her
ideological makeup affronts people, but in another way she relishes her difference and looks at the
broader picture, a view no doubt fostered by Andlau. Faustine distances herself and puts the basic
existence of humankind into context in her search for philosophical discernment. Her sense of self-
assuredness and individuality is heightened by her refusal to succumb to the mundanity of life. But
she is not perspicacious enough to rise beyond this spiritual challenge on her own, and so far
Andlau has been there to guide her. The harmonious arrangement with Andlau seems further
evident in their reunion in Dresden where she expresses her fondness for, and her sense of
belonging to, him:
“Nun will ich wieder leben,” sagte sie. “Ich muß zum Leben einen weiten Horizont, einen hohen Standpunkt, eine schöne Aussicht, eine reine Atmosphäre haben—Alles haben, was ich auf hohen Bergen finde, und was Deine Nähe, Dein Umgang, Dein Wesen mir geben. Ohne Dich wandle ich im Thal umher, immer den Ausgang suchend, immer auf die Berge verlangend, durstend nach Luft, nach Freiheit, nach Dir, Anastas!” (74)

“Now I want to live again,” she said. “I need a wide horizon in order to live, a high vantage point, a beautiful vista and pure atmosphere—everything that I find in the high mountains and that your proximity, the interaction with you, your being, provide me with. Without you, I am wandering in the valley, always searching for the exit, always longing for the mountains, thirsting for air, for freedom, for you—Anastas [Andlau]!”

This exclamation of affection demonstrates the important role (which, it is worth noting, is guiding and not passionate) that Andlau occupies in Faustine’s life. She enjoys the freedom that allows her to explore and live out the various aspects of her personality and the diversity from which her free spirit derives inspiration. Thus far, their cerebral rapport maintains equilibrium. There are however, to adopt Offen’s metaphor, “fissures” (European 25) bubbling, signs of three major eruptions, of restlessness. These manifest themselves firstly in her temper. “‘Der Himmel und ich’—pflegte Faustine zu sagen—‘wir müssen uns ausdonnern; das ist unsre Natur, und ihr Leute mit euern Blitzableitern langweilt uns sehr’” (HH GF 75) (“‘Heaven and I’”—Faustine used to say—“we have to release our thunder; that is our nature, and you people with your lightning rods, you bore us very much’

Faustine’s complaint about people being like lightning rods, while addressed to a third person, targets Andlau. The German noun, Blitzableiter, illuminates a salient indicator of the nature of their relationship. Blitz refers to a bolt of lightning, it suggests force and energy (Langenscheidts 118), while the verb ableiten implies drawing or draining off (22). While Faustine displays passion, Andlau does not; indeed in her disappointment she tells him that he is “eiskalt” (HH GF 104) (“ice-cold”). Any passion is wasted on Andlau. He is not shaken by desire; instead he diffuses it so that Faustine feels constrained by his guiding calm. Perhaps, Faustine’s time with virile young Clemens in Oberwalldorf was too stark a contrast to Andlau’s lack of sexual vitality.

Secondly, after the initial joy of their reunion Faustine expresses her growing restlessness to Andlau, complaining that she finds it dreadful having to remain still and seated. She would rather walk or stand: “Meine Gedanken verrosten, wenn ich sitze, und das macht nicht ruhig, sondern nur schläferig” (76) (“My thoughts get rusty when I sit and that is not calming, but puts me to sleep”).
She seeks vivacity and drama in her life, as the imperturbable reasoning and the discrete spirituality personified in Andlau takes on an air of tedium. Faustine wants to escape physical ennui. The symbolism of the fountain, which, it is important to note, she utters before their trip to Belgium and before the six months separation (which is their final separation as they only meet briefly some years later just before his death in Italy when she is Mengen’s wife) becomes the third, and significant, sign of her growing agitation: “Ruhig bin ich, wenn alle Kräfte in Bewegung sind und wie die Strahlen einer Fontäne springen” (76) (“I am calm when all energy is in motion and rises like the jet from a fountain”).

Water and thunder, as expressed in Faustine’s preceding analogies, project energy, which generally suggests freedom, emancipation and equality. However, apart from an overall liberating effect I believe Faustine’s waterjet exclamation to be of a more intimate nature, that is, as suggesting the calm intensity before an orgasmic release that has been lacking in her relationship with Andlau. As a sexually feeling woman the absence of physical consummation with Andlau contributed to a feeling of frustration. This may have prompted masturbation as an alternative, a daring topic in 1841. Cixous describes the ante-climax of masturbation with similar intensity to that of Faustine’s fountain jet: “I, too, have felt so full of luminous torrents that I could burst” (876). Faustine’s use of the fountain metaphor indicates that she has not “burst” she has not gained satisfaction or calm, but has yet to reach an orgasm. Her sexual frustration is evident when she cites further contradictory imagery: “die Sonne purpurgolden glüht, und unter ihr Blitze gleich Silberschlangen aus dem Gewölk auftauchen” (HH GF 76) (“the sun glows crimson-golden, and below her the lightning appears like silver snakes out of the clouds”).

Faustine emphasises that only when these paradoxical images materialise, (she continues with the peaceful moon and fighting, and the whole earth being incensed and gleaming like an adorned altar), only then, will she be “himmlisch ruhig! und nur dann” (76) (“heavenly quiet! and only then”). Faustine will eventually experience sexual ecstasy in her relationship with Mengen (“in ihr stand das Gewitter neben der Sonne . . . sie war von einer Leidenschaftlichkeit . . .” [332] “in her the thunder stood next to the sun . . . she was passionate . . .”), as becomes evident when these contradictory images are evoked during her marriage to Mengen.

Exhausted after this revealing utterance, in which, I believe, lies the crux of Faustine’s eventual decision to leave Andlau, she instructs him to play the piano, saying that he never speaks.

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71 Masturbation was considered to be a defect inherited at birth that weakened the body, softened the brain and let to impotence, lethargy, insanity and finally death. In 1843 the Russian medical practitioner Kaan published in Germany Psychopathia Sexualis, in which he pointed out its dangers. This influenced Krafft-Ebing to publish his study about sexual behaviour more than forty years later (Haeberle 10.3.1).

72 The persecution for masturbation had reached a peak during the nineteenth century (Haeberle 7.1). Until 1794 the Prussian code dictated burning at the stake for homosexuality and other “unnatural acts” by both men and women. This code had only just been ‘humanised’ in 1837 to liberalise the burning sentence to “imprisonment followed by life-long punishment” (Faderman and Eriksson XV).
more beautifully than through musical notes (77). At this moment Faustine is no longer content with Andlau’s verbal dialogue and seeks solace in melody. Without answering, Andlau kisses her “beautiful feet” (77) and then starts playing the piano, with this gesture probably fuelling her sexual frustration. There is symbolic foreboding in this passage. Andlau was physically, and is now no longer verbally, able to satisfy Faustine’s longings and needs. The once calming effect of his words does not suffice. That he obediently responds to her instructions to play the piano by kissing her feet, gives also rise to differing interpretations.

Eroticism may be suggested, but in my reading it seems that he is subservient and accepts their imminent separation. Andlau’s spiritual guidance has been usurped by Faustine’s sexual needs. Her yearning for something that is missing in her life with him has increased. In view of her relatively sudden acceptance of Mengen’s ‘bursting with vitality’ proposal, I interpret this choice by Faustine as being due to a long-standing lack of sexual gratification. This is emphasised by her use of the fountain metaphor to express the impossible—satisfaction of her physical needs. It is therefore little wonder that Faustine is bursting “to release [her] thunder” (75). It also explains why she embarks on another, the third, phase in her life’s quest. Hahn-Hahn’s literary strategies subtly but consistently reveal subtextually a meaning that addresses a modern topic of female sexual frustration. As is evident, Andlau’s and Faustine’s relationship is as complex as Faustine’s personality. Her restlessness intensifies, perhaps due to the companionship of Clemens, a similarly incongruent character in conforming society.

4.4 Clemens
Walldorf’s ideal of family life, “Man must rule” (65), is contrasted to that of his young bachelor brother, Clemens, who aspires to have a wife with whom he is compatible: “daß sie für mich vom Himmel herabgefallen wäre” (64) (“who would be as if fallen from the heavens for me”). This is to Faustine’s inclination. She likes it when he refers to her sister’s domestic objectives: “der Mann etwas mehr von seiner Frau wünscht und erwartet, als daß sie ihm die Suppe nicht versalze” (64) (“a husband wants more from his wife than soup that is not too salted”). Phrases like these demonstrate Hahn-Hahn’s humour while defusing the impact of serious social issues. Faustine’s relationship with Clemens is platonic. Clemens was fond of Faustine for she had treated him with kindness in his younger years when everybody else considered him a dunce: “Faustine, die mit dem unbeholfenen blöden Menschen sprach und scherzte, bis er etwas seine eckige Scheu verlor” (51) (“Faustine, who spoke and joked with this awkwardly clumsy being until he lost some of his gawky shyness”).

This demonstrates her empathy. Initially she does not allow Clemens to accompany her on her nature walks, preferring to keep her distance. Eventually, however, Faustine and Clemens spend more time together and it becomes clear that the two young people enjoy each other’s company.
Inspired by his receptivity, Faustine discusses issues beyond the scope of polite conversational dialogue and divulges her philosophical pondering on the souls of humankind. At one stage she announces that the distinction between the height of a person’s exhilarating awareness and the depth of their despair is so fine that it can send them to their death, and that people die from causes other than old age. Conveying this rumination to Clemens suggests a relaxed intimacy but, as a foreboding of their fate, it heightens the reader’s perception and suspense. As their friendship grows, Clemens falls in love with Faustine:

Faustine hatte keine Ahnung, daß Clemens oder irgendein anderer Mann ein Interesse für sie hegen könne, welches die gewöhnlichen Grenzen der Theilnahme und des Wohlwollens überstiege. Eine tiefe Neigung einzuflößen, schien ihr unmöglich, weil sie keine erwidern zu können glaubte, und sie hatte die feste Überzeugung, dies stehe ihr, so zu sagen, auf der Stirn geschrieben. (61-62)

Faustine had no idea that Clemens or any other men would harbour an interest in her, which would transgress the usual border marked by sympathy and benevolence. To instil deep affection seemed to her impossible, as she believed that she would be unable to respond. She was totally convinced that this was written, so to speak, on her face.

By her own admission Faustine lacks the ability to commit herself to reciprocal love. This sheds some light on her relatively short-lived arrangements with Andlau and Mengen, and supports her stance on an everlasting love concept, as discussed below. Even though Faustine had been married, and considered Andlau her soulmate, the novel presents her as somewhat naïve. Moreover, like a typical heroine of romantic novels, Faustine is oblivious to the fascination she exerts on men. Accordingly, as a narrative device, her attractiveness as a character is ensured through her lack of vanity, considered to be a female fault (Richards, “Era” 228). In line with her modest upbringing, Faustine displays no airs. She appreciates the arts, loves to paint and wonders about the purpose of her existence. Her naivety permits her liberties that sophisticated women, who are aware of possible repercussions, would cunningly avoid.

She divulges her intimate musings without realising the devastating consequences that such openness creates for the equally inexperienced Clemens. In his naivety, Clemens appears as a kindred spirit to Faustine. The connecting element between Faustine, Clemens, and Cunigunde is their streak of individuality that stands out in the society in which they live. While each follows their own agenda: Clemens’s unsuccessful pursuit of Faustine, Cunigunde’s love of Faustine, her refusal to marry Feldern, and Faustine’s attempt to strive for lasting fulfilment in her life, none
seems able to overcome the hurdle of freeing themselves from society’s firmly entrenched conventions.

Some time earlier Faustine had discussed with Andlau a possible relationship with Clemens. She then insightfully reasoned: “Ich würde fürchten, er ließe mich fallen, oder ich spränge herunter” (HH GF 106) (“I would fear that he would drop me, or I would jump down”). Her restive temperament is comparable to Clemens’s, and she is cognisant of their similar traits. Clemens, a rural and urban misfit, was brought up on an estate, but does not like farming life. He visits social gatherings but his behaviour affronts people in elegant and glib society. He is not a scholar, but ponders. His practical sense frowns on culture’s artificial refinement: “Die Weisheit, in eine Wissenschaft gebracht, kam mir so spaßhaft zugestutzt vor, wie der Baum, dem der Gärtner eine Thierform giebt, damit man doch wisse, was so ein dummer Baum bedeute” (241-42) (“Wisdom brought into science is to me as artificial as the tree that is shaped by a gardener into an animal shape, for the purpose of convincing us of the meaning of such a stupid tree”). Faustine also expresses her disapproval of social affectations and similarly Clemens does not hold back when criticizing society:

“Thut nur nicht preziös mit eurer guten Gesellschaft!” rief Clemens ärgerlich; “in ihr fallen Dinge vor, deren keine schlechte sich schämen dürfte. Ist die Gesellschaft schlecht, d.h. gemein und roh, nun, so ist auch das rohe Wort und der gemeine Scherz am rechten Platz, und Niemand wird dadurch beleidigt. Aber in der guten, der feinen, der gebildeten, der eleganten, was wird da geredet! zierlich immer und mit pikanten Wendungen—die grössten Unanständigkeiten [. . . ] Besonders die alten Männer haben recht ihr höllisches Behagen dran, und das macht auch den jüngern Courage.” (245)

“Don’t be so precious with your high society!” shouted Clemens, annoyed; “in it things occur that even bad company would not be ashamed of. If society is bad, that is, mean and rough, well, then the rough word and the common joke are not misplaced and nobody will be insulted by it. But in the good, the refined, the educated, the elegant society, how talk is being conducted there! Delicate always and with piquant turns—the coarsest indecencies [. . . ] In particular the old men indulge in this devilish comfort, and that gives courage to the young to follow suit.”

The character of Clemens enables the author to vent her anger with the hypocrisy of ‘good’ society. Previously Faustine had bitterly criticised the inequality and pretence of society towards women. But, contrary to Clemens, she partakes in social games from the status point of a star attraction, a
“Sonne, um die sich die Planeten bewegen” (113) (“sun around which the planets are moving”). She thus maintains decorum, while Clemens offends from the social periphery. Yet they share similar disquieting qualities in a prescriptive and categorised society. Faustine, however, had the advantage of Andlau’s guidance to develop personal ambitions and social refinement during their relationship. The non-conformity of twenty-two year old Clemens is heightened by the years he spent in the rural remoteness of Oberwalldorf. This fostered his social incongruence when visiting Dresden, and the price for his unconventionality is exclusion, to some extent, from the upper classes.

During Andlau’s prolonged absence, Mengen and Feldern visit Faustine frequently, and she is initially also pleased to see Clemens in Dresden: “Clemens Walldorf? willkommen tausendmal!” (133) (“Clemens Walldorf? A thousand welcomes!”). When Clemens sees Andlau’s letter on Faustine’s desk and says that it must be pleasant to be able to write to her, she teasingly responds that it is: “Viel angenehmer mit mir zu plaudern” (135) (“much more pleasant to chat with me”). She thus prefers Clemens, who is present, to Andlau, who is not. She will in due course, in a similar frame of mind, accept Mengen’s marriage proposal. Since both Mengen and Clemens vie for the same woman, tension arises. Clemens in his naivety, a trait already noted in Faustine, is unable to control his jealousy of Mengen, which enables Mengen to console Faustine. When Clemens stops visiting, Faustine sends Feldern to investigate. Faustine inadvertently plays with Clemens’s feelings because, when he finally had the strength to make a break and not visit her any more, she called him back. Faustine will also react to Mengen in the same way.

Clemens sees Faustine as the cause of his dismay: “O das Leid, welches dies Geschlecht über die ganze herrliche Schöpfung verbreitet, ist namenlos, und der Mann verloren, der von einem Weibe Heil begehrt! Und gerade, daß die engelhaften so dämonisch sind!” (241) (“Oh the pain which this sex spreads over the whole wonderful creation is indescribable, and that man who desires salvation from a woman is lost! And this is all the more because the angel-like ones are so demonic”). Clemens perceptively sees two opposing sides of Faustine’s nature; neither Andlau nor Mengen observe this demonic trait. Using Treder’s comparison of demons with subconscious feelings of repressed passion would suggest that a physical attraction existed between the two, which may also have contributed to Faustine’s outburst of frustration with Andlau as discussed above.

While Mengen is away from Dresden, Faustine allows Clemens to visit more often and her attitude towards him becomes friendlier. Here the narrator, as antithesis to the heroine, warns women against men as they are unable to feel empathy: “Nur nie Mitleid mit dem Manne geäußert! er mißbraucht es alle Mal” (258) (“Never ever express pity for the man! He will abuse it every time”). Had Faustine been in tune with her suitors, with Clemens in this instance, she would have realised the effect that her artlessness might have on a similarly artless Clemens and that this would
not be without consequences. However, because Faustine is the protagonist, the ensuing tension heightens the reader’s expectations.

Sensing Faustine’s sympathy, Clemens feels encouraged and reasons that, with persistence and his daily presence, Faustine will eventually reciprocate his feelings of love. He is therefore quite confident about his right to her attention, and says to Feldern: “Das ist es eben! sie muß nicht mit mir umgehen wie mit aller Welt” (244) (“Well, that is it! She must not treat me as she treats the whole world”). While he feels privileged, he is importunate. Upon realising that she will marry Mengen, his hurt turns to insult. He compares Faustine to Queen Libussa who, in order to retain her independence, had her lovers ‘defenestrated’ into the Moldau: “Hört eine Persönlichkeit irgendwie auf Ihnen homogen zu sein, und hätte sie Ihnen das Innerste des Lebens dargebracht,—Sie lassen sie in die Moldau stürzen” (314) (“Once a personality somehow refrains from being homogenous to you, and even if they had offered you the most precious in life,—you let them be thrown into the Moldau”). This comparison with the legendary Libussa, and Faustine’s resultant painful reflection on severing the relationship with Andlau, increases the narrative tension. In her response: “Das ist wirklich nicht ganz unwahr” (314) (“This is really not quite untrue”) Faustine acknowledges her awareness of the pain that she caused Andlau; but she is oblivious to Clemens’s feelings.

Realising that he has no place in Faustine’s future, Clemens asks poignantly if she remembers what she said on their walks in Oberwalldorf: “Auf der Grenze zwischen dem Bewußtsein der neuen Erkenntnis und der Verzweiflung über den Irrthum—stirbt man. Ich stehe auf jener Grenze und ich sterbe” (323) (“On the border between the recognition of new revelation and the despair of misunderstanding—one dies. I am standing on this boundary and I am dying”). Clemens’s first sentence reveals his miscomprehension that Faustine had loved him but also his acceptance. Secondly, he knows that Faustine in time will also suffer from treading the fine line between revelation and misunderstanding. He recognises that her hasty conformity to society’s norms, as shown in her forthcoming marriage to Mengen, will not extinguish her yearning. After this declaration, Clemens puts a pistol into his mouth and pulls the trigger.

For Clemens, death was the solution to his great emotional pain, since life had lost meaning. His final deed is an act of desperation, or perhaps a personal triumph. The desperation lies in his unrequited love, the triumph in his revenge. In my reading he recognised Faustine’s true mercurial and non-conforming nature in a society that demands compliance. He knows that the effect of his suicide will remain with Faustine and that eventually she will, as he did, not want to continue to live in this world. I suggest also that his character was meant to foreshadow the incompatibility between Faustine and Mengen. Due to the traits of similarity, which, acknowledging Clemens’s lack of striving and industry, I see in their self-centredness and incongruity with society, Faustine was, from his point of view, bound to follow his path. However, while Clemens, like Mengen, demands a
total commitment from the person he loves, Andlau and Faustine are capable of maintaining a more fluid, less static and more unconventional love concept.
Chapter 5  Gräfin Faustine—Social Non-Conformity

5.1  Expected conformity

5.1.1  Marriage

We know that Faustine does not sympathise with fictional Vinzenze sacrificing happiness in favour of duty in her marriage, as happiness is denied to all characters in that triangular relationship. Crucially, because Faustine rejects Vinzenze’s repudiation, I consider Faustine’s final act as a determined, if symbolic, step towards self-actualisation rather than renunciation. However, Faustine has to experience several stages before reaching that phase in her life. Focusing on Faustine’s first phase of her life’s quest reveals that her marriage to Count Obernau was arranged. After leaving the orphanage, Faustine and Adele stay with their aunt, who dislikes the presence of her two seventeen-year old nieces in her own circle of male admirers. It is interesting to note that the aunt enjoys a self-governing existence (which may have influenced the more mature Faustine), though no light is shed on her background. The aunt does, however, master societal rules by establishing herself on firmly independent grounds. To resume her uncontested social reign, she encourages any suitor with sufficient pecuniary means to vie for the hand of each young girl. The difference between the self-assured, middle-aged aunt and the sensitively unsure and youthful Faustine is evident.

While the aunt recognises the weak character of Faustine’s suitor (he is easily led by his drinking and gambling male companions), she considers it a woman’s vocation to elevate the man above his foibles: “eine gute, edle Frau könne ihn leicht zu sich emporheben und ihn zu einem neuen, bessern Menschen umwandeln—das sei der herrlichste Beruf des Weibes” (HH GF 274) (“A good, noble woman could easily raise him to her level and thus transform him into a new, better human being—that would represent the most wonderful vocation for a woman”). Where it is expedient, the aunt agrees with the Lutheran doctrine that a woman’s duty in life is to oversee her children and support her husband by aspiring to the best for their welfare. She strongly recommends this course of action to Faustine without, however, following this advice herself.

Lacking any other guidance, Faustine becomes engaged to Obernau without any like or dislike on her part. Since her sister had married three months earlier, and displays signs of happiness with a husband whom Faustine finds incompatible with her own nature, she concludes that: “der Mann sei am liebenswürdigsten in der Ehe” (275) (“Man would be most charming in matrimony”). She therefore agrees to the marriage with Obernau despite her considerable doubts and, as a consequence, becomes resentfully unhappy. She bemoans with irony her situation as a wife in a marriage that incarcerates her as a bonded woman whose suffering is sanctioned by society:

Gibt es denn auf der ganzen weiten Gotteswelt eine Schmach, welche der gleich kommt: einem Mann zu gehören, ohne ihn zu lieben? O ich glaube, ein ganzes

Is there in the whole of God’s wide world a humiliation that equals that of belonging to a man without loving him? Oh, I believe a whole life of depravity is being described as such. But, no! no! I err! To the people I was indeed his wife [Obernau’s], wedded to him at the altar—and then it doesn’t matter.

Faustine’s feeling of isolation is exacerbated by a marital code, and a law, that sanctions a woman’s suffering and the mental anguish caused by her mismatched husband. Faustine’s last words, “and then it doesn’t matter,” discounts the possibility that any person would have sympathised with the unhappiness that she experienced. Her arranged marriage with Obernau displays similar characteristics to that proposed by Cunigunde’s mother.

5.1.2 Sexual coercion in marriage

Interestingly, as well as Andlau’s lack of sexual relations with Faustine, Hahn-Hahn highlights another issue, another taboo subject, that is not mentioned in the novels of ‘polite’ nineteenth-century society: forced sexual relations. For years girls were married without instruction or knowledge of sexual practices, or even of their own bodily functions. Indeed, this ignorance still existed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, for it was not uncommon for a young girl to be confronted with great horror and perturbation by the unexpected and unexplained blood flow of her first menstruation.73 Yet in the 1840s, Faustine describes her tormented experience of sexual intercourse in her marriage with her first husband:


73 One such case was Emma Moennich who was born in 1876 in Essen (Fricke).
But in those days I cried about my fate. I felt myself to be inhuman, humiliated by the passion that I aroused without sharing, and the creature whom a man kicks off the sofa on to the street seemed to me to be less degraded than I felt—as that creature is outside the code of law, as that creature has no claim to honour. But I, young, uncorrupted, morally pure, under the umbrella of the law, surrounded by every protective defence considered holy by honour, I suddenly saw myself under the controlling power of a person whose dreadful right over me was meant to be sacred, because he had sworn in church, in front of many witnesses, to always use that right. What did it concern me? I had to submit to that right: only in that way could I understand it! Only with that attitude could it not be disgraced.

The only way that Faustine can maintain her dignity in the face of enforced sexual intercourse is to consider herself marketable merchandise. Her husband purchases a commodity (Faustine) therefore he is entitled to assume his legal rights over his purchase (her). Drilled to obey since her days in the orphanage, she submitted to her husband’s sexual demands with shame. While there is no indication that Obernau used violence, such as hitting or kicking, his forceful invasion of Faustine's body represents an act of violence, of rape. Whether in marriage or otherwise, “rape is a crime of violence, not of sex” (Ammer 431), and women who report it are often made to feel provocateurs who may perhaps have liked the act. There are several definitions of rape of which Ilsa Lottes includes psychological and manipulative sexual coercion (126). In these instances the domineering person pressures the subordinate into compliance to “contribute to unwanted sexual intercourse, the inability to say no,” (126) against which no law existed. Dane commends Hahn-Hahn for her modern approach in dealing with a topic that was taboo socially and legally:

Im Hinblick auf die Frage, wie sich der erzwungene eheliche Beischlaf in der Literatur in Beziehung zu dem zeitgenössischen Recht ausnimmt, ist dieser Roman [Gräfin Faustine] in doppelter Weise seiner Zeit voraus. Die eheliche Beischlaferzwingung hat hier so gravierende Folgen für die Frau, daß damit die Ehe gefährdet wird. Zwei Sachverhalte werden hier miteinander verschränkt: Die Frau wird durch das Verhalten des Ehemannes verletzt, weil er den Beischlaf erzwingt. Daran zerbricht die Ehe, hat mithin von innen heraus eine Gefährdung erfahren. Die juristische Deutung der Notzucht allgemein als Verletzung der Sittlichkeit, womit die Integrität der bürgerlichen Institutionen schlechthin, darunter auch die Ehe, gemeint war, sollte das, was der Roman exponiert, erst viel später nachvollziehen. (Dane 264-65)
In view of the question of how the enforced conjugal coitus is represented in literature, in respect to contemporary law, this novel [Gräfin Faustine] is ahead of its time in two ways. The conjugal coitus enforcement has here such serious results for the woman that with it the marriage is endangered. Two circumstances are here conjoined: The woman is hurt by the behaviour of the husband because he forces the coitus. With this the marriage breaks as it has been endangered from within. The juridical interpretation of rape is generally understood as a violation of morality. Middle class institutions, which include marriage, should only much later implement laws to protect that morality to which the novel draws attention.

As in other Western countries, marital rape only became a punishable offence in Germany in 1997 ("Facts"). Faustine had no recourse to turn to anybody for comfort or advice. Her twin sister, submerged in marital bliss, lacked the understanding to empathise. Her aunt had forsaken her, and law and church condemned her to her misery. It is interesting that she feels comfortable enough with Cunigunde to describe her misery: "die Männer lieben auf allerlei Weise, und es giebt freilich eine, die uns elnder macht, als je ihr Haß uns machen könnte" (HH GF 173) ("men love in all sorts of ways, and there is of course one, that makes us more miserable than their hate could ever make us"). By telling Cunigunde she is also telling the female reader not to submit to this custom at a time when marital rape was not publicly debated.

In her marriage to Obernau Faustine internalised her torment and resignedly submitted to his sexual self-satisfaction:

Ich sah bisweilen die Leute ganz erstaunt an, wenn sie mich mit Achtung behandelten—die übrigens der vornehmen, reichen Frau nie fehlt—ich hätte fragen mögen: was fällt euch ein! der willenlose, dumpf gehorchende Sclav, zählt der mit in der menschlichen Wesenreihe? und steht mir’s nicht wie ein Brandmal auf der Stirn, daß ich Sclavin bin? (282-83)

I looked at times with quite a surprise at people, when they treated me with respect—which, incidentally, a high-class, wealthy woman is never lacking—I would have liked to ask: how dare you! The weak-willed, dull obeying slave, is she included as a human being? And isn’t it written like a stigma on my forehead that I am a slave?

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74 Here it should be mentioned that South Australia was in 1976 the first jurisdiction in the world to make rape in marriage a criminal offence ("SA Firsts").
Her feeling of self-worth is severely diminished. In seclusion she senselessly accepts her distress. Not loving her husband but as a legalised object of his desire, she reluctantly degrades herself:

Er kannte von der Liebe nichts, als was die Sinnlichkeit ihm zuflüsterte, die mich empört, wenn ihr nicht die Seele ihren himmelblauen Mantel umgeschlagen—
und so lebten wir, m i t einander schauerlich verbunden, i n einander schauerlich getrennt. (285)

He knew nothing of love other than what sensuality whispered to him, and that insulted me, since our souls were not embraced in a heavenly blue mantle—and so we lived, horribly connected w i t h each other, horribly divided w i t h i n each other.

Because of Obernau’s coarseness, Faustine is unable to develop any passion for him. She is disgusted by the act of copulation. She implies that had she been in love with him, as indicated by the “heavenly blue mantle” (which I interpret as suggesting a reciprocal love), instead of an abhorrent duty in a loveless match she would have enjoyed sexual intercourse. The spaced out “mit” (“with”) and “in” (“within”), signify that even though they were legally and clerically bound together, during the sex act they remained separate entities—one powerful, the other submissive. While Obernau lacks understanding of his inexperienced bride, his self-satisfying sexual act shows his lack of consideration. He is brutal to obtain his conjugal rights even though he is aware of his wife’s pain, misery, and disgust. She is reluctant, finds it shameful, and is therefore emotionally and physically withdrawn. Because of this socially-sanctioned marital rape, Faustine feels forlorn and condemned to a life of emotional suffering.

Reflecting on her sister’s fate, Faustine concludes that Adele would have made any man happy “—und dies wird doch zuweilen als Lob von einem Mädchen gesagt! Nun, ich habe es nie verdient—”(276) (“—and this is at times praised in a girl! Well, I never deserved it—”). With her sister as successful domestic role model, Faustine in her unhappiness, loneliness and desperation (which is born of an act of degradation), psychologically considers herself to be a failure. As a result of her humiliation, she loses her self-esteem and concludes that she never deserved anything better. The novel depicts a social and church-endorsed sexual ritual that can diminish a woman’s esteem to the level of a loss of confidence and self-denial. The emphasis on the physicality of this traditional union of incompatible people underscores the mental anguish experienced by the protagonist. It provides convincing reason for her entering into a non-sexual relationship with Andlau, and also explains that the harmony that she experiences in this unorthodox arrangement temporarily compensates for any sexual deficiencies.
Hahn-Hahn discusses the topic of forced sexual relations also in her novel, *Der Rechte*. Vinzenze’s mother advises her daughter: “Mein Kind, ein Mann darf Dinge befehlen, die schwerer sind, als ihm einen Kuß geben, und die Frau muß gehorchen, wenn sie nicht gegen ihr Gewissen sind” (HH *DR* 235) (“My child, a man is permitted to demand things that are more difficult than just giving him a kiss, and the woman must obey, if it is not against her conscience”). The aside about conscience may be a veiled reference to particular sex acts and does demonstrate a prevailing anxiety, and the dilemma with which women were faced. What is a daughter like Vinzenze to do? Her mother instructs her to obey her husband, but only if her conscience permits. How can she combine the performance of marital duty with her own free will, if her will contradicts what duty prescribes? Her mother offers a sham solution that may ease her own conscience but does not alleviate the daughter’s dilemma. Here the divide between young girl and matriarch is contrasted. On the one hand, the mother knowingly submits her daughter to what she most likely suffered herself, thereby maintaining the cycle of subdued and subjugated womanhood. On the other hand, the mother does not have the power to change this situation and may just ‘hope for the best.’ Hahn-Hahn’s progressive perspective is apparent by her addressing an intimate topic that concerned women and that was not readily found in the literature of her times, addressed in polite society, mentioned by the matriarchs or socially and legally addressed until very recent times.

5.1.3 The matriarchs

Matriarchal Frau von Stein’s position is unambiguous. I define matriarchy not as a “mirror-image of patriarchy” nor as a female line of ancestral descent, but rather as a female position of power within the confines of a domestic or social realm (Tuttle 199). Depending on her social or political circle a matriarch can be very influential, as in the characters of Frau von Stein and Faustine’s aunt. This matriarchal correlation with Cunigunde and Faustine highlights the extremes of women’s roles in nineteenth-century society. The matriarchs exert power in their domestic realm, and are able to force their offspring (or ward, in Faustine’s case) into unsuitable marriages to satisfy their own objectives of maintaining the equilibrium of social order. They help fulfil women’s predetermined roles in patriarchal society. Adele and Faustine initially resign themselves to matrimony. Cunigunde appears to be the most liberated of the three young girls, though the assenting Adele feels invigorated in the realm of her family.

Matriarchal women could exert their influence not only over daughters but husbands and sons as well. In their domestic realm they were very powerful, as has been observed in the power play of Faustine’s aunt and is apparent in the position of Frau von Stein and Mengen’s mother. Mengen’s parents are initially not impressed when he announces his engagement to Faustine. To please him, and because of his declared love for Faustine, they give their blessing to this union. Although his mother warns:
solche Frauen—genial, ungewöhnlich, über dem Alltäglichen, und wie man sie nennen mag! haben so selten die Klarheit, Ruhe, Gewissenhaftigkeit und Pflichtthreue, mit denen man einzig und allein glücklich sein und machen kann. (HH GF 312)

such women—brilliant, unusual, above the ordinary, and whatever attributes one may find for them! They have so seldom the clarity, calmness, conscientiousness and sense of duty, with which alone one can be happy and create happiness.

In fulfilling their responsibility for socialisation Frau Mengen’s stress on duty is similar to that of Frau von Stein, the aunt, and that of the orderliness with which church, state, and men aim to control women. Wrapped in neatly conforming packages women can grace their designated place and function in society. The firmly placed and complying, but shrewd, matriarch then casts her powerful net in an invisible and manipulative manner. This power is at times painfully acquired as a result of the teasing she received in her youth: “daß eine Menge trotziger, impertinenter, eigensinniger Frauen diese Eigenschaften den Neckereien zu verdanken haben, mit denen sie in ihrer Kindheit [von Männern] heimgesucht sind” (HH DR 282) (“that a lot of defiant, impertinent, stubborn women owe these characteristics to the teasing which they suffered from them [men] in their childhood”). Thus the co-dependence of the oppressor with the oppressed, of power and corresponding compliance, asserts itself, and the pattern continues into the next generation. In this society the non-stereotypical role of an attractive young woman, in contrast to the matriarchal older woman, unsettles a character like Feldern:

[Feldern:] Frauen, auf die man sich verlassen kann, ohne Schwankungen, ohne besorgniserregende Allüren—Frauen, die den Mann nie hinreißen und ihm stets gefallen. Solche Faustine entzückt, aber wer hat den Muth, sie zu heiraten? nicht einmal Andlau. Weibern gegenüber, die immer wie in einem Regen von Brillantfeuer stehen, kommt man sich so dunkel, so inferieur, so dumm vor, daß enorme Selbstverleugnung dazu gehört, um sie zu lieben. Vielleicht liegt aber in ihrer Liebe Lohn für diese Demütigung. (HH GF 154-55)

[Feldern] Women on whom one can rely, without moods, without alarming airs and graces—women who never enthral a man and who always please him. Such a Faustine charms, but who has the courage to marry her? Not even Andlau. In front of women, who seem to stand in a shower of brilliance, one feels so dull, so inferior, so stupid, that it requires an enormous self-denial in order to love them. But perhaps their love is the reward for this humiliation.
Feldern believes steadfastness a worthy attribute in a desirable wife. He perceives Faustine to be on the one hand an always pleasantly obliging female who curbs her emotions. But, on the other, because she seems to him to be in control of her life, she has power, is independent, and that poses a threat to men. Therefore any conventional male, and even Andlau, would need courage to marry her because men like wives who subordinate themselves. Furthermore, Feldern’s musings suggest that, if women outshine men’s endeavours, the male equilibrium goes out of balance so that men feel inferior, threatened and intimidated. His aside, that perhaps their love compensates for any humiliation, disregards any sense of equality—a balanced relationship devoid of degrading innuendoes. Feldern’s attitude reinforces that women who have the courage to be different, and who do not abide by a societal charade, are more cunning and powerful opponents. His reflection mirrors the fragile self-image of those men who feel their authority to be under attack.

In contrast to this masculine mindset, Hahn-Hahn draws Herr von Stein, in a reversal of roles, as a mild-mannered man. Unbeknown to his wife, he provides emotional support to his daughter, Cunigunde, but is too weak to stand up to his domineering wife. Cunigunde confirms her mother’s dominance to Faustine: “denn meine Mutter ist nicht daran gewöhnt, daß wir ihren Wünschen entgegen handeln” (174) (“as my mother is not used to us acting against her wishes”). As matriarch, Frau von Stein abides by patriarchal rules in projecting to the outside world an image of subdued and unthreatening modesty while invisibly cementing her powerful influence. Ironically, Mengen perceives Cunigunde’s mother to display a discreet, endearingly submissive persona, thus confirming the social pretence of the powerful matriarch.

5.2 Challenge to traditions

5.2.1 Alternative forms of love

Faustine’s relationships, her marriages and Cunigunde’s same-sex love, differ from traditional views of lifelong romanticised heterosexual monogamy propounded in for example Wobeser’s Elisa, or the Wife as she ought to be. Notwithstanding changing ideas about marriage and relationships, in Western society love is often associated with a bond to the loved one. In religious devotion love is understood to be an unconditional love for God. Hahn-Hahn challenges these traditions in Gräfin Faustine and questions such commitments in her depiction of Faustine and Andlau’s unconventional liaison. She promotes the maintenance of separate identities, whereby each partner maintains individuality and sexuality. Furthermore, Faustine’s inability to maintain a lifelong relationship with Obernau, Andlau, Mengen and, eventually, even with God, challenges the very foundation of an everlasting love devotion. Cultural mores prescribe this notion of a monosexual commitment, which simplifies the governing orderliness of institutions. The heroine’s depiction of unconventionality and reluctance to commit to a formalised love or sexual relationship
challenges one of the main traditions of Western society and thus places Hahn-Hahn in a feminist vanguard.

Faustine’s stance in her personal relationships is controversial, and I interpret her lack of commitment to a long-term pledge not as unprincipled but as realistically modern. Faustine’s psychological conflict places her incongruously in a societal structure whose personal, social, and institutional values are based on strictly prescriptive moral directives. Against this background, the depiction of a socially rebellious heroine, who experiences love in three ways, represents a challenge. The first is non-sexual affection with Andlau, the second is a conventional marriage with Mengen, and the third is saintly devotion (I do not include the marriage to Obernau because it was devoid of love).

The last kind of love is based on the spirituality of a saint, who “by nature has a spontaneous love of [wo]mankind; [s]he does good because to do so gives [her] happiness” (Russell, History 735). This love is altruistic and Faustine expects to be imbued with it when she enters the convent. Faustine’s past reveals that, while married to Obernau, she was attracted to Andlau with whom she experiences the first type of love. Andlau’s calm distinguishes him amongst Obernau’s frivolous friends. Not surprisingly Faustine is taken by him:

—mit welcher unaussprechlichen Wonne, mit welcher lautlosen Überraschung

sah ich aus dem alltäglichen, langweiligen Schwarm eine Gestalt [Andlau]
auftauchen, bei der es mir wohl ward, bei der ich mich in meinem innersten
Wesen geschützt und frei fühlte! (HH GF 287)

—with what inexpressible bliss, with what noiseless surprise did I see amongst
this humdrum, tedious crowd a figure [Andlau] emerge, with whom I felt at ease,
with whom I felt in my innermost being protected and free!

In Andlau she meets a man with whom she is in spiritual harmony. When Obernau shoots Andlau, who refuses to be drawn into a duel with him (291),75 Faustine is released from her mental internment. The reason for Andlau’s refusal to duel might stem from an overall non-physicality, perhaps an effeminate streak. After all, in some circles duelling was “a gentlemanly vice” (Dar 61). This chain of events takes on tragi-comic hues because Faustine is now provoked into action. She leaves her brutal husband and departs with the wounded Andlau, to whom she now swears allegiance because “der für mich litt, unschuldig und qualvoll litt” (HH GF 291) (“he suffered for me, suffering innocently and painfully”). She takes on the role of the traditionally strong man who

75 Duels, typically fought to redress an insult to a man’s honour, (Keiser 5) were “most tenaciously” practiced in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century (McAleer 3).
takes care of the weak woman. She does as the masculine Mengen will do after Clemens’s suicide. Here the text illustrates another role reversal.

Faustine’s sense of self-worth blossoms with Andlau, whom she “unaussprechlich verehrte” (292) (“indescribably revered”). She felt elevated and “nie herabgezogen” (293) (“never degraded”), contrary to her feelings during the sexual act with Obernau. Under Andlau’s guidance and affection she blossomed: “Dies Glück und diese Weise ließen mich in meiner vollen Selbstständigkeit und doch zugleich in der Sphäre des Weibes, welches seine Ausbildung und Befriedigung allein in der Liebe findet” (293) (“This happiness and this way left me with my total autonomy and yet at the same time in the social stratum of a woman, who finds her development and satisfaction in love alone”). After the experience of her husband’s violence, Faustine is content in a spiritual relationship that appears actively heterosexual to outsiders. She becomes self-confident and openly queries woman’s allocated position in life.

She even supports Cunigunde’s decision to renounce her engagement: “sie will nicht einen Mann heiraten, den sie nicht liebt, und das nenne ich vernünftig” (176) (“she does not wish to marry a man whom she does not love, and I think that that is very sensible”). At a social gathering she responds to discussions about a girl’s decision to marry in similar fashion: “Ein Mädchen soll die Zuversicht haben, daß weder Himmel noch Hölle sie von ihrem künftigen Gatten trennen können. Hat sie die nicht, so heirate sie ihn nicht” (117) (“A girl should have the confidence that neither heaven nor hell can separate her from her future husband. If she does not possess that, then she should not marry him”). This is another hint that Andlau is not completely compatible or satisfying her needs, otherwise she would have married him. It also demonstrates Faustine’s burgeoning change from an orphaned, submissive young girl to an autonomous woman.

Faustine is confident about her long-term relationship with Andlau. The narrator observes that Faustine is “durch seinen Umgang verwöhnt; sie fand jeden andern langweilig und steril” (101) (“spoiled in his company; she found everybody else boring and sterile”). Before his imminent departure, which was to be a final departure, Andlau, too, feels confident in his role as Faustine’s partner: “Wäre meine Seele nicht der Deinen gewiß, so würdest du mir große Sorgen machen” (97) (“Were my soul not confident in yours, I would feel very concerned about you”). Faustine replies: “mein Herz ist fest; darauf kannst du Felsen bauen” (97) (“my heart is strong; you can build rocks on it”). The narrator confirms Faustine’s happiness with Andlau by elaborating:

Er hatte sie daran gewöhnt, sich rücksichtlos, absichtlos, in unbefangener keuscher Freiheit vor ihm zu offenbaren; darum wurde es ihr schwer, in die zurückhaltenden, abwehrenden Formen der Gesellschaft sich zu fügen, [. . .] deshalb fühlte sie sich nur bei Andlau glücklich. (101)
He had accustomed her to revealing herself in front of him without intentions and considerations and in an uninhibited chaste freedom. That is why it was difficult for her to submit to the restrained, defensive forms of society [. . .] therefore she felt happy only with Andlau.

Using the adjective “keusch” (“chaste”), further demonstrates in my interpretation,76 the platonic nature of this relationship. The relaxed intimacy, or equality, depicts the two people as soul-mates. Without an orthodox marriage contract, sexual intercourse, energy or tension, they are devoid of both consummation and general frustration. Evoking images of nature, the description of a relationship that cascades ideally from one stage into another, continues with wily satire: “Andlaus Liebe war ihr die Frühlingsluft, in welcher sie, wie die Lerche, ihre Flügel ausbreitete, sich hob, und steigend und singend hängen blieb” (101) (“Andlau’s love was like spring air for her, in which she, like the lark, spread her wings, lifted herself, and ascending and chirping a song, was caught”). The joy that Faustine derives from the spring air signifies a spiritual contentment.

Interweaving idealisation with burlesque, it is suggested that Faustine may be left suspended, singing mid-air, forever. The relationship may also have reached the limits of its life, or a kind of arrested development. Faustine is ready to escape the lightness of Andlau’s platonic love for the depth of an exploration of the unknown, the depth of sexual love. In my interpretation of a non-sexual arrangement, Faustine was denied a physical climax and therefore remained in a fixed state of frustration. In other words, as a young woman with sexual vitality, in order to gain physical satisfaction she has to break through this, ultimately, restrictively netted or ‘caught’ confinement of affection. This confinement, while spiritually attractive, is a contradiction for Faustine, whose mercurial nature thrives on metaphorical air, flying and singing, but who will, all things considered, rebel against being confined. This explains the relative brevity of the relationship.

Yet in conversation with Andlau, Faustine says that their relationship will never end. Here the narrator elaborates: “Ein solches ‘nie’—ist die größte Ehre, welche eine Frau einem Manne erzeigen kann” (101) (“Such a ‘never’ is the greatest honour that a woman can present to a man”). As will be shown, part of Faustine will love Andlau until his death. Her love does not end because another person claims a stake. Mengen forces Faustine, whose capricious naivety is easily manipulated, to make a choice. In his conservative mindset, sharing Faustine, who must have the

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76 While “keusch” may be open to interpretation to mean a certain frankness or equality in intellectual exchange, Grimm’s 1873 *Wörterbuch* defines this adjective as: “enthaltsam, der Versuchung widerstehend: keusch leben, keusch sein” (651) “abstemious, to withstand temptation: live chaste, be chaste”). Amongst others they quote Schiller: “die keusche braut des himmels willst du warden” “enthaltsam gegen unreine, unerlaubte geschlechtslust: es ist nichts liebers auf erden dann ein züchtig weib, und ist nichts köstlicher dann ein keusches weib” (652) (“you want to become the chaste bride of heaven” “withstanding against impure, forbidden sexual pleasure: there is nothing better on earth than a virtuous woman/wife, and nothing more exquisite than a chaste woman/wife”). Campe’s 1808 *Wörterbuch* definition is: “Eine keusche Liebe, eine reine, von Sinnlichkeit befreite Liebe, welche auch in der Ehe noch statt finden kann” (923) (“A chaste love, a pure, freed of sensuality love, which can also occur even in marriage”).
allure of a trophy to him, with another human being, however spiritual, hurts his pride. This demonstrates the possessive attribute that is usually associated with traditional and sexual love, in contrast to her earlier free-flowing arrangement.

Not surprisingly, the representation of the firm basis on which Faustine and Andlau’s relationship is built loses more ground with the observation that Andlau: “trieb Abgötterei mit seinem lieblichen Idol” (107) (“indulged in idolatry with his lovely heroine”). This somewhat idealised rendition of Faustine’s and Andlau’s association turns unrealistically droll when Faustine, just before Andlau’s departure, pleads with him to allow her, dressed as a pageboy, to go with him (104). Andlau ignores this appeal. Any initial impression concerning the permanence of this relationship disintegrates, but Faustine’s vulnerability is confirmed. That their unusual relationship may not be acceptable to Andlau’s family confirms its anomalous nature, which is underscored by the humorous suggestion of Faustine’s disguise. While Faustine seems to be torn between loyalty to Andlau and the lure of a new adventure, given the basis of this spiritual arrangement her future action is not out of character.

In response to Faustine’s begging, Andlau suggests: “Sonst könntest Du ja Clemens Walldorf kommen lassen” (105) (“Other than that you could ask Clemens Walldorf to come”). Andlau may think Clemens harmless enough to provide Faustine with companionship during his absence. However, his elaboration: “der, nach Allem, was Du mir von ihm erzählt hast, überglücklich sein würde, Dich auf Händen tragen zu dürfen” (105-6) (“who, after all that you told me about him, would be more than happy, to be allowed to wait on you hand and foot”) indicates a teasing, and maybe provocative, streak. Perhaps he intuitively senses the compatibility between Clemens and Faustine or, alternatively, Faustine’s intensity is too overwhelming for him.

Andlau therefore secretly welcomes the call away to attend to family matters. After his departure, Faustine is in a state of depression: “Er ist fort! er ist fort! o mein Gott, bleibe du nun bei mir!” (110) (“He is gone, he is gone! Oh, my God, do you not leave my side now!”). (Here is another indication of Faustine’s decision to enter the convent after Andlau’s death.) Significantly, in a letter to Andlau ten days later, she voices her depression which, unsurprisingly, is reflected in the mood of the dark November sky: “Jetzt bin ich eingemauert wie eine verbrecherische Nonne, bedrückt, geängstigt” (123) (“Now I am walled in like a villainous nun, oppressed, frightened”). The poignancy of this sentence in view of her entering a convent five years hence echoes throughout the novel from hereon.

The next morning Faustine is more cheerful: “bin ich doch eins der glücklichsten Geschöpfe auf der wunderschönen Gotteswelt. Das muß Dich [Andlau] unaussprechlich glücklich machen; denn was ich von Glück weiß, weiß ich durch Dich” (124-25) (“am I not one of the luckiest creatures of this beautiful world of God’s. That must make you [Andlau] inexpressibly happy, as
what I know of happiness, I know from you”). Faustine once more effusively proclaims her affection for Andlau, after her disagreeable marriage to Obernau her loyalty is understandable. Yet it seems unlikely that her restless spirit will be able to sustain her overenthusiastic gushing and agitation for too long.

5.2.2 Everlasting love

The historical reluctance to officially address the flaws of institutional traditions that are based on an assumed permanence of love or affection is evident from the divorce laws that have been reformed in recent times. Yet in 1841 Faustine expresses her understanding of love by questioning a time-honoured pact:

Lieben ist: sich einem Gegenstand weihen; aber muß der Gegenstand durchaus derselbe bleiben? sind in uns keine Fortschritte, keine Umwälzungen, die einen andern bedingen? können wir bei zwanzig Jahren reif genug sein, um unsere Entwicklung bei dreißig und deren Ansprüche vorherzuwissen und uns gleich von Hause aus dafür einzurichten? Ich meines Theils hatte vor zehn Jahren kaum eine Ahnung von Allem, was ich geworden bin. Es mag ein hohes Glück sein, beim Eintritt ins Leben der Seele zu begegnen, mit der wir, bis zum Austritt aus demselben, verbunden bleiben; aber es ist ein seltner Glücksfall, daß zwei Menschen durchaus gleichen Schritt halten in ihrer Entwicklung, und daß keiner den andern überflügelt. Darum sollte man nicht eine Ausnahme zur Richtschnur machen wollen; nicht sagen: nur das Festhalten an einem Gegenstande ist Liebe. (HH GF 342)

To love is: to devote oneself to an object, but does that object have to absolutely remain the same? Is there no progress, no upheaval in us that necessitates another? Are we at twenty years of age mature enough to foresee our development and its relevant demands at thirty, to be able to accommodate those future needs by default? I for my part had hardly an idea ten years ago of anything that I have become. It may be a very rare fortune to meet upon entering life that soul, with whom we will remain conjoined until our departure from it, but it is an exceptional stroke of luck when two people’s development is kept at absolutely the same pace without surpassing each other. Therefore the exception should not become the guiding principle, and it should not be said that only to hold onto one object is love.

By challenging the permanence of love through disassociation from accustomed traditions, Faustine overturns the conventions of women’s docility (the author may covertly use the heroine as a
mouthpiece to justify her own living arrangement). Faustine’s determined stance on this, as well as on the institution of mind-numbing education, reveals an antagonism towards the establishment, which undoubtedly prompted the criticism of Hahn-Hahn’s works in journals and newspapers. Faustine’s attack on the hypocrisy of ‘good society’ comes to the fore in a twofold manner. First, Faustine doubts that a romanticised prerequisite, that of being able to love and to commit to the same person, will last for ten years. Here she refers to two young people who are initially in love, not a marriage that was arranged or motivated by convenience.

Thus Faustine challenges an element of traditionally sanctioned marriages. The suggestion that one spouse might outgrow another promotes a notion that conflicts with the civil order that state and church want to maintain in society. Faustine expresses sentiments that, if adopted, would unsettle a mainstay of Western society’s structure. While divorce was possible, and some men and women secretly, and other times openly, indulged in extramarital affairs, and perhaps frowned upon those who lived a ‘bohemian’ life, they maintained social decorum. They obliged and obeyed society, and maintained the patriarchal relations that were expected in personal, social and institutional interactions. Faustine’s attack represents a challenge, for she claims a higher morality.

Second, Hahn-Hahn writes about marriage as a controlling mechanism to oppress women. It is, after all, the woman who has to swear to obey her husband. Therefore she questions the concept of everlasting love (glorified in poetry, art, music and religion, its cottage commercialisation as well as the controlling institutions). Mengen romantically declares his eternal and unwavering love (337). He, unromantically, stipulates conditions, which is evident before he agrees to go on a trip to the Orient. Initially Mengen denies Faustine this venture with the excuse of lacking the pecuniary means. When Faustine earns money from one of her paintings, he requests that she paint an exact copy of what she had sold, knowing that the second painting will differ from the first.

Faustine, however, excels with this painting and he finally agrees to the journey. Faustine is psychologically subjugated to Mengen. Paradoxically Faustine had submitted herself willingly, albeit hastily, to Mengen’s leadership after their marriage: “jetzt bist du mein Herr und der seine” (350) (“now you are my master and his [their son Bonaventura”]). Her love resembles a notion of love that Pearsall and Trumble define as a “feeling of deep affection” (The Oxford Companion to English 849) which, by her own definition and her proviso above, may be subject to change due to personal growth.

True to her original spirit Faustine, in the cause of creative achievement and despite her husband’s restrictions, frees herself of the duties generally associated with a mother by delegating

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77 Hahn-Hahn’s husband, Friedrich Graf von Hahn, divorced Ida in 1829 after three years of marriage, and Hahn-Hahn’s mother, Karl Friedrich Graf von Hahn in 1809 (Goldmann, “Hahn” 161). In 1845 Fanny Lewald fell in love with the married Adolf Stahr and waited for ten years, until he divorced his first wife, to marry him (Diether 86-8).
her son’s upbringing to Mengen: “Sie liebte auch Bonaventura, aber meinetwegen; für ihn sollt’ ich arbeiten und sorgen, mit seiner Erziehung mich angenehm beschäftigen, in ihm ihre Seele, ihr Wesen wiederfinden” (HH GF 336) (“She also loved Bonaventura, but for my sake [Mengen’s]; for him I was meant to work and to care, to spend some pleasant time with his education, to find in him her soul, her being again”). This suggests that Faustine considers her son to be her substitute for Mengen. She thus enjoys a level of freedom by acquitting herself of motherly conduct and by delegating that task to her husband. While it was not unusual for young children to be educated under male control (Prelinger 68), this determined reversal of female and male domestic duties may challenge the marital role of conventional female timidity.

The idiosyncrasy of Faustine’s personality surfaces further in her mischievous proposition that a woman should not die if a man does not love her. Instead, in starry-eyed idealisation, she says: “Die Männer müssen um die Frauen sterben, so schickt sich’s; das habe ich von jeher behauptet” (HH GF 341) (“Men ought to die for women that is befitting, I have always maintained that point of view”). This slyly humorous proclamation poses two questions: first, are women more rational than men? The narrative thus far demonstrates that, even though Faustine witnesses Clemens’s suicide and sometimes wonders if she could have avoided this tragedy, she holds her composure. She is rational. Second, will women maintain this rationality in their relationships with men? Up to this point Faustine appears to have done so to some extent. From her experience, she can advocate that men should depart this life because of women. This self-serving proclamation humorously advocates women’s power. It is interesting to note that this declaration is uttered before the disintegration of Faustine’s relationship with Andlau and her acceptance of Mengen’s proposal.

5.2.3 Cunigunde

Because Cunigunde is the most attractive of three siblings, the two younger sisters’ chances of matrimony are severely diminished while the more attractive daughter is unattached. For this reason, her mother, Frau von Stein, is quite agitated when, after an engagement of four years, Cunigunde hesitates to marry Feldern. Like Faustine’s aunt, Frau von Stein considers it her daughter’s obligation to elevate the aspirations of a prospective husband. In conversation with Faustine, Frau von Stein proclaims:

Hat sie sich nur erst überwunden und den Schritt gethan, welcher ihr jetzt unmöglich scheint, so wird ihr reines Herz in dem Bewußtsein erfüllter Pflicht

78 The historical significance of this name is worth mentioning. In the early tenth century the empress Cunigunde was powerful and influential. As wife of Heinrich the Second of Bamberg (970-1024), she was actively involved in politics and reigned as sole ruler during Heinrich’s absence (Scheidmüller 1). The name of this prominent historical female figure seems appropriate in this instance where Cunigunde acts with a streak of independence.

79 Hahn-Hahn’s choice of name for this fictional character, while unrelated but given the significance of Goethe’s Faust in this narrative, is worthy of note. The older Frau von Stein offered Goethe in his youth “full intellectual companionship” for a ten-year period (Robertson and Reich 317).
die nöthige Stärke und Erhebung finden, um sie mit ihrem Schicksal auszusöhnen. (192)

Once she overcomes her self and takes the first step which presently seems to her to be impossible, her pure heart, in the consciousness of having fulfilled her duty, will find the necessary strength and elevation to reconcile herself with her fate.

Frau von Stein promotes her daughter’s self sacrifice and misery, based on the assumption that her daughter will rejoice in the knowledge of having fulfilled her God- and society-given duty to her husband. Frau von Stein is unable to fathom that her daughter may rebel against the long established ritual of submitting to an arranged marriage. According to her, women have to accept their prescribed role in life. If they do not, Frau von Stein, as a conforming member of society, has the right to ostracise them. Faustine intervenes on Cunigunde’s behalf (although this does not convince Frau von Stein):

Den ungeliebten Mann zu beherrschen ist eine Entwürdigung, weil nur zwei niedrige Mittel diese Herrschaft geben können: die Heuchelei der Frau, die Sinnlichkeit des Mannes;—und sie anwenden zu müssen, wäre kein entsetzliches Schicksal? (193)

To rule over a man whom one does not love is a degradation, as only two base means can provide this governance: the hypocrisy of the woman, the sensuality of the man; and to apply these, would that not be a horrifying fate?

Once again Faustine dares to confront, first, the patriarch Walldorf, and now the matriarch, with a topic that is challenging: women prostituting themselves in marriage. When Cunigunde finally refuses to marry Feldern and leaves for Mengen’s sister’s household as a governess, Frau von Stein parts coolly from her daughter saying that, as Cunigunde has chosen to be independent, she will have to accept the severance of her family ties. The mother’s expectation of Cunigunde’s obedience outweighs feelings of affection for her child: Frau von Stein effectively cuts herself off from her daughter, and punishes her for contravening the role of the matriarch, whose duty it is to perpetuate patriarchy.

Against the depiction of matriarchal characters such as Frau von Stein and Adele, and non-conformists such as Faustine and Cunigunde, minor characters like Feldern provide an insight into society’s attitudes. Because Cunigunde does not give a reason for her refusal to marry, Feldern thinks that her motivation must originate from:

wenn nicht Wahnsinn, doch Verschrobenheit, Überspannung, Sentimentalität! Was wollen Sie denn? etwa katholisch und Nonne werden? die religiöse Schwärmerei verrückt zuweilen die klarsten Köpfe. (151)
if not madness, then eccentricity, hysteria, sentimentality! What do you want then? Possibly become a Catholic and a nun? At times religious fervour deranges the clearest heads.

It is noteworthy that Feldern suggests hysteria and mental imbalance which was the generic term for categorising women who refused to comply socially, who dared to be different. His view is examined further when Faustine enters the convent. The novel suggests that Feldern challenges the possibility that convents may have provided refuge to some women. Cunigunde does not wish to follow the paths of her mother, society or God. Young women like her and Faustine are not allowed to choose with whom they would like to live nor, to quote Christian doctrine, whom they would like to serve and obey till death do them part. If women have the courage to choose independence over an arranged marriage, an unhappy ending is bound to ensue.

Hahn-Hahn’s modern leanings are shown further in her depiction of Cunigunde’s same-sex love for Faustine, which is evident when Cunigunde describes Faustine in infatuated manner to Feldern: “eine himmlische, wunderbare Frau” (153) (“a divine, wonderful woman”). Cunigunde only saw Faustine once but she cannot forget her: “Wie sie ansah und aussah, wie sie ging und stand, wie sie sprach und lächelte” (153) (“How she looked at something and how she looked, how she walked and stood, how she spoke and smiled”). The description of Cunigunde’s feelings has sardonic connotations of falling in love for the first time, breathlessly, and almost comically. Cunigunde’s fascination with Faustine is apparent and the reason for her refusal to marry Feldern seems understandable, especially as all she wishes is: “daß sie mich liebte” (153) (“that she [Faustine] would love me”). While Cunigunde’s adoration could be interpreted as an admiration for a slightly older and wiser woman, I believe her feelings to be of a more passionate nature.

Oblivious to Cunigunde’s real feelings, Feldern arranges a meeting between the two young women: “Sie waren lieblich anzusehen, die beiden schönen Gestalten!” (171) (“They were lovely to look at, the two beautiful figures!”). Faustine is significantly portrayed as poetic day, while Cunigunde personifies the night: “Ihren Kopf [Faustine] konnte nur ein Dichter erfinden, Cunigundens—ein Bildhauer” (171) (“Her head [Faustine’s] could only have been created by a poet, Cunigunde’s—a sculptur”). A hint of mystery, indistinctness and taboo surrounds the following sentence which can refer to both women:

Sie war die in Frauenform verhüllte Essenz einer halbromantischen, halborientalischen Poesie—Leidenschaft und Phantasie vorherrschend, zwei Dinge, die sich gewöhnlich einander ausschließen, und in ihr sich vereinigten, wie der Lucifer ins Morgenroth hineinstrahlt. (171)
She was in her female shape the concealed essence of a half romantic, half oriental poem—passion and fantasy prevailing, two things that are usually mutually exclusive but that united themselves in her, like Lucifer who shines into sunrise.

Because this sentence follows the description of Cunigunde’s sculptured head, is itself followed by a comparison with the night: “Aber nicht die Nacht allein—auch der Tag hat seine Geheimnisse” (171) (“But not night alone—day too has its secrets”), it may refer either to Cunigunde or Faustine, who was first mentioned in this sentence. The references to romantic and oriental poetry, passion and fantasy are used to describe Faustine. The unification of passion and fantasy refers to something forbidden and supports my stance that it does not just seem to be the adoration of an older woman. Moreover, Clemens’s allusion to Faustine’s demonic trait is again emphasised by invoking Lucifer in this sentence. It is interesting that this demonic impression is called upon in connection with the Clemens and Cunigunde characters, suggesting a relationship perhaps of ‘mischievous sprite’. This ambiguous implication seems to be an intentional device by Hahn-Hahn to hint about a hidden and unspoken characteristic of both women. Their affinity consists of secrets which might relate to sexual frustration: Cunigunde’s longing for Faustine, Faustine’s unfulfilled relationship with Andlau. Here the association between the demonic and “erotic desire, sensuality, passion” (Treder 36), longings a lady would not dare confess, becomes evident.

Significantly Cunigunde imparts to Faustine that men are not endowed with the same “Fühlfäden” (HH GF 172) (“perceptive [literally ‘threads of’] feeling”) as women. She opens her heart about the intolerable situation in her home that is caused by her rejection of Feldern’s proposal. Faustine offers support by promising to look for a position of employment on her behalf as an older friend would do. The innuendo surrounding the two women’s relationship, coupled with Cunigunde’s declaration of love for Faustine and her rejection of Feldern, who is portrayed as a likeable character, underlines Hahn-Hahn’s anticipation of modernism in the sense of ideas, ideology and meaning and not just form. Since patriarchy is based on male supremacy, for a woman to love and value a woman above men is a challenge to their order, and “is thus a political and revolutionary act” (McKeen 480).

Hahn-Hahn was daring to touch on this taboo subject even though she does so in a light, encoded way in the guise of ‘romantic friendship.’ In 1721 Catharina Margaretha Linck was burned at the stake for posing as a man and wanting to marry another woman under the Prussian code for “unnatural acts” (Faderman and Eriksson XV). The notion that women were even interested in
“sexual satisfaction” was still doubted towards the end of the nineteenth century (Faderman 156). Hahn-Hahn alludes to both these issues.

5.3 Forms of social criticism

Faustine’s determined views about society’s concepts of love, regimentation and education demonstrate her opposition within the context of social expectations. Recognising the correlation of duty and victory Faustine criticises mindless education which, in turn, produces good soldiery. Men are trained to fulfil their duty by obeying orders. If they conquer the enemy, their victory is rewarded with glory. During her visit to Oberwalldorf Faustine questions social obedience in front of Clemens, whom she rightly considers to be sympathetic:

Bei mir darf Niemand in die Schule gehen: die Praxis des Lebens, das Eingreifen, das Handanlegen, sind mir unerträglich, und die Männer sind dafür, wenn nicht geboren, doch erzogen. Wer nicht arbeitet wie eine Dampfmaschine, gilt nicht. Wer am Längsten am Schreibtisch sitzt, ohne leberkrank—und am Längsten: ‘Rechts um! links um!’ kommandiert, ohne brustkranz zu werden—wem die Augen nicht übergehen und die Geduld nicht ausgeht—der kann was werden, kann es zu etwas bringen, wie man sagt! Aber da ich glaube, daß man es leichter auf seine eigene Hand als in Reih’ und Glied zu etwas bringt: so würbe ich gern Deserteurs, Überläufer, und Sie wissen—das ist schimpflich. (HH GF 57-58)

No-one should be allowed to learn from me: the practical life, taking action, getting the job done, I find that unbearable, but men, if not born for that, are brought up for that. Those who do not work like a steam engine don’t get recognition. Those who sit the longest at a writing desk without getting a disease of the liver, and those who shout the commands ‘Turn left! Turn right!’ the longest without getting chest diseases, those who don’t get greedy or lose their patience, they can achieve something, can establish themselves as they would say! But as I believe that it is easier to achieve something individually and singularly rather than in rank and file, I would love to advertise for deserters, defectors, and you know—that is a disgrace.

In her first sentence above, Faustine distances herself from others and reaffirms the stance of Catherine, Hahn-Hahn’s protagonist in Der Rechte, which questions the notion that women and

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80 Research into sexuality began only towards the end of the nineteenth century with pioneers such as Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Albert Moll (1862-1939), Iwan Bloch (1872-1922) and Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935) (Haeberle 13.1.1). Not until the publications of sexologists Alfred Kinsey in the mid-1950s, and Masters and Johnson in the mid-1960s, were many myths identified as such and sexual taboos more openly debated.
men are born with predestined attributes. Catherine had suggested that after three generations of intensified conditioning, the behavioural attitudes of boys and girls would change. In her speech Faustine, too, leaves no doubt that society ensures that no man will escape the role prescribed by the authorities. Here Hahn-Hahn ingeniously adds credence to the condemnation of gender inequality, with two separate protagonists in two different novels.

Faustine clearly voices her critique of regimentation. This connects to an Enlightenment that demands: “a reconstitution of the self in a new self-description which has nothing in particular to do with anyone else’s political or social agenda” (Johnston 7). Yet her presentation reveals a wry sense of humour. She satirises a utilitarian work ethic and aspirations for career and material acquisitions. On a personal level, however, she recognises the potential danger to her position in society. She admits her isolation but confidently and mockingly maintains her intellectual independence and her line of argument. Being aware that her views are not acceptable in her upper-class circle, she validates her rationale for non-conformity.

Even after her marriage to Mengen, Faustine voices her strong criticism of the educational system that produces people who mostly comply with societal rules and etiquette. While travelling through the Orient with Mengen, she condemns occidental civilisation in general and education in particular (thereby revealing Hahn-Hahn’s critique of the Prussian system). Faustine declares that, were she a single mother, she would educate her son in the Orient:


far from demoralised society, far from the jumble of pedantic learnedness [. . .] The education of men is these days unbearably one-sided! The poor boys are being crammed with studies, being formed for the unpleasant conditions of the public service, which requires from everybody the same measure: down with the genius—drag up the dullard. Learn, they must! Whether they are able to process and know what they have learned—nobody cares about that. Most of them go to waste in the swamp of learning, without being able to rise to a development of intellectual independence.
Faustine fearlessly attacks a powerful institution, a restrictive educational system that shapes and influences the next generation. Faustine condemns Humboldt’s educational model as “one-sided.” She recognises that where education is by regimented drill, students’ curiosity and intellectually fertile minds lack stimulation and development of critical thinking. In 1694 Mary Astell had voiced something similar: “ignorance and a narrow education lay the foundation of vice, and imitation and custom rear it up” (qtd. in Rogers and McCarthy 115). Faustine anticipates later educationalists, such as W.W. Sawyer in 1943: “Bad teaching is teaching which presents an endless procession of meaningless signs, words and rules, and fails to arouse the imagination” (Ramsden 84). In a similar vein Felski points out approaches to literature that differentiate between “semantics” and “social meaning” (12).

As far as educational philosophy is concerned, Faustine favours “social meaning” by suggesting an expansion of the young male intellect to its fullest individual capacity. While not all young boys were privileged to gain an education, Hahn-Hahn’s ambiguities surface in her heroine’s disregard of young females. Faustine had earlier strongly defended young girls in front of Mengen and Kirchberg: “—sagen Sie von einer Frau, was Sie wollen! es wird schlecht von Ihnen sein, aber es thut nichts. Doch von einem Mädchen, einem schönen jungen Mädchen—wie wagen Ihre Lippen das!” (HH GF 142) (“—say about a woman what you like! It would not be nice of you, but it does not matter. But about a girl, a beautiful young girl—how dare your lips do this!”). In view of Faustine’s favouritism of young girls, their exclusion from her educational ideas may surprise but is in accord with the contemporary reality.

In an overarching sense, Hahn-Hahn’s critique applies to the patriotic and political school-training practised in the Prussian state. The impeding of imagination produces the “most people,” referred to by Faustine above, who are conformists (with whom she is in conflict but with whom she now complies, as indicated by her marriage), and this is dangerous, if they are led by unscrupulous governance or by a dogmatic husband (349). Because enthusiasm and the joy of expanding their minds through learning is not instilled in them, conformists do not think for themselves, are satisfied being led, and follow authority willingly. This mindset of blind obedience is particularly desirable in military recruits. Indeed, decades later, the spread of an obedient bourgeois liberalism facilitated Wilhelm II’s militant patriotism, which led to a further regimentation of society.

The ideology of the social fabric of some societies is built on mindless and oppressively organised education, and results in an apathy that supports those in power through unquestioning conformity. This important thematic issue is not only targeted by Hahn-Hahn but also by Mühlbach in Aphra Behn. Paradoxically and ironically, this attitude is also illustrated in Faustine when she accedes to Mengen’s proposal. I see this as an overt warning to women, further intensified by the
“most” in Faustine’s declaration about educating her son in the Orient. Faustine suggests the alternative of a holistic educational approach that encourages tolerance: “und wärst du zum Jüngling herangereift, so ließe ich Dich nach Europa in alle Länder, zu allen Nationen, auf alle Universitäten ziehen, um die Gegenwart durch unmittelbare Anschauung kennen zu lernen” (359) (“and were you to grow into a youth, I would let you go to all countries in Europe, all nations, all universities, in order to get to know the world today by means of direct observation”). Faustine’s progressive thinking represents a threat to the status quo. Yet in her philosophical isolation, the fictional Faustine was not alone: even “der Weltbürger Goethe ist damals einsam in Deutschland” (Menzel 112) (“the world citizen Goethe is at that time lonely in Germany”).

6.1 Mengen

6.1.1 Courtship and incompatibility

During Andlau’s absence Faustine becomes more dependent on Mengen as a companion, and feels comfortable enough to say what she thinks true love is: “Sinne und Seele vereint ist Liebe” (HH GF 141) (”senses and soul united is love”). She oversteps conventional boundaries and teases him with her inner thoughts. Her inability to abide by social etiquette suggests a certain detachment from reality. An example is her suggestion that Mengen should accompany her on a journey to the Orient. When Mengen, who is aware of her liaison with Andlau, coldly replies that Andlau would not appreciate Faustine and Mengen travelling there, she nonchalantly asks: “und kann ich denn je von zu vielen Freunden umringt sein?” (185) (“and can I ever be surrounded by too many friends?”). For Faustine to raise this question in a coquettish manner seems inappropriate but, given the non-sexual nature of her relationship with Andlau, understandable.

Because her free spirit lives beyond the bounds of societal restrictions, she is able to accommodate the affection of two potential rivals without experiencing any apparent conflict. Momentarily overwhelmed by feelings of intimacy, Faustine asks Mengen to always be truthful to her. He wants a token from her to remind him of this moment, and she gives him a ring with a pearl and the inscription: “Qui me cherche, me trouve” (188) (“Who seeks me will find me”). With this token she invites the courtship of an utterly conforming male. Revealing his infatuation Mengen, in a significant gesture, wants to wear this symbol on his ring finger, but Faustine withdraws by putting the ring on his little finger, saying that the ring finger is reserved for a wedding ring. After Mengen’s departure, she wonders whether her action was correct and how Andlau might feel about her giving a ring to Mengen while he was away. This pondering suggests simplicity, or perhaps feelings of a pending rupture.

The next day, in almost regretful manner, she decides to tell Andlau about this incident in a letter but then, rejoicing in Mengen’s company, neglects to do so. The narrator questions whether this joy would last upon Andlau’s return but Faustine does not think that far ahead, here is another example of Hahn-Hahn’s narrative technique of showing different aspects of a given situation. The character of Feldern also furnishes observations from another perspective. He ponders about the nature of men:

Der starke Mann fürchtet nicht, zu der Geliebten emporzublicken; er fühlt die Kraft in sich, mit einem Schwung ihr zur Seite zu stehen. Der eitle und schwache Mann hält sie gern in seinem Niveau: er fürchtet die Überstrahlung und fühlt nicht die Kraft, ein G e g e n g e w i c h t in die Schale zu werfen. (155)
The strong man is not afraid, to look up to his lover, he feels strength within to stand by her side at one go. The vain and weak man likes to keep her on his level: he is afraid to be outshone and does not possess the power, to throw a counter-weight into the scale.

Feldern recognises the weakness of those men who endeavour to subdue independent women because they feel intimidated. He indicates that women can achieve equality with strong men. Transposing these attributes onto the men around Faustine shows that Andlau, neglecting to remain by her side, does not return “mit einem Schwung” (“at one go”) and that Mengen, lacking depth of understanding, does not balance her yearning.

Mengen’s dogmatic opinion of women is not conducive to a lasting relationship with the carefree Faustine. This is apparent when he poignantly says: “Wo ein Mann ruiniert ward, trug gewiß eine Frau die erste Schuld” (146) (“Where a man has been ruined, it can be certain that a woman carries the first blame”). Faustine confidently responds: “Sie sind unerhört parteiisch für Ihr Geschlecht!” (146) (“You are incredibly prejudiced for your sex!”). Thus Faustine is aware of Mengen’s bias against women, which he repeats: “Also eine Frau?” sagte Mengen gedehnt” (229) (“So a woman?” said Mengen with emphasis”) to which Faustine responds with irony: “Ja, zum Unglück nur eine Frau, die Ihre Ansicht theilt” (“Yes, unfortunately only a woman, who shares your opinion”). The spaced “only” emphasises Faustine’s understanding of Mengen’s misogyny. Mengen also states his dislike of artistic genius, a tactless observation to an artist like Faustine:


Possible! Because I [Mengen], as already said, observe and admire these people [the genius] preferably from a respectable distance. Close up it is difficult for one to find the right angle from which to view and gauge them. That creates and brings perplexity. I love clarity.

The incompatibility of Mengen and Faustine is evident. Any union between them is not based on the emancipated arrangement that Faustine had shared with Andlau, in which each partner had a good measure of personal freedom. While Mengen has no understanding of and is unable to relate to artists, he romantically pursues the artist Faustine. It seems that she represents a show trophy.

Faustine, in her interaction with Mengen, does not think of the consequences that will result from her action in a society that is ruled by restrictive protocols, moral principles, and lifelong monogamy. Given her unusual and harmonious seven-year arrangement with Andlau, this is
understandable and Mengen is aware of Faustine’s instability. At a ball he detects her despondency which is caused by Cunigunde’s refusal to marry Feldern. Mengen suggests to Faustine that Cunigunde could become his sister’s companion. Faustine’s quick-tempered turnaround takes him by surprise. Her delirious happiness prompts him to ponder: “Es war etwas in dieser Frau, was sie befähigt hätte, eine große Heilige zu werden: der schmachtende, unauslöschliche Durst nach dem Ewigen” (208) (‘There was something about this woman, that would have enabled her to become a great saint: that languishing, inextinguishable thirst for eternity’). Here Mengen inadvertently predicts Faustine’s destiny.

The symbolism of Mengen’s first visit to Faustine’s painting studio is most important, for she is painting a human skull. For centuries the skull has had a fascinating and at the same time repelling effect. Its connotations range from melancholy to contemplation of death and repentance. The depiction of Mengen observing Faustine painting a skull, when she usually paints landscapes, allegorically represents mortality and transformation. This telling foreboding is accentuated by Mengen’s calculatingly cool approach to life:

Stolz, kalt und rein ging er durch die Welt, nichts fürchtend, als aus seinem innern Gleichgewicht zu kommen, in Schwankungen zu geraten und die Herrschaft über sich zu verlieren. Das geschieht aber leicht, wenn man sich in die Tiefen des Lebens hineinwagt. (80)

Proud, cold and pure he walked through the world, fearing nothing other than losing his equilibrium, to get caught in fluctuations and to lose control over oneself. But that can easily happen, when one dares to venture into the depths of life.

Because Mengen does not allow his emotions to override his reasoning, he remains in control. The warning that he may lose his equilibrium by deviating from his self-imposed path in life increases the tension in his interaction with Faustine. This is all the more so since, true to his firm nature, he lives by his stern dictum:

Charakter haben—Wort und That, Meinung und Handlung in die genaueste Übereinstimmung, und beide dahin bringen, daß sie Eins, daß sie unsere Wesenheit, daß wir selbst Character werden: darin liegt die ganze menschliche Würde. (186)

To have character—word and deed, opinion and action in exact synchronisation, and to manage that both become one, that they become our being, that we ourselves become—our character: in that achievement lies the whole human dignity.
Mengen represents everything that Faustine does not. The contrast between her warmth and his regimented coldness is shown in her unenthusiastic suggestion to him: “Dann lassen Sie uns in den großen Garten gehen: da ist jetzt Alles von einer gespenstischen Klarheit. Der Himmel so blau, die Erde so weiß, das Eis so hell, die Bäume so nackt—o diese Klarheit, wie ist sie kalt!” (231) (“Then let us go into the big garden, everything there is of such ghostly clarity. The sky so blue, the earth so white, the ice so bright, the trees so bare—oh, this clarity, how cold it is!”). Allegorically his coolness is her detriment: “Sie schüttelte sich vor Graus und ging sich zum Spaziergang und zur Eisfahrt anzukleiden” (231) (“She shook herself with horror and went to dress for walking and for a ride on the ice”). Faustine obliges, but Mengen’s clarity has an eerie, freezing effect on her, and any connection with him is ill-fated. She is blinded by his physical attraction, as when they first met: “Beider Blicke begegneten sich und sanken ineinander wie zwei gefaltete Hände” (139) (“Both eyes met and sank into each other like two folded hands”). The narrator describes this moment by elaborating on Mengen’s thoughts; he felt the nearness of the “unknown queen of his soul” (139). There is no mention about Faustine’s thoughts.

While Faustine gets dressed for this excursion into the cold, Mengen calculates: “Ich liebe die Klarheit.” [. . .] “Was hält mich ab, bei ihr dahin zu gelangen?” (231) (“I love this clarity.” [. . .] “What prevents me from reaching that with her?”). In my reading, he plans to mould her into his expectations and temperament. He knows that Faustine is excitable, loves the sun, the warmth, and the vicissitudes that life has to offer. His austerity does not naturally yield to her free spirit but he is captivated and intrigued by her sparkling personality. Mengen sees a challenge in taming Faustine’s verve to fit into social prescriptions, of which he symbolises the master and the executor. Contrary to Faustine telling Andlau some months earlier where to paint at night, on this occasion she loses her independence by bowing to Mengen. Their liaison is based on antagonisms: between clarity and confusion, between coldness and warmth. The dichotomous wavering of Faust between “moments of clarity and moments of utter confusion” (Heffner, Rehder and Tweddell, Faust 2: 68) may be juxtaposed with Mengen’s stance of firmness and Faustine’s state of uncertainty. Faustine’s philosophical outlook on life also differs from the conventionality of Mengen. In answer to his question of why she is painting a skull, she answers:

Aus einer Form der Existenz zu einer andern übergehen, heißt bei mir nicht Tod, sondern eine neue Lebensentwicklung. Leben muß man, wie man liebt: durch Ewigkeiten hindurch. Wer nicht diese Überzeugung hegt, weiß nichts vom Leben, nichts von der Liebe. (HH GF 158)

To transmigrate from one form of existence into another does not signify death to me but a new development of life. One must live as one loves: through
eternities. Those who do not carry this persuasion, know nothing of life, know nothing of love.

In the first sentence of the passage above, Faustine deviates from orthodox Christian views. She expresses Hegel’s doctrine (Martini 347) of evolutionary progression of life and thought. Faustine suggests that human existence does not end with death but evolves into another sphere, which is noteworthy in view of her early, and in my reading willing, death. The second sentence suggests a permanence that is denied to Faustine in this life. Love, as a social notion of exclusive possessiveness, forces Faustine to make choices: between Andlau and Mengen, between Mengen and the convent, between a constricted concept of God and personal emancipation—the absolute “which can exist without being related to anything else” (The Australian 5). Faustine, in an overall sense, possesses an ability to love concurrently more than one person and beyond one confined devotion to a God, but that is not possible in a society that expects as behaviour the specific choice of one person and one religious devotion. While some people can surreptitiously live with spouse and lover, with God and ungodly behaviour, this is not possible for Faustine.

Because of her eternal yearning, Faustine is incapable of maintaining a monogamous and everlasting love. She is like a Byronic hero: “I have not loved the world/ I have not flattered its rank breath, nor bowed/ To its idolatries a patient knee” (Byron, Childe 3, 1050). Faustine’s concept of love does not fit the conventional mould of a prescribed relationship that is solemnised in an official ceremony. Hers can be likened to a perpetually free-floating feeling of affection that, like a butterfly, gently flies from one beautiful flower to another, in the sunshine of a cloudless blue sky. The restrictiveness of a cage, or even Andlau’s net, in which she, like the lark, is caught singing forever, will extinguish this gentle and flighty creature in the same way as the psychological restrictions of Mengen’s possessive love. This characteristic trait serves to accentuate the predicament that a woman faces when her attitudes are at variance with those of her social circle. She becomes ostracised as an outcast, or misunderstood. Andlau responds to Faustine’s letter of separation with irony, recommending that she forget the past: “Deinem Leichtsinn wird das nicht schwer fallen” (HH GF 307) (“With your thoughtlessness it won’t be difficult”). Clemens had queried: “Sie kann wohl nicht lieben” (181) (“She is probably not able to love”). Mengen perceives the same trait by elaborating:

und kann sie denn überhaupt lieben? länger lieben, als den Augenblick, wo die Sonne der Liebe ihre jungen Strahlen in die Welt hineinwirft? [...] tiefer lieben als eine Fee, welche drei Minuten lang den Geliebten beseligend und dann ihn verläßt?” (208)
well, is she at all capable of loving? Loving longer than the moment, in which the sun of love projects its young beams onto the world? [. . .] loving deeper than a fairy, who fills her lover with bliss for three minutes and then leaves him?

Mengen misreads Faustine’s emotional personality, and his principled adherence to social conventions makes no allowances for her impracticality and inability to accept reality. When Mengen announces that he will have to depart Dresden, Faustine is depressed at the prospect of being without his daily visits. She is mournful that he has to attend to other matters. Like a petulant and selfish child, she expects to have her wants satisfied. The narrator chides that Faustine should have let him go when he had this intention:

Hätte sie den Muth, die Stärke und die Besonnenheit gehabt, den Verhältnissen fest ins Auge zu sehen, so wäre ihr bald genug klar geworden, daß in Marios [Mengen] Entfernung ihrer Aller Heil liege, und sie hätte durch ein gefaßtes: ‘Fahre hin’ dem Schicksal vorbeugen können, das sie zerbrach, als es in seiner vollen Macht über sie herbrauste; sie hätte durch ruhige Darlegung ihrer innersten Seelenverbindung mit Andlau Mengen auf einmal, ehe er ein Wort gesagt, durch einen einzigen kurzen Schmerz, in sein altes Gleichgewicht, wenigstens äußerlich, zurückgestellt, und in dem seinen das ihre gefunden; sie hätte Alles das thun können, was sie n i c h t that, eben weil ihr Muth, Stärke und Besonnenheit fehlten. (256-57)

Had she had the courage, the strength and the level-headedness, to look circumstances squarely in the eye, then soon enough she would have realised that in Mario’s [Mengen] departure lay the salvation of them all, and she would have been able to prevent the fate that broke her, when its full force raged over her, by means of a composed: ‘Go!’ She would have, by means of a calm explanation of her innermost spiritual kinship with Andlau, all at once, before he had been able to utter a word, through a single short ache brought Mengen back into his old equilibrium, at least on the surface, and she would have found her own balance in his. She could have done all this that she did n o t do, because she just lacked the courage, the strength, and the level-headedness.

Here, as the Countess (the second narrator) will do in due course, the narrator assesses the protagonist in a conventional and indeed accusing manner. The reader has to decide whether to sympathise with Faustine’s behaviour or to condemn her, according to prevailing customs. It may be a warning for women to be accountable for their actions, since the narrator distances herself and holds Faustine responsible for her future fate. Faustine chose the convenience of taking no action
(emphasised by the spaced “not”), of drifting along instead of taking stock of her spiritual relationship with Andlau and the physical attraction with Mengen. Faustine now conforms like ‘most’ people whom she had once criticised for their conformity.

6.1.2 Subjugation of Faustine
Choosing Mengen ‘saves’ Faustine, for she complies with the conventions that are upheld by society, as represented by Mengen’s firm stance. Reverting now to conventional childlike simplicity, Faustine is indecisive, which prompts Mengen to take the reins, as Faustine herself had done earlier when she departed in autonomous manner with the injured Andlau from Obernau’s estate. Mengen woos Faustine and manipulates her subjugation to him. He achieves with calculated cunning what an unrefined Walldorf could not, without the aunt’s selfish collaboration. The narrative depicts the conflict of steadfastness, as epitomised by Mengen, and artlessly restless striving, as represented by Faustine. Moreover, Mengen’s unbending insistence serves as contrast to the more liberal-minded and moderate Andlau. Mengen declares his love for Faustine. She tells him she loves him too, but hesitates. He detects her concern for Andlau and asks her to tell him the truth about her life. Here, perhaps as device for intimidation, he resorts to religion by calling on God as a witness. The narrator succinctly describes the strong physical magnetism of his confrontation: “Er—ganz Mann. Sie—ganz Weib” (270) (“He—totally man. She—totally woman”). Doering argues that Mengen’s “seduction into marriage” (199) technique adroitly utilises Faustine’s confusion by manipulating her fascination for him.

Mengen reasons that if Faustine had loved Andlau, she would not feel any love for him, as he (Mengen) would have been just one of her acquaintances. He circumvents Faustine’s wavering by giving her the ultimatum of pronouncing her stated love for him as a lie, staying with Andlau and never seeing him again. His inducement is that he will always love her. Forgetting the past and ignoring the future, Faustine responds. She is carried away by the moment: “Sie sagte nichts, aber sie nahm seine Hände, faltete sie und legte sie um ihren Hals, wie ein Joch” (HH GF 297-98) (“She said nothing, but she took his hands, crossed them and put them around her neck, like a yoke”). Faustine knows what she is doing. By putting herself symbolically into his yoke, sheforetells her fate. She denies her self and all she thus far stood for: her individuality, her self-sufficiency, her aspirations for self-actualisation and her free, generous and uncomplicated love but, in compensation, she realises her unfulfilled sexuality. Mengen urges Faustine to leave Andlau.

Faustine is trapped and, in her state of confusion, she is irrational and her vision is clouded. Mengen forces Faustine to write to Andau to sever their relationship. He assumes control: “Sie war ganz von ihm beherrscht. Seine Bestimmtheit, die sich um seine Leidenschaft legte wie ein Schild vor eine nackte Brust, beschämte sie, die Schwankende” (299) (“She was totally dominated by him. His firmness, that embraced his passion like a shield in front of a naked breast, made her, the
wavering one, feel ashamed”). Mengen winningly exclaims: “Du liebst mich, Faustine! O, Du liebst mich” (300) (“You love me, Faustine! Oh, you love me”). Faustine’s: “‘Das muß wol wahr sein,’ sagte sie finster und ließ die Hände sinken” (300) (“that must be true,’ she said gloomily and let her hands drop”) is not a positive or passionate response. Now Faustine surrenders under Mengen’s pressure and abnegates her conviction against the institution of marriage. An hour earlier she had: expressed her total aversion against marriage; however, Mario [Mengen] dominated her to such a degree and jolted the convictions she had thus far adhered to with such a powerful hand, while expressing his own opposing views passively, that she felt unable to resist. She said only: “And he shall be your master—is written in the Bible. Well then, Mario, I shall marry you.”

Faustine enters into a state of submission by quoting the Bible. As if driven by invisible forces, she disposes of her second thoughts about leaving Andlau and allows herself to be absorbed into a maelstrom with Mengen: “Es giebt keinen Stillstand für mich, dachte sie, rastlos muß ich vorwärts—und ist das nicht eins und dasselbe mit aufwärts?” (310) (“There is no standstill for me, she thought, restlessly I have to push forward—and is that not one and the same as upwards?—”). Since Faustine is not interested in advancing her position socially, her questioning of upward aspirations suggests a spiritual enlightenment. However, she knows Mengen well enough not to find this kind of visionary elevation in his countenance. Faustine had, however, shared this potentiality with Andlau. Following the conventions of romantic fiction, Faustine enters this marriage. Importantly, instead of being jubilant she does so in a subdued somnolent state, suggesting her capitulation to Mengen’s governance. She lacks the alertness with which she had queried Obernau before her marriage yet here, older and more experienced, she is not able to act on intuition, or read ‘the signs.’

Unlike Geiger’s comparison of Faustine entering a pact with the devil like Faust, I do not consider Faustine’s marriage to Mengen to be such (Befreite 216). Instead I see it as following a hitherto unfulfilled sexual urge. In one way Faustine has set a matrix in her life in which she alternates between physical and spiritual relationships: she leaves Obernau for Andlau, Andlau for Mengen, Mengen for God and, perhaps, God for self. Faust signed a pact with Mephistopheles with his soul as a wager. Faustine too signs a conventional sexual contract (not a devil’s pact) with
Mengen. Tellingly the surname Mengen denotes “mit der Menge laufen” (Langenscheidts 417) “following the crowd.” In an associated sense, by marrying him, Faustine does what women were sometimes willingly and often times unwillingly, doing at that time when entering a marriage contract.

Carole Pateman likens the sexual contract, which, according to Veber “finds its legal expression in the marriage contract” (2), to “a kind of labour contract” (Pateman 116), whose structure of “subjection” (Veber 2) is used to exercise power, and in which “women are the subject of the contract” (6). The basis of this contractual arrangement of subjugation is deeply entrenched in society. However, I consider Faustine’s decision to give up her independence as a wager for her sexual attraction to Mengen. The depiction of Faustine’s surrender to the social conformity that she had earlier condemned can be seen as a warning to women not to submit to the persuasion of unsuitable men by entering a marriage contract. It also portrays the unfavourable alternatives that many single women at that time, when spinsterhood was scorned and entering the convent not an appealing alternative, were faced with. Mengen’s determined dominance foreshadows a psychological confinement that is not conducive to a creativity that needs inspirational and unrestrictive influences.

Andlau’s long absence, when he knows Faustine’s ingenuous nature, shows a lack of intuition, or perhaps a welcome relief on his behalf. He does not, however, expect Faustine to end their relationship, and receives her final letter without understanding. The question as to why Andlau remained away for such a long period without making arrangements for intermittent visits serves the narrative purpose of highlighting Faustine’s dilemma. Eventually Andlau writes to Faustine, wishing her happiness. The narrator says that after their years together Andlau: “liebte sie, mirakelmäßig, nicht mitleidig, sondern bewundernd” (HH GF 309) (“loved her, like a miracle, not pitifully but admiringly”). But Faustine was one: “für die, wie durch ein Wunder, diese Sonne im Zenith steht, Faustine schaut nach einem anderen Gestirn. Aber sie that es” (310) (“for whom, as if by miracle, this sun shines in the zenith. Faustine looks for another constellation. But she did so”). While the narrator is critical of Faustine’s decision, the reference to Andlau’s saintly love suggests that her marriage with Mengen represents a pyrrhic and physical victory only.

6.2 The likely cause of Faustine’s death
The narrative continues with the second female narrator, a Countess who accidentally meets Mengen, the third narrator, in Venice at the grave of the historical, early nineteenth-century painter, Léopold Robert, in whom similarities to the painter, Faustine, are evident. Robert had reached the peak of his artistic creativity, which resulted in melancholy. His love for Princess Charlotte Bonaparte, unbeknown to her, exacerbated this, especially because she encouraged the romantic advances of Robert’s friend, Edouard Odier (Gassier, Robert 268). Upon the revelation of each
other’s feelings this un consummated l’amour à trois dissolved, Odier left for Naples, and Robert slashed his throat in front of his easel (268). According to Gassier, this death may have been motivated by Robert’s unrequited love for the Princess, a history of mental illness, a sexual disease, creative impotence, or a combination of any of the foregoing (268). Romantic artists around this time often took their own lives (Whiteley 364), and Robert was a popular artist (Foucart 10), whose suicide was widely known (Gassier, “Salle” 66). Most probably Hahn-Hahn, keenly interested in art,81 used it as a model.

The similarities between Robert and the fictional Faustine is twofold. It can first be seen in their mutual bond of artistic excellence, their creative affinity and the malaise that affects their artistic drive. Second it is evident in the triangle between Faustine, Andlau, and Mengen, and a feeling of non-fulfilment. Faustine in due course loses her love for Mengen and, perhaps, for God; she is thus disillusioned with (or unable to indulge in) a feeling of love. Because Faustine’s death is presented from the point of view of two different characters, I see the incidental introduction of Léopold Robert as offering a contributory parallel towards the speculation about her death. The location of Venice, a city famous for carnivals, masquerades, and decadence is an apposite place to reveal the fate that was to afflict Faustine’s tormented soul.

Here the heroine is symbolically unmasked. Having been surrounded by what, to a slightly overwrought cognition, represents a society in which she feels dissonant, Faustine has been led to abide by certain conventions, and therefore to mask her true self. In death this masquerade is dropped. The literary technique of portraying Faustine’s stance ‘beyond society’ by juxtaposing the socially unaffected heroine with a decadent Venice underlines Faustine’s purity, innocence and strength. While there is no suggestion that Faustine died in Venice (the convent was located in Rome), the choice of this city (of which Hahn-Hahn wrote that she liked it better than no other city [HH JB 2: 432]), the Countess’s conjecture about Mengen standing at Robert’s grave and his possible association with that artist, support this reading.

The dialogue between the Countess and Mengen provides a nexus for the continuation of Faustine’s life story. Thus, in conversation, Mengen’s voice enlightens the reader that a mere three weeks after Clemens’s suicide, he had married Faustine. The couple moved to Italy and lived mainly in Florence, which is famous not only for art treasures but also for its numerous academies. This setting serves as a background to the early years of their marriage. The correlation between academies and discipline corresponds to Mengen’s efforts to instruct and shape his wife. Nonetheless, they enjoyed four happy years together and, within a year of their marriage, a son, Bonaventura, was born.

81 This is evident from her travelogues through Venice recorded in Jenseits der Berge (HH JB 2: 391-433). (While the second edition was published in 1845, Hahn-Hahn’s afterword is dated 1 March 1840).
Mengen behaves at times like a taskmaster to Faustine: “die ich tausendmal auf harte Probe stellte; denn ich wollte, daß sie sich fügen sollte” (HH GF 333-34) (“whom I put to the test a thousand times; since I wanted her [Faustine] to learn obedience”). Mengen’s austerity imposes conditions on Faustine that go against her nature. While he grants that Faustine is an exceptional artist and person, he bemoans her lack of discipline (330). He denies Faustine her individuality by wanting to change her into something she is not meant to be: “Meinen Erziehungsprojecten zufolge sollte sie sich aber an den geregelten, einförmigen Gang der Existenz im Verkehr mit Anderen wie in der bürgerlichen Stellung gewöhnen” (343-44) (“According to my training projects she was meant to get accustomed to the orderly, uniform course of life in dealings with others as well as in her position in society”). Mengen’s control even extends to Faustine’s poetry, when he instructs her to correct the grammar of poems she wrote (344).

Mengen claims that he is subservient: “Vom ersten Augenblick unserer Bekanntschaft an war meine Seele ihr unterthan” (343) (“From the first moment of our acquaintance my soul was subjugated to hers”), but he gives lectures in humility and wants to transform Faustine’s fundamental character to suit his ideal of bourgeois domesticity. This notion, however, conflicts with a wife who is an independent and famous painter, all the more so if she is ambitious: “Ich neckte sie bisweilen mit ihrem Ruhmdurst” (345) (“I teased her at times with her ardent desire for fame”). Mengen’s pedagogical obsession with Faustine is manifested not only in his attempt to shape her into his expectations of a wife, but also his continual gaze upon her (331).

Due to his regimented mind-set, which has undertones of Faustine’s critique of regimented education, he, in his fixation, feels responsible for her lack of artistic output and is jealous of any outer influence: “daß Schatten Macht über sie haben konnten” (340) (“that shadows could have power over her”) indicating a fear of losing control over his possession—Faustine. It is possible that Mengen’s disciplined approach to life fostered Faustine’s production of her visual art. What was a hobby with Andlau turned into professionalism with Mengen. Yet Mengen’s credo that she must “produce” (356) alludes to an attitude that concentrates on quantitative rather than qualitative competencies. Mengen does not allow time for reflection, for freedom that inspires creativity. Faustine’s temperament thrives on variety, whereas Mengen is satisfied with routine: “Die Einseitigkeit hat auch ihr Gutes” (345) (“One-sidedness also has its advantages”).

This monotony does not inspire Faustine, who draws her stimulation from an unrestrained atmosphere. His insensitivity towards her need to immerse herself in artistry without bureaucratically administrated commercialism shows, yet again, their opposing natures and temperaments. This leads to a sharp contrast between the previously free-spirited, and the now increasingly morose, Faustine who is pressured to conform and submit to her husband’s and
society’s norms of marriage. In this suffocating atmosphere, it is small wonder that Faustine loses her inspirational drive and becomes even more restless.

6.2.1 Faustine’s genius and artistic torment

To apportion the status of genius to Faustine is based on subjectivity, since beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and genius too is subject to different interpretations. Faustine is portrayed as a successful painter who, while not cast as Michelangelo or Da Vinci, is outstanding in any case. The following four romantic notions of genius are present in the references to Faustine’s talent. First, according to “the founder of German idealism,” Immanuel Kant (Russell, History 677), the basis of genius can be seen in the binary attributes of imagination and understanding or intellect, from which the power to express “aesthetic ideas” or artistic expression is derived (Banham 112, Knox 44). Faustine’s talent seems to come into full bloom with Mengen, even though she had painted from a young age and during her years with Andlau, as depicted in the opening scene of the novel.

Mengen supports Faustine’s genius, the primary function of which is to produce outstanding works. In line with a Kantian concept of artistic excellence, Mengen recognises this type of genius in Faustine: “Hatte sie sich dann in irgendeinem Werk als den Genius gezeigt, den die Welt anerkannt hat” (HH GF 334) (“Then she proved herself in any one of her paintings as the genius that was recognised in the world”). Faustine was active and feted in the world of the arts, her paintings were sought after, and she was financially well rewarded (344). At this stage Faustine herself proclaims with confidence: “und ich meine mit Recht—ich sei ein großes Talent” (345) (“And I believe quite rightly—I possess a great talent”).

Second, Schopenhauer elaborated that artistic genius can see that which is unperceivable to ordinary “man” (Janaway 226) (sic). Because of an extraordinary gift of contemplative perception (Copleston 110), genius has the ability to view “the universal in the particular” whereas non-genius sees “the particular only in the particular as such” (Magee 166). The gained insight is the “result of a deep sensitivity, a clear sight, in a sadly disordered world” (Knox 138). Faustine’s fragile personality perceives with clarity the troubles in society, such as arranged marriages and mind-numbing educational and military practices. She stands out from her peers and the emerging monied bourgeoisie. Third, Schopenhauer observes that genius is often detached from the ordinary routine of life. Due to their mind working independently from their will, they appear to be “cut off from other people” (Magee 173). Mengen supports Faustine’s detachment from traditional domestic duties by assuming the responsibility of attending to everyday obligations. Such non-conformity and defiant independence “as a lonely seeker after some unattainable essence” (Friedrichsmeyer, “Romanticism” 460) of society was also a popular trait associated with the cult of genius that the Romantics celebrated. The Countess voices yet another aspect, the fourth, that is connected to that of a genius. She laments to Mengen that people criticise the moods of genius as in the case of
Columbus, who was treated like an imbecile, and Léopold Robert, who was said to be a hypochondriac (HH GF 325-26). These comments serve to make concessions for the artist’s (that is, Faustine’s) irrational behaviour. In such an interpretation, Faustine was following mood swings when she agreed to marry Mengen and later decided to leave him.

Hence Faustine is cast as the creator of outstanding works, perceptive of the world but detached from those around her, and displays aspects of genius. By devoting herself to her art, Faustine rebels against the traditional role expected of a nineteenth-century female (portrayed in Adele), a rebellion sanctioned by the concept of ‘genius.’ She is able to voice her criticism of sex roles and society in an excusable (due to the eccentricity of her genius) and personally poignant manner. Faustine is driven by ambition to achieve her goal of creating masterworks, but upon completion of this self-imposed task she loses interest. “Streben war ihr alleinziges Glück, und der Moment, wo sie das Erstrebte mit der Fingerspitze berührte—ihre Seligkeit. Sollte sie aber festhalten, so ermattete ihre Hand” (334) (“To strive was her sole and only happiness, and the moment when that aim was within very close reach, her sheer bliss. But were she to hold on, her hand tired”). Her restlessness renders the permanence of her artistic status as precariously artificial, given the constraints of Mengen’s confining directives and the attitude of a society that firmly associates the role of most women with the three K’s. Mengen is prompted to tease: “Wären wir doch Götter und nicht Menschen!” (337) (“If only we were gods instead of humans”), to which Faustine responds:

Oder gäbe Gott uns etwas so Dauerndes, so Wechselloses, daß, trotz aller Schwankungen der Sinne und des Geistes zwischen Verlangen und Befriedigung, die Seele in einem permanenten Bewußtsein tiefster, unwandelbarer Befriedigung bliebe. (337)

Or if God would give us something so permanent, so unchangeable, that, in spite of all fluctuations of the senses and the mind between desire and satisfaction, the soul would remain in a permanent consciousness of deepest, unchangeable satisfaction.

This aspiration has been voiced throughout human history, and to achieve such equilibrium requires more than being a sublime painter. Faustine acknowledges her lack of intrinsic spiritual resources by relying on God as provider. However, in her striving for ultimate artistic achievement she forgets her previous creations and continues with her endeavour to fulfil her insatiable ambition:

O wäre doch das Leben eine ununterbrochene Kette solcher Momente! Träte doch nie eine Abspannung, Nüchternheit, Öde an die Stelle des Enthusiasmus,
der Thatkraft, der Fülle! Folgte doch nur nicht auf den höchsten Schwung die tiefste Ermattung. (337)

Oh if only life were a continuous chain of such moments! If only exhaustion, sobriety, desolation were not to take the place of enthusiasm, of vigour, of abundance! If only the deepest exhaustion were not to follow the highest force.

The absence of her inner stability, in combination with Mengen’s determined attempts to shape her, deny Faustine the self-sufficiency that she once possessed with Andlau’s support. Andlau recognises Faustine’s lack of deliberation and moderation when he refers to Faustine’s “Leichtsinn” (307) (“carelessness”). Mengen too, is aware of her agitation when he half jokingly reprimands Faustine for her “unlöschbaren Durst nach ‘etwas Anderem’” (336) (“unquenchable thirst for ‘something else’”). Each man responds differently: Andlau accepts what Mengen reproaches—Faustine’s capriciousness. Mengen lacks the perceptive understanding and generosity of Andlau who had, to a great extent, recognised the detriment of emotional confinement.

With increasing agitation Faustine seeks a different, perpetually inspired sense of self. This is apparent when she: “will leben ohne zu altern, schaffen ohne zu ermüden, genießen ohne mich abzustumpfen, forschen ohne zu zweifeln, ruhen ohne mich zu langweilen” (348) (“wants to live without aging, create without tiring, enjoy without being dull, search without doubting, rest without being bored”). Faustine’s mood is reminiscent of an “unrepentant wanderer” or “Byronic hero” (Abrams 480), forever striving for a new thrill to avoid the descent from artistic zenith. Just like the painter Robert and the Byronic wanderer, Faustine had experienced the ecstatic heights of grandiose achievement. Robert, incapable of managing his emotional despondency after composing a “monumental” work of art, descends into “a deep depressive state” (Thomann) and takes his life.

Having, like Robert, reached a similar state of artistic ecstasy, Faustine now becomes despondent and further considers the notion of the unattainable by beginning to reflect morosely on the course of life: “Das Neue ist immer etwas Altes, und etwas Anderes ist immer dasselbe; nur das äußere Kleid ward gewechselt. Das kann uns keine volle Befriedigung geben” (HH GF 352) (“What is new is always something old, and something different is always the same; only the outer clothing has been changed. That cannot possibly provide us with total contentment”). Faustine cannot find in her emotional resources an ordered way of accommodating her talent. She now resignedly states:

Diese Jahre mit Dir, Mario, waren meine höchste Blütezeit![. . .] meine Seele hat mit der deinen in solchen Ekstasen der Liebe und Begeisterung geschwelgt, daß Alles was ihr in dieser Region widerfahren kann, nur Wiederholung, und vielleicht . . . eine matte sein dürfte. (354)
These years with you, Mario, were the time in which I flowered most abundantly [. . .] my soul has indulged with yours in such ecstasies of love and enthusiasm, that everything that could still befall it in this region would only be a repetition and perhaps . . . an insipid one.

Faustine has outgrown Mengen. The physicality of their relationship as expressed in her feverish “Leidenschaftlichkeit” (332) (“passionateness”) does not sustain her sense of belonging to him anymore. It is noteworthy that in connection to their passion, Mengen uses Faustine’s language: “in ihr stand das Gewitter neben der Sonne, und das Mondlicht neben der Aurora” (332) (“in her thunder stood next to the sun and the moonlight next to Aurora”). Faustine had expressed to Andlau five years earlier, that only when she experiences this sensation, this yearning for the unattainable (with him), will she be “heavenly quiet” (76). She has now experienced this kind of sexuality, of rumbling thunder and burning sun, of orgasm and ecstasy with Mengen, but it is no longer satisfying.

For the first four years of her marriage Faustine seems untroubled by Clemens’s death and the rift in her relationship with Andlau. She justifies her decision to leave Andlau by saying that he would want her to be happy. After a chance meeting with Andlau, Faustine laments that she brings doom to those who love her, but Mengen eases this anguish by pointing out that this does not affect those she loves (340). In other words she did not love Andlau in an all-encompassing sense. In a state of agitation she calls out: “Mario! Mario! Mario! ich töte ihn! dem Clemens hab ich Leib und Seele getödet; Ihm, das Herz . . . und jetzt auch den Leib” (358) (“Mario! [Mengen] Mario! Mario! I am killing him [Andlau]! I killed Clemens’s body and soul; him, [Andlau], his heart . . . and now also his body”). Faustine witnesses Andlau’s passing away, his last words being her name. She blames herself for causing the death of her past companions.

Faustine’s existence seems to her like that of a waterlily that emerges into full bloom to then disappear into the depth of the water (353). It is not within Mengen’s capacity to offer spiritual guidance for Faustine to cope with this period of doubt and torment in her life. He misinterprets Faustine’s mental exhaustion by lamenting that the genius in Faustine gives in abundance but is: “im Genießen ein Übersättigter” (351) (“supersaturated with enjoyment”). Faustine is not saturated with satisfaction, she still longs for self-fulfilment. However, having reached the height of her craft, she resigns: “Höheres kann ich nicht—Geringeres mag ich nicht leisten. Ich habe das Meine getan!” (362) (“More I cannot do—less I do not want to accomplish. I have done my share!”).

The emphasis on the difference between a creative and a tormented Faustine increases now that the physical attraction is waning. Faustine does not remain in a marriage which fails to satisfy her spiritual needs and her yearning. She dares to break the matrimonial bond for no socially accepted grounds. Her husband loves her, she has a lovely and healthy child, she is a successful
artist, she lives very comfortably and she enjoys an outward autonomy, all attributes not granted too often to a wife and artist in early nineteenth-century society. Her audacious step to sever her family ties breaks with the conventions of the time. The two influential men in Faustine’s life were unable to provide her with sustaining support. Andlau’s spirituality lacked physicality, and Mengen’s physicality spirituality, perhaps creating the impression that her personal relationships vacillate between the platonic and the physical. Here Hahn-Hahn may wish to alert women to the potential conflict that ensues from such a dilemma, which seems to be based on her own experience.

6.2.2 Faustine’s liberation

Faustine had repeatedly entertained the idea of finding spiritual peace under ecclesiastic guardianship. She now pleads with Mengen to release her from her marriage vows so that she can enter a convent. While entering a convent was an acceptable step to take, the dissolution of marriage vows required courage, and to gain admission was more complicated for a woman who was married and the mother of a child. Mengen tries to calm her by singling out her longing as an unfeasible ambition:


Total contentment for the state of human beings on this earth is for me [Mengen] unthinkable [. . .] the moment when I would perceive that I had reached the goal of all my striving, and when I could find no more arena for wishes and struggles, would make me miserable instead of satisfied.

As Mengen embraces regularity in life he admits that, were he capable of reaching heights of ecstasy, he too would not be able to cope with it. He therefore endeavours to convince Faustine that it is impossible to achieve permanent contentment in life. His stance represents one aspect that is typical of his society: the action of striving is reserved “exclusively for men” (Brewer 191). By pointing out that complete bliss is unattainable “on this earth”, he also alludes to a religiously based state of satisfaction in an after-life, thus fostering Faustine’s intention to enter a convent (IH GF 352). Faustine is now driven by a fever that she believes can only be eased by sacrificing everything she ever loved and cared for (359-60). She is tired of life as she has lived it and seeks peace and salvation in meditative prayer and devotion to God. Two commonly held perceptions of convent life provide different perspectives for Faustine’s motivation to enter a convent. First, Mary Astell epitomises its perceived tranquillity in her 1694 treatise, Serious Proposal to the Ladies about Religious Retirement:
For here [in the convent] those who are convinced of the emptiness of earthly enjoyments, who are sick of the vanity of the world and its impertinencies, may find more substantial and satisfying entertainments. (qtd. in Rogers and McCarthy 117)

Geiger similarly points out that retreat into a convent was one of the few choices women had in the nineteenth century if they wanted to live outside the framework of family life (Befreite 222). Feldern voices another view. To him the idea of taking religious vows was abhorrent, as expressed to Cunigunde: “this religious idolatry makes at times the clearest heads crazy” (HH GF 151). Similarly five years earlier Faustine had declared in a letter to Andlau: “Now I am walled in like a villainous nun, depressed, frightened” (123). The prospect of entering a convent, rather than providing calm, had frightened Faustine. In view of this earlier antagonism Faustine’s turn-around decision may surprise. Yet this outcome is not so much out of character for Faustine, since those who understood her, like Andlau, or were of similar non-conformity in society, like Clemens, are dead. Further, she blames herself for these deaths.

Significantly, Faustine now enters the enclosed order of Viva sepolte (364) (those who live buried, those who, in a Gothic-like sense, live like the living dead). Even austere Mengen is horrified: “Schon der Name macht schaudern!” (364) (“Already the name makes me shudder”). In her state of segregation, the prospect of burying herself behind cloistered walls is a way out of what might seem like a hopeless situation. Because Faustine is no longer receptive to worldly stimuli, she expects to find inner peace in the sanctuary of cloistered life. Furthermore she believes: “daß eine Frau sterben kann, wenn sie nicht mehr liebt!” (342) (“that a woman could die if she is not able to love anymore”). She thus focuses on a love beyond earthly ideals, a Godly love, and now believes, like Vinzenze Sonsky, that renunciation will provide her with gratification. Faustine therefore asks for the annulment of her marriage and leaves the secular world to enter the convent (366). Importantly, with this act she has freed herself from convention and made a commitment to someone/something of her choice. She does this without the intervention of a third party like the aunt, a response to an act of violence like Obernau’s shooting, the tutelage of a male adviser like Andlau, or male persuasion like Mengen. Geiger considers Faustine’s entry into the convent as a metaphoric rather than a religious act of liberation (Befreite 222). I concur with Geiger, for Faustine’s love of God is not convincingly portrayed and her motive does not seem to be religious. Rather her decision to enter the convent appears to stem from frustration with her life.

One and a half years after entering the convent Faustine dies of what is briefly described as “a short illness” (HH GF 366). Hahn-Hahn presents the reader with four possibilities for its cause. First, because the circumstances surrounding Faustine’s death are presented from Mengen’s point of view, impartiality is compromised by the husband’s interpretation. Mengen believes that Faustine
did not die due to illness but due to regret and “bitter disappointment” (366). Such reasoning is convincing to someone who wants to maintain his mental balance after losing the one he loved; it is Mengen’s justified reasoning. Second, Mengen tells us that the father confessor of her convent and the bishop from Rome maintain that Faustine passed away piously and submissively “gottselig verschieden” (366) (“God-blessed passing”). It is not surprising that the representatives of her holy order would give this reason. Mengen expresses doubt about this cause, by saying that it was meant to console him.

Third, the Countess condemns Faustine for being a vampire and warns men: “Frauen wie Faustine sind der Racheengel unseres Geschlechtes” (367-68) (“Women like Faustine are the avenging angel for our gender”). The vampire image is suggestive of excessive and untamed femininity and represents danger. She compares Faustine to Semele who “was worshipped at Athens during the Festival of the Wild Women” (Graves, Greek 62) and, who in Greek mythology, destroyed herself by daring to see Zeus in his divine form (Duden-Lexikon 2039). In other words Faustine was justly punished for her daring non-conventionality. Fourth, the parallel of the death of artistic Faustine with the suicide of Léopold Robert, indicates to me that Hahn-Hahn portrayed Faustine’s death as a willing departure. This may be due to resignation: she has exhausted all there was to experience in life: love, motherhood, fame, success, contemplation—she has, in her own words, reached her “most fruitful period” (HH GF 354); or, she has attained liberation from conformity and thereby freedom. Some years earlier Faustine had voiced her reflection on life to Mengen: “Out of one form of existence to transcend into another does not signify death to me but a new development of life” (158). Thus Faustine considers death to be not final but a transformation into another stage.

In this interpretation Hahn-Hahn adopts Goethe’s teleological construct of an evolutionary-like process whereby living matter develops “from the lowest, unreflective, inorganic Thing to the highest, spiritual, all-embracing Being” (Heffner, Rehder, and Twaddell 117). Accordingly, the Lord in the prologue to Faust I says to Mephistopheles: “Wenn er mir jetzt auch nur verworren dient, so werd’ ich ihn bald in die Klarheit führen” (Faust 308) (“Even though he [Faust] now only serves me in confused manner, soon I shall lead him into clarity”). I see this as a gradual phasing of an evolutionary development, a philosophical outlook synonymous to that expressed by Faustine. As such, death is devoid of morbidity. Indeed, the motif of death is a staple of romantic and devotional literature that has had its followers throughout the centuries. This is evident in the writing of, amongst others, the Middle-Ages visionary Hildegard von Bingen and the philosophical pondering of early twentieth-century Kahlil Gibran, both of whom are still read widely.

Elisabeth Bronfen theorises that a good literary death “helps to regenerate the order of society, to eliminate destructive forces or serves to reaggregate the protagonist into her [subservient]
community” (219). This stance supports the Countess’s viewpoint that the vampire, the element of
danger, is no longer a threat to society. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar describe such death in
another way: “graceful or passionate self-abnegation,” the “highest virtue” (575) for a woman of
that time. This position upholds the desirable and glorified subjugation of women in patriarchy.
Both standpoints confirm the disadvantaged position of women at that time. Hahn-Hahn shows in
Faustine's death the result of the exploitation of women, which can be read as a stern warning as
well as a compassionate gesture towards those who collapse under this burden.

Gottschall uninspiringly finds that the convent is the swan song of her “weiblichen Faustiaden”
(440), only no Pater Seraphicus is there to intone. Munster adopts Mengen’s explanation that
Faustine died because of grief and bitter disappointment (102), while Lehmann suggests that Hahn-
Hahn endows her character with an untimely fatality so as not to offend society’s norms and
conventional morals (75). In this vein and at least according to the more severe proponents of
morality, Faustine would have had to die of shame, heartbreak, guilt or, perhaps, from God's
punishment. And even for the more secular minds, death was the most viable outcome for Faustine.

An examination of Faustine’s namesake provides further possibilities. In order to liberate
himself from a future that is bound to entail old age, Faust pledges his soul to the devil in exchange
for eternal youth. Faustine too wanted to live without ageing (HH GF 348), and she pledges her
soul to God to liberate herself from a secular life with which she has become disillusioned. Faust
exposes himself to the enjoyment of life’s offering under false pretences—his artificial youth—by
making a pact with the devil, while Faustine makes a faithless pact with God by entering the
convent without total conviction. Thus Faust and Faustine perform the same deed, albeit for
different motives, by committing their souls to antithetical theological constructs. Furthermore,
Faust requires the aid of a woman, Margarete, to provide his restless soul with salvation. Faustine,
however, achieves the calming of her restless striving by determining her own exit. Her unbridled
spirit, displayed while living with Andlau, re-emerges. Living in seclusion and contemplation has
liberated Faustine’s true, independent self. She frees herself not only from hegemonic society, but
also from religious conviction.

By adopting Brewer’s interpretation of the themes of resignation and rebellion in Gabriele, I
argue that Faustine “engages death as a bold means to reclaim her life and with it, her independent
voice” (191). Faustine’s secular quest evolves through several phases, in some of which she
endeavours to break through the confinement of traditional roles and customs. Like a Byronic hero,
she: “stood/ Among them, but not of them; in a shroud/ Of thoughts which were not their thoughts”
(Byron, Childe 3, 1055). In her final act this heroine does not follow the path of sacrificial
suffering. Instead, like Tolstoy’s Ivan Ilyich, who realises shortly before his death “that his life had
not been what it ought to have been but that it was still possible to put it right” (160), Faustine takes a decisive stance.

Unlike the once determined and headstrong Cunigunde, Faustine has remedied her marital situation and spiritual isolation. Disillusioned Cunigunde had lost her clarity and her free spirit when she eventually married a “trister Gesell” (HH GF 346) (“drab lad”), significantly after Faustine’s marriage to Mengen. Ironically, Mengen had predicted that pride and humiliation would prohibit Cunigunde from admitting her unhappiness with her incompatible husband. Accordingly the once impressively independent Cunigunde will not change her predicament, which may be due to her unfulfilled love for Faustine but, in contrast to Faustine, submits, sacrifices and suffers. Inside the cell of Viva sepolte Faustine realises that she can still remedy what she had neglected to do—exit this life in an act of defiance and liberation. As a literary device suicide offers an alternative to an independent nineteenth-century female character. Margaret Higonnet reflects on women’s suicide:

Some choose to die in order to shape their lives as a whole; others fragment life to generate the energy of fission or elision. In their deaths, many are obsessed with projecting an image, whether to permit aesthetic contemplation or to provoke a revolution in thought. (69)

Hahn-Hahn may have wanted to plant a revolutionary seed, but no light is shed on the circumstances surrounding Faustine’s actual death. Her death is charged with ambiguity. In keeping with her inconsistencies, it may signify punishment, thus suggesting a return to social conformity. It may be the result of following an emotionally charged decision lacking in maturity, an escape from confinement, or even an enlightened salvation.

Hahn-Hahn seems to pursue a twofold strategy. On the one hand, the ending endorses the customary expectations of the era: Faustine was—either due to weakness of character, past excesses, or exhaustive genius—unable to live within the constraints of her role. She therefore reaped an early death either as punishment or redemption, depending on the flavour of the reader’s religious or romantic conviction. On the other hand, this interpretation contradicts Hahn-Hahn’s critique of that very society. From what is known of Faustine, she indulges neither in self-abnegation, in submissive passivity, nor in what Veber considers a “spiritual quest” (312). Rather, she desires an independent and self-determining existence even if it contravenes customary expectations and behaviour. In this context her death signifies what Gillian Beer reads in other

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82 Veber, referring to Hahn-Hahn’s post-conversion text, Von Babylon nach Jersusalem, in which Hahn-Hahn wrote, “that she had always been” (313) a dormant Catholic, sees Faustine’s quest as being religiously inspired. Since the living Faustine expresses no such sentiments, I interpret Faustine’s motivation as stemming from a need for personal self-actualisation.
nineteenth-century heroines: “the only means of escape from the determining bonds of a particular society” (87-88).

It has become apparent that Hahn-Hahn ends the novel in the way it begins, as an affirmation of self-actualisation for women, an enactment of the ‘great themes’ and their progression: relationship, art, renunciation—deliverance. Therefore Faustine’s death should be regarded as an act of defiance rather than compliance. Geiger describes it as a kind of suicide that enables the heroine to “survive” patriarchal deadening: “Sterben, um zu leben, heißt in diesem Sinne, eine von außen festgelegte Identität loswerden” (Befreite 340) (“to die in order to live, in this sense, means to get rid of a [socially] enforced identity”). Faustine’s passing would then signify liberation.
Chapter 7  Positioning Aphra Behn

7.1 Similarities between the historical and fictional Aphra Behn

7.1.1 Historical Aphra Behn’s life and work

Similarities between Luise Mühlbach’s novel, *Aphra Behn*, and *Gräfin Faustine* are evident in the heroines’ quests for self-actualisation. Comparing Faustine’s phases in her quest for self-realisation with those of Mühlbach’s protagonist, Aphra, shows that Aphra’s quest consists of four phases, of which three are attempts at happiness through love. The first is her love for Oronooko. Aphra battles through his rejection without the comfort or advice of friends or family. The second phase is her marriage to Behn. In this legally binding arrangement, her resilience comes to the fore when she negotiates a divorce in spite of most unfavourable circumstances. Her love for Edward is the third phase of her life’s quest. Upon Buckingham’s destructive interference in this liaison, Aphra channels her energies into becoming a writer. In her fourth and final phase, she accepts that a love-relationship proves elusive for her but that she can gain satisfaction and independence in her life with her writing. The feminist meaning reveals that love alone may not be fulfilling, for it does not provide self-actualisation for an independent woman. While Hahn-Hahn’s more philosophical pondering involves the specific topics of sexuality and individualism in an upper-class environment, Mühlbach’s critique encompasses personal as well as broader institutional injustices.

I analyse *Aphra Behn’s* criticism in the following ways. First, by comparing and contrasting the historical background of nineteenth-century Prussia and the Restoration period in England, I aim to demonstrate that Mühlbach adopted this historical setting to critique her own time and place, a finding shared with Judith E. Martin:

Similarities between Behn’s and Mühlbach’s times undoubtedly account for Mühlbach’s equally strong interest in Behn’s historical period and in the writer’s life. Behn, like Mühlbach, lived in a period of revolution and restoration. The English Restoration saw a “sexual revolution” in reaction to the Puritan interregnum that parallels a literary sexual revolution of sorts among the Young Germans during the *Vormärz*. Mühlbach’s position within politically progressive ideologies shaped her author-persona as engaged and self-consciously feminist artist. (“Luise” 588)

Contrary to pro-aristocratic Hahn-Hahn, Mühlbach condemns the institutional power of the ruling Hohenzollern monarchy, which she disguised in the English Restoration period. She attacked the clergy, characterised by the ruthlessness of Fathers Matthews and Abranto, who support the
restoration of the exploitative King Charles II for their own ambitious purposes. She also voices her disapproval of a not entirely blameless population. Her analysis of how the oppressed may, to a degree, be complicit in their oppression is insightful and thought-provoking. Second, in contrast to Hahn-Hahn’s focused attack on regimented and hypocritical society, Mühlbach demonstrates how a prevailing corrupt system influences several diverse and vivid female characters to respond to life in a patriarchy. The King’s mistress, Barbara, Duchess of Cleveland, achieves fame and wealth, and thrives extravagantly in her manipulation of the King’s and the Queen’s existence. Similarly, Nelly Gwyn finds her prince, while fearful Mrs Monk enjoys the trepidations she creates.

But for others, suicide is the only solution: Imoinda, due to the savagery of the coloniser, Governor Bannister; and Sara, because of her betrayal by Charles II. According to her nature each woman reacts differently to male-dominated society. Third, and in contrast to the character Faustine, Aphra reacts to this social construct by taking a journey through life that, in overcoming obstacles, culminates in the establishment of a professional writing career. A corrupting institutional system enables not only the King’s minions to flourish but also, as a consequence, causes the social behaviour of diverse characters, and the heroine’s personal empowerment. With these topics Mühlbach demonstrates her emancipatory endeavour, her sustained social criticism, and her progressive approach that is of contemporary relevance. Drawing a distinction from the more philosophically subtle tones of Gräfin Faustine, Luise Mühlbach created in her heroine a character who is full of incessant vitality, action and excitement and who lives in a colourful world that consists of a fair share of burlesque, a clever device that allows its author freedom of expression in times of censorship.

Who was the historical, seventeenth-century Aphra Behn who, more than a century and a half later, inspired Mühlbach to fictionalise her life? The writer Aphra Behn is famous for her novel Oroonoko, or the History of the Royal Slave, on which Mühlbach’s first Aphra Behn volume is based. Nothing is known for certain of Aphra Behn’s early life (Rogers and McCarthy 1). According to Drabble (The Oxford Companion to English 83), Behn, probably born as Johnson, lived from 1640 till 1689. While one scholar estimates Behn’s time in Surinam to have been as lengthy as twenty years (Möhrmann, Andere 80), most agree that she lived there only between 1663 and 1664 (Dulan 8, Todd 35, Link 20). Whatever its length, Behn’s sojourn in Surinam is significant since it inspired her writing of Oroonoko, or the History of the Royal Slave (usually considered to be the autobiography of Behn’s youth [Rogers and McCarthy 1]).

Behn was widowed after a brief marriage. She also worked as a spy for the English King, Charles II, in Holland, but his failure to remunerate Behn for this service upon her return to England left her in debt and earned her a short prison sentence (Goreau 113). Once freed, instead of marrying, “then the only respectable means of support for a woman” (“Women” 5), Behn earned
her living as a professional writer, the first English woman to do so (Ezell 22, 30). It is estimated that Behn wrote eighteen plays, many poems, and five novels published between 1688 and 1689, Oroonoko, or the History of the Royal Slave being the best known (Rogers and McCarthy 1). Eight novels were published posthumously (Link 130).

The themes of Aphra Behn’s writing involve “marriage, caustically peeling away its pious façade of respectability to reveal the sexual and economic power struggle which was the reality” (“Women” 5). In her writing she entertained and publicly critiqued the injustices of subjugation, be it of women or slaves, and the double standards of religious practices. She fearlessly voiced her criticism of institutionalised customs such as arranged marriages, albeit a common drama theme during the Restoration (Goreau 228), and the hypocrisy of the clergy. Yet here too attacks were not uncommon (Woodcock 198). Because of her outspoken criticism she depended on the favour, support and leniency of the King and her work was consequently either published or suppressed (Goreau 251). Enjoying some of Charles II’s favour, Behn had a successful run with her plays; however, after his death attendance numbers declined, and the ease with which her works had been published waned. Due to her unconventional life and her social critique, Behn had gained notoriety, but she died in relative poverty in 1689 (Goreau 261). According to Virginia Woolf Behn was “most scandalously but rather appropriately” (60) the first woman writer laid to rest in Westminster Abbey. As a professional woman, “shady and amorous as she was” (60), she disrupted tradition not only with her writing but by being put to rest in the ‘revered’ company of kings, queens and many other famous people.

The significance of Aphra Behn, the first woman to earn her livelihood by her pen, cannot be underestimated. In the 1970s “modern feminists” reclaimed her as “proto-feminist” (Tuttle 35). While her life is shrouded in controversy and mystery, her writing survives, and her legacy paved the way for women to have courage in becoming professional writers. Behn’s writing is still very much the subject of scholarly research, debate (Dulan 2) and enjoyment, but “none of her contemporaries, who were in a position to know, objected that she was ‘lying’” (Goreau 44) about the topics of her narrative. So what matter if Mühlbach, two hundred years later, uses authorial licence to present the actions of a thought-provoking, seventeenth-century woman whose portrayal impugns the structure of her society, in an equally vibrant and thought-provoking manner? Perhaps Mühlbach continued in her novel with Behn’s legacy to portray the themes of institutional inequities, of social intolerance, and of personal struggle for contemporary and future generations to ponder.

The colourful similarities between the lives of the historical Aphra Behn (whom, to avoid confusion, I shall refer to as Mrs Behn), and Mühlbach’s fictional Aphra Behn, are perceptible. While Janet Todd depicts Mrs Behn as an outsider in her society (411), Montague Summers states
that she enjoyed company and was very popular (lviii). It would appear that Mrs Behn had been introduced to Charles II by the “chief of the King’s Company of actors” (Todd 72), Thomas Killigrew. According to scholars, Charles was pleased (Goreau 211) and entertained by her amusing rendition of life in Surinam (Woodcock 30). Yet even though Charles saw the performance of Mrs Behn’s play, The Dutch Lover, in 1670 (Todd 169), their relationship was reputed to be a distant one. In contrast, Mühlbach’s fictional Aphra was part of the inner circle at the court of Charles II and her relationship with her friend Barbara, Duchess of Cleveland, is very cordial. Barbara fulfils a very important role in Charles’s life, which Mühlbach explores to its fullest extent. In comparison, the historical Duchess of Cleveland does not feature as prominently in the King’s life. Todd concludes that even though Charles’s first reigning decade was spent with the “voracious” (129) Barbara, who was later to be supplanted by Nell Gwyn (10), it was Louise de Kéroualle who became “the most expensive and influential of Charles’s mistresses” (129).

According to Todd, Summers, Goreau, and Woodcock, Mrs Behn’s association with the Duke of Buckingham was not as informal as that portrayed by Mühlbach. Summers quotes Buckingham’s “ungenerous lines” about Mrs Behn in A Trial of the Poets for the Bays (liv), while Todd refers to Buckingham’s “mockery” (153) of Mrs Behn in The Rehearsal. Goreau claims that Mrs Behn “kept company” (211) with Buckingham, and Todd asserts that she “never much liked” (222) him. Lastly Woodcock classifies Buckingham as “her political enemy” (84). Even though Mrs Behn wrote a dedication to the memory of Buckingham in 1687:

Great Buckingham’s Exalted Character
That in the Prince liv’d the Philosopher.
Thus all the wealth thy Generous Hand has spent
Shall Raise thy Everlasting Monument

(Behn, “Memory” 2)

this is no proof of their cordiality. It was not uncommon for impecunious writers to write eulogies, and Mrs Behn wrote a number, such as a congratulatory poem to Queen Mary on the birth of the Prince of Wales (Goreau 253, 294; Todd 533). It would therefore appear that the relationship between the historical Mrs Behn and Buckingham was lacking the intimacy depicted by Mühlbach, but in the novel this is necessary for the fictional Buckingham’s jealous behaviour. However, Mühlbach’s rendition of Buckingham’s love liaison with the Countess of Shrewsbury, and the duel in which Buckingham kills her husband the Count (LM AB 3: 37), is recorded as an authentic incident that occurred in 1668 (Phipps 15).

The relationship of Mühlbach’s Aphra to her lover, Edward Vane, seems to be entirely fictitious. Yet the circumstances surrounding Edward Vane’s father’s (Henry Vane’s) death (LM AB 3: 103) appear to be based loosely on the life of Sir Henry Vane (1613-62), whom the
Restoration government convicted of treason and executed on Tower Hill (Adamson and Folland 472). Two minor characters bear some similarities to their historical predecessors, witty Nell Gwyn (with whom Mrs Behn was friendly enough to dedicate her play *The Feign’d Curtezans*, to) (Goreau 235), and “Generall Monke,” of whom Samuel Pepys records that the city thinks of him as the “most perfidious man that hath betrayed everybody, and the King also” (372-73). Mühlbach’s fictional Nelly’s account of the procession of the clergy, and fictional Monk’s lack of decision-making regarding the petitioners, are discussed below. The beheading of the Marquis of Argyll (Willcock 155) is another historical event that provided Mühlbach with the material on which to model her fictionalised Lord Argyle (LM *AB* 3: 122). The above-mentioned historical figures, the turbulence of the Restoration period and, above all, the adventurous life of the “incomparable” (Woodcock) Mrs Behn inspired Mühlbach to recreate the life of this amazing woman with suspense and excitement.

### 7.1.2 Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko* and Mühlbach’s *Aphra Behn*

What was the significant theme in Mrs Behn’s *Oroonoko, or the History of the Royal Slave* that caused such controversy for its author? For Ruth Nestvold, Mrs Behn’s 1688 novel is “one of the first realistic prose narratives in English literature” (“White” 1). By 1650, a revolution had taken place in England and the King had been executed, which caused the uprooting of traditions and challenged conventional thinking (Goreau 19). Joanna Lipking proposes that Mrs Behn portrays in *Oroonoko, or the History of the Royal Slave* a re-enactment of the English revolution and the King’s beheading (241). Notably, Mrs Behn advocates the abolition of slavery. Indeed, Goreau accredits Mrs Behn with publishing “perhaps the first important abolitionist statement” (289) in English literary history that was to influence not only the slavery debate in England, but also to inspire the revolutionary forces in France. Similarly, Drabble contends that as “[p]erhaps the earliest English philosophical novel, it [*Oroonoko*] deplores the slave trade and Christian hypocrisy, holding up for admiration the nobility and honour of its African hero” (*The Oxford Companion to English* 83). The plot of the novel questions the supremacy and integrity of the civilised colonisers against the uncivilised savages. Thus Mrs Behn wrote one of the original depictions of the “noble savage in literature” (Rochwalsky 2), seventy years before Rousseau’s widely acclaimed theory on this topic.

The novel is written in the first person, the female narrator professing that: “I was myself an Eye-witness” (*AB* O 1) to the events she describes. Her father, who had been appointed Lieutenant-General to Surinam, died during the journey from England, leaving the young protagonist and her family stranded in the English colony of Surinam for some months. While there, she meets Oroonoko, the prince of Coramantine, in the vicinity of modern-day Ghana (Craton 25). He had been enslaved in his homeland and was then sold in Surinam. In Coramantine he had been married
to Imoinda, who was sold into slavery by the jealous King. When reunited with Imoinda in Surinam, Imoinda’s pregnancy galvanises Oroonoko to stage a revolt against the governor. Abandoned by the other slaves, who succumb to the oppressors’ superior weaponry, Oroonoko kills Imoinda but is then unable to kill himself as intended. He is taken captive. The protagonist Aphra, leaving her mother and sister behind, had taken a journey along the river. During her absence, Oroonoko is cruelly tortured to death by “one Banister . . . a fellow of absolute barbarity” (Rogers and McCarthy 76). Behn’s novel ends prophetically: “Thus died this great Man [. . .] Yet, I hope, the Reputation of my pen is considerable enough to make his glorious Name to survive to all Ages” (AB O 78). And indeed, it did.

Luise Mühlbach published her three volumed-novel, Aphra Behn, in 1849. It is not surprising that this writer, who shaped “the German historical novel” by “popularising historical knowledge” (Peterson, “Luise” 207), was inspired by the English woman writer Aphra Behn and her novel Oroonoko, or the History of the Royal Slave, to write her own German novel, Aphra Behn. Mühlbach’s decision to depict a controversial historical and literary person in equally controversial fiction provides the opportunity to create a fantastic tale, to showcase her research, and to articulate contemporary social criticism. Generically, Aphra Behn is a mix of the historical and the social novel with strong elements of political criticism. It also encompasses aspects of the female German Robinsonaden fiction. Blackwell points out that the depiction of such fictional heroines created “a new type of female consciousness” (“Island” 8).

The adventures of Mühlbach’s protagonist Aphra in exotic Surinam, at Charles’s court, and on her spying assignment in Holland, are similar to the female Robinsonaden, because these journeys are akin to a mission of what twentieth-century feminists might call feminist consciousness-raising. In Mühlbach’s words, the purpose of a historical novel is to present history in a readily understandable form to a general readership, and to extend the “human dimension” that is missing from the historian’s “objective, factual” (Kurth-Voigt and McClain 55) rendition. By focusing on women in the roles of “lovers, wives, mothers and sisters” in her historical novels, Mühlbach “popularized history and brought it to the hearts of her contemporaries” (57). Kurth-Voigt and McClain find that Mühlbach’s early social novels display “evidence of her love of history” (53). Although opinions about the historical merit of her historical novels were divided (57), in rendering a social critique Mühlbach adds something of her own to the historical element of her narrative. In addition she conveys ideas to a general readership, who may think about her veiled criticism of the prevailing political regime in a milieu of intellectual censorship. Her method was successful, as

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83 According to Dulan, Major Banister is traceable to historic records in Surinam (8).
84 German term for adventurous stories derived from Defoe’s The Life and Strange and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe (1719) (Cuddon 756). Between 1720 and 1800 over sixteen heroines appeared in German Robinsonaden fiction (Blackwell, “Island” 5), which were generally published anonymously or pseudonymously (8).
evidenced in Mühlbach’s domestic and international success and in her recognition by 1875 as a writer of these genres (58).

The literary nexus between the narratives of *Oroonoko, or the History of the Royal Slave* (Behn) and *Aphra Behn*, volume one, “Oronooko” (Mühlbach) is evident in the comparable storyline even though there are some variations. For example, Mühlbach’s female characters Aphra and Imoinda take decisive action by intervening on Oronooko’s behalf (Aphra), and ending her own life (Imoinda). Each of the three volumes of Mühlbach’s *Aphra Behn*: “Oronooko,” “Die Restauration,” and “Die Dichterin Aphra Behn,” depicts different aspects of the historical Aphra Behn’s life. While the duration of the historical Aphra Behn’s stay in Surinam is usually dated as from 1663 to 1664, Mühlbach’s Aphra Johnson would have lived there from 1658 to 1660.85 The overarching theme of a struggle against patriarchy in Mühlbach’s novel corresponds to Mrs Behn’s criticism as expressed in her novels and plays.

Both writers attacked forms of social discrimination that stem from an underlying “corrupting desire to dominate another human being” (Goreau 272). Consequently the leitmotiv of institutional, social, and personal inequities in Mrs Behn’s *Oroonoko, or the History of the Royal Slave* is echoed in Mühlbach’s *Aphra Behn*. “Mühlbach reimagines Behn as actively engaged for women’s political and social rights, indeed as a proponent of nineteenth-century feminist concerns [. . .] Aphra works to counter male oppression of women legally, collectively, and individually” (Martin, Judith E., “Luise” 591). Both heroines condemn slavery, and indict the willingness of those who condone unjust practices. Set in different countries and centuries, the political situation in mid-seventeenth-century England (Behn) and early nineteenth-century Germany (Mühlbach) is explored in their novels. “Within this historical cultural context, Mühlbach therefore combined Young German concepts of the activist artist with romantic conventions of artistic genius” (591).

At this point, before submitting a historical comparison of the governing institutions of Prussia and England, some observations of Mühlbach’s narrative style are useful.

7.2 Deployment of narrative devices

7.2.1 Exotic imagery and symbolic meanings

Because Mrs Behn had spent time in Surinam, her novel’s description of the fauna and flora is quite accurate. Indeed, Nestvold suggests a dual function for *Oroonoko, or the History of the Royal Slave*: it can be read either as novel or travelogue (“Behn” 6). In contrast, Mühlbach’s own journey outside Europe consisted of a trip to Egypt in 1870, twenty-one years after the publication of *Aphra Behn* (Potts 66). She relied on secondary sources for her scenic descriptions of foreign places and, apparently, worked in this respect like an historical novelist by doing research and reading

85 In the novel, Cromwell, before his death in 1658, appoints her father as governor to Surinam. In volume two, “The Restoration,” the heroine returns from Surinam to England at the time of Charles II’s coronation in 1660.
documents (Kurth-Voigt and McClain 69). By building on the excitement of the exotic ‘other’ as represented in the locations of Surinam and West Africa, Mühlbach engages in a strange medley of magic and mystery in the first volume of Aphra Behn. While the setting of her novel was not part of the Orient, the connotations of Oriental mystique that Europeans attached to the ‘other’ gave her the liberty to create outlandish imagery. Importantly, the connotations of this ‘other’ also freed her from the domestic restrictions that implemented ideological policing and censorship. Mühlbach’s factually incorrect, but imaginative, information about distant shores strikingly enriches her depictions, and adds to the flavour of the exotic and the fantastic connotations associated with anything ‘foreign,’ and thus anything Oriental and enticing for the reader.

Before and during the nineteenth century the Orient, an “almost European invention,” was considered to be “a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (Said 1).86 For the Western mind, images of the Orient, like the Robinsonaden, created a “perennial fascination” with “strange peoples and customs, unfamiliar plants and animals, the rich textures, precious stones, and fabulous wealth” (Roberston and Reich 44). The earliest account of British Guiana, translated from English, was printed in Germany in 1841, when travel literature was still very much in its infancy and a trendsetter (Maler 79). There developed a tradition of adventurous women travel writers and, in 1842, two continental women set out on an expedition to the Holy Land, a major journey involving many perils. Ida Pfeiffer departed from Vienna in March, while Ida von Hahn-Hahn left Dresden in June.

Both women travelled to Egypt via Constantinople and the Holy Land and, in 1844, published their travelogues, Reise in das Heilige Land (Pfeiffer) and Orientalische Briefe (Hahn-Hahn). By now readers were interested in reports of wondrous countries with peculiar customs. The journeys to these foreign destinations whetted readers’ appetites for travelogues from the remaining four continents to which Pfeiffer, the “first [Austrian] woman travel writer” (McLoone 29) contributed in a significant manner up to her death in 1858.

In 1848 when Aphra Behn was written, accurate information about Surinam and Ghana was only sparingly available, thus providing Mühlbach with the superb opportunity to utilise in her fiction unlikely scenarios for best dramatic, and also political, effect. This is evident in her botanical and geographical descriptions, which contain imaginary elements to enhance the mood of her fictional setting. An 1869 critique points out that, while not all of Mühlbach’s statements are

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86 One of the earliest German references to the Orient dates to around 1150-60, when the hero of König Rother, probably written by a Rhineland cleric, travels there to seek a bride (Robertson and Reich 40-41). In 1603 Gabriel Rollenhagen wrote Vier Bücher Wunderbarlicher Indianischer Reisen (Bithell 377), and in 1647 Adam Olearius recorded his Beschreibung der Newen Orientalischen Reise (Robertson and Reich 187). Between 1812 and 1813 the Viennese orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall’s Persian translation, Divan, inspired in 1819 Goethe’s Westöstlicher Divan (Robertson and Reich 402). Adelbert von Chamisso’s Reise um die Welt in den Jahren 1815-18 and Alexander von Humboldt’s Kosmos (1845-58) were popular early nineteenth century literary texts (Bithell 377). During this time, Friedrich Rückert also interpreted Oriental life and poetry (Robertson and Reich 432).
“authentic”, the enjoyment readers derive from a good “tale” (“Louise” 189) more than compensates for any inaccuracies. This adds to the novel’s allure for modern day readers, who may be more acquainted with geography. The opening of Mühlbach’s first volume embellishes, in a Romantic style, the first of several puzzling, but creative, narrative factors:

Es war eine wundervolle zauberhafte Stille in der Natur. Die glühenden Streifen der verglimmenden Abendsonne hüllten die Landschaft gleichsam in ein purpurnes Gewand ein, hier ein magisches Licht auf die Bananen und die im Abendwind flüsternden Palmen werfend, während dort die Dämmerung schon ihre langen Schatten über das Dattelgehölze und die Pinien zu legen began. (LM \textit{AB} 1: 1)

There was a wonderful, enchanted stillness in nature. The glowing lines of the fading evening sun enveloped the landscape in a crimson robe so to speak, throwing here a magical light onto the bananas and onto the whispering palms in the evening wind, while over there the dusk had already begun to throw its long shadows onto the date thickets and the pine trees.

The opposing forces of day and night are signified by the glow of the sun and the dark shadows of dusk. What appears on first reading as an idyllic atmosphere possesses an underlying current of mystery, a concept of \textit{appearance-and-reality}. The dissonance is underscored by elements of fantasy. First, the narrator describes the location of this opening passage as a landscape with tropical date palms and pine trees. The botany of Surinam, where this action takes place, consists of “untouched tropical rain forest” (Jonkers 3). Pines, with the exception of the Norfolk species, are predominantly native to northern temperate regions. Depicting them in a tropical setting lends an impression of an imaginary realm, and the magical encasing of familiar pine with the unfamiliar banana palms is a marvellous lead into an imaginary setting. Another creative element involves the hero’s appearance. Oronooko is described, in line with the European’s ideal of beauty, as the black image of a “Belvederische Apoll” (LM \textit{AB} 1: 14). As a Westernised beauty symbol this appearance tantalises those readers who had never seen a black person. Here, this figure becomes unrealistically ‘familiar.’ Also, this black hero appeases those for whom, due to prejudice, people of other appearances are unacceptable: Oronooko is an acceptable ‘other.’ Mühlbach richly interweaves a syncretic mix of Gothic, Oriental, and American Indian notions into the scenery of Africa and Surinam.

Gothic imagery emerges from a dungeon in Surinam. Newts inhabit this dungeon in which the black female slave, Janka, has been locked up on the orders of Governor Bannister (1: 38). Historically, in 1650, England had established a fort and some thirty houses in Paramaribo, the main
settlement of Surinam (Price 2). While a dungeon formed part of a fort, the habitation of newts that survive in the moist and wooded areas of Europe, Asia and North America (Gin 2), seems unlikely, especially in the “warm and humid” (Jonkers 3) climate of Surinam. However, images of these creatures evoke an atmospheric effect. This Surinam, a half-real and a half-imagined environment, is full of wild surprises. The reader is aroused, for anything can happen.

The African landscape is just as fanciful. Oronooko’s grandfather, the old King, lives in a palace with (what appears to have been a prerequisite for exotic depictions) an underground dungeon into which he, in a jealous fit, condemns the chained Oronooko to be tortured by the dungeon keeper. “Mit Ketten belastet führt man ihn in den unterirdischen Kerker” (LM AB 1: 75) (“laden with chains he is led into the underground dungeon”) and subjected to the “Quälereien seiner Kerkermeister” (1: 75) (“tortures of the gaoler”). Indeed, forts or ‘palaces’ were “characteristic of European settlements” (Walvin 29), in which slave traders had tortuously enslaved the Africans in dungeons. For example, the Portuguese had by 1482 built “Elmina” (Hernæs 197), the first castle of the many fortresses that protected their traders from European competitors and hostile Africans along the Gold Coast of West Africa.

A balcony, from which the African King, his silvery hair falling in waves over his chest, observes his lion- and eagle-like warriors returning after battle (LM AB 1: 65), augments this Gothic theme. Wavy silvery hair suits the image of a knight of King Arthur’s table, while an African King would distinguish himself by his tightly curled hair. Another titivation presents itself when Oroonoko rests on his tiger skins (1: 72), detailing that he and his warriors hunt and kill not only lions but also tigers (1: 78). The tigers’ habitat is India (The Oxford Companion to English 1507), evoking their image adds to the colourfulness of the ‘foreign.’ For good measure any fantasy-rich tableau is enhanced with oriental elements. In the innermost part of the King’s palace, eunuchs guard the women’s chambers which are inhabited by heavily veiled harem women (LM AB 1:70).

Elaborating on an arsenal of typified non-European countries, an American Indian flavour surfaces as yet another element of exotica when the African King mistrusts the white people, those “Bleichgesichter” (1: 79) (“palefaces”) who landed on his shores: he therefore refuses to smoke the peace pipe with them. Oronooko’s behaviour too is like that of an American Indian rather than an African. He wields his tomahawk, lusting for a fight (1: 65) and, sometime later, glides through a secret palace door past dark passages without a sound, like a snake (1: 73). Oronooko and Aphra are described as “der indische Hercules, an welchen die weiße Taube sich mit flatternder Angst anschmiegt” (1: 186) (“the Indian Hercules on whom the white dove nestled in trembling fear”). Here, American Indian images freely interact in a tropical Surinam that is spiced with imagination.

An air of drama, an essential ingredient to create suspense and to heighten the tension in most exotic narratives, confronts the reader. In romantic rendition, an amazing occurrence takes place
when Aphra gets up at dawn and runs in her light nightgown into the, one is bound to think, magical
forest. She loses her way, but all of a sudden the man she loves rescues her. Oronooko appears from
nowhere, killing a poisonous snake that was just about to bite her foot (1: 46). With this action
gallant Oronooko endears himself to protagonist and reader alike. One might wonder how he
combines the condition of slavery with his ever-watchful eye for the heroine’s wellbeing, but any
qualms are cast aside because he is, after all, a true romantic hero. In another instance of a
seemingly romantically-motivated act of liberation, this black slave comes into the white girl’s
room at night:

Wird die weiße Jungfrau dem Sclaven verzeihen, daß er es wagt, zu ihr einzutreten? fragte er leise, und bei dem Ton dieser weichen melodischen
Stimme fühlte Aphra ihr Herz sich zusammenziehen in krampffästem Schmerz.
(1: 138)

Will the white virgin forgive the slave that he dares to enter her room? he asked
softly, and at the tone of this gentle, melodic voice, Aphra felt her heart contract
in convulsive pain.

The tantalising interaction between black slave and white female oversteps the taboos of the time so
that the reader awaits with suspense the culmination of a moment that is set in such exotically
intimate surroundings. Alas, the potential eroticism of this scenario evaporates when his intention is
revealed: Oronooko informs Aphra of the slaves’ pending revolt and asks for her protection of
Imoinda in case of its failure. Perhaps readers were not primed to accept a ‘happy-ending black and
white’ love story, though Wolfram von Eschenbach (ca. 1170-1220) depicted a non-threatening
union in Parzival87 (ca. 1170-1222) (Robertson and Reich 80). Moreover, such depiction would
have ruined the dramatic purpose of this narrative. Therefore the hopes of the heroine, and perhaps
some readers, are devastatingly shattered. Nonetheless, the foregone flamboyant fantasies lend
themselves to a sense of adventure, to intrigue, and to the exotic. Gothic, Oriental and American
Indian motifs transform Mühlbach’s novel into an Arabian Nights narrative, set in a world
composed of real and imaginary elements. The sense of appearance-and-reality in the opening

87 In this first “Entwicklungsroman der Weltliteratur” (Martini 44) (“development novel in world literature”), Parzival’s
father Gahmuret had married the African Moorish Queen Belakane and their son Feirefiz is Parzival’s older half-
brother. Parzival eventually meets Feirefiz, who is described with a complexion that was “like a parchment with writing
all over it, black and white all mixed up” (Eschenbach 390). In 1882 Wagner turned the story of Parzival into an opera,
a “Bühnenweihfestspiel” (Jacobs and Sadie 283) (“sacred festival drama”) of the same name. While a social awareness
of black and white relationships had existed for centuries, Hoxie Neale Fairchild states that “[e]xcept for the South Sea
Islanders, whose status as romantic lovers is beyond question, the courtship of the Noble Savage cannot be regarded as
having been a very popular theme” (412). In recent years a Swiss woman, Corinne Hofmann, married a Massai warrior
in Kenya, ‘went native’ for a while and then published her bestselling story, which became the script for a film
(Hofmann).
paragraph quoted above: “There was a wonderful, enchanting stillness in nature” (LM AB 1: 1), places the novel in a world of imagination and reality. This first volume is staged in unfamiliar surroundings that puzzle and entertain the reader. It may also be a challenge to differentiate between fact and fiction, good and bad, fantasy and reality and, Mühlbach’s salient point, a resemblance between events at home and abroad.

In her writing Mühlbach has a tendency to use first person plural narrative, which encourages inclusiveness, as for example: “Wir haben gesagt” (2: 94) (“We have said”). Descriptive commentary like: “wie sie damals zum guten Ton der vornehmen Welt gehörten” (3: 5) (“as was at that time customary in the world of refinement”) and the aside that the relationship between Aphra and Buckingham is not: “eins dieser schlüpfrigen, leichtgeknüpften, leichtzerrissenen Verhältnisse” (3: 5) (“one of those slippery, easily formed, easily torn relationships”) creates a feeling of intimacy. “Aber horch . . . an’s Werk, also an’s Werk!” (2: 42) (“But hark . . . to work, well, then, to work”), adds legitimacy and theatrical flourish to the narrated incidents. She also intersperses her writing with deft colloquialism: “elenden Pöbel” (2: 255) (“miserable rabble”), and “was hatte der [König] zu schaffen mit diesem heulenden, winselnden, verhungernden Pöbel, welcher sich Volk nannte” (3: 283) (“what did he [the King] have to do with these howling, whining, starving rabble, who called themselves the people”).

Aside from the colloquial and exotic flavours, buffoonery is evident in the farcical motif of conducting charades behind a hidden curtain or a room divider. This occurs in almost stage-like manner, as shown in incidents involving Charles with the Church of England, and Lady Monk with her husband’s petitioners, representing yet again both drama and parody. Symbolic coincidences feature as well: just as Charles and his entourage proceed towards the French harbour to start the journey back to England, his procession is stopped by the death parade of the drowned corpse of his abandoned mistress, Sara (2: 72). This symbolic confrontation has two purposes. First, it provides information about Charles’s character whereby, abetted by the clergy as epitomised in Father Matthews, he callously contributed to the tragic suicide of this young woman. Second, it acts as an ill omen for his forthcoming reign.

In an interesting social aside that is allegorically presented, most likely prompted by the European timber shortage, Mühlbach expresses concern for the sustainability of the environment. This emerges in the sardonic comment that a whole forest of oak trees has been bared of its freshly burgeoning leaves and branches to turn all of London into an artificial oak grove for Charles’s triumphant arrival (2: 192). Mühlbach thus creates relevant awareness amongst her readers with

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88 Concerned about “sustainable development,” Hans Carl von Carlowitz had coined the concept of ecological sustainability in his 1713 book, Sylvicultura Oeconomica, oder Hausswirthliche Anweisung zur Wilden Baum-Zucht ("or, Domestic Instruction for the Cultivation of Native Trees") (Grober 98). Similarly in 1791, Georg Ludwig Hartig voiced his concern by publishing Instructions to Foresters about Siviculture (Hartig 1).
annotations about the issue of maintaining an ecological balance for future generations. The oak
tree has a twofold symbolism. In European folklore that dates back to the ancient Greeks, the oak,
similar to Zeus, Jupiter and Hercules, signifies power, endurance and triumph (Graves, White
175). Thus the felling of many oak trees is a metaphorical precursor to the fate of the nation and
the general population. Just as the oaks are bared of their foliage, the English nation will lose
strength and the population will be depleted of their earnings. The ironic commentary represents not
only an apt observation and assessment of people and trends, but also an ecological and natural
awareness of infringements of the laws of nature, order and harmony. Mühlbach’s social critique is
introduced in incidents like these, and in certain qualifying attributes of her characters.

To validate her storyline, as was conventional in novel writing of the period, Mühlbach quotes
numerous historical sources in footnotes or brackets in volumes two and three. Her main source
is Gilbert Burnet’s History of My Own Time: The Reign of Charles the Second. She also inserts
references to sources in the text, such as: “By a member of his court” (2: 135), “Charles Stuart’s
own words” (2: 138), and “Histoire secrète des regnes des voix Charles II et Jacques II” (2: 137).
The plot is interwoven with well-known anecdotes such as Charles’s hiding in an oak tree while
fleeing England, and his love life abroad and on his return to England. It incorporates historical
events like the Stuart Restoration, the Declaration of Breda, the sale of Dunkirk, the depositing of
its proceeds in the Tower, and the marriage between Charles and the Portuguese Princess, Catherine
of Breganza, to name but a few.

The novel’s social statement, voiced in the narrative remarks and the observations of the
characters, leaves little doubt about Mühlbach’s political desire for democratic change, be it secular
or ecclesiastical, be the setting 1660 England or 1849 Germany. In this novel Mühlbach depicts the
journey towards self-fulfilment of her heroine and addresses the issue of discriminatory actions by
those in power. The topics of gender, race and human equality, as well as clerical accountability,
remain as relevant in the twentyfirst century as they were at the time of the novel’s publication.
While the novel does not offer a specific solution, the acts of voicing concern, creating awareness,
and presenting current affairs for discussion amongst a readership, are an attempt to put the social
order into balance and represent a feminist act of consciousness-raising. Because the parallels
between monarchical nineteenth-century Prussia and seventeenth-century England are striking,

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89 Hector Munro Chadwick traces the origin of the Nordic thunder-god “Thor” (28) back to the Stone Age and points
out features that are similar to the Greek and Roman thunder-gods Zeus and Jupiter. Interestingly the ancient Prussians
believed that the thunder-god inhabited “the sacred oak at Romove.” (26) According to Munro, Mr Frazer contends that
among Indogermanic-speaking peoples the thunder-god developed from the oak (39), while Munro argues “that the
origin of the thunder-god […] developed out of the conception of ‘sky.’” (40)
91 Pages: 17, 18, 80, 89 106, 139, 195, 216, 221, 238, 244, 249, 250, 277, 280, 282, 284, 285, 286, 287, 289, 292, 293,
298, 299, 304, 305.
92 Gilbert was acquainted with the historical Aphra Behn (Dulan 12)
relevant in discussing Mühlbach’s political observations, and essential to support my hypothesis that she critiques the ruling monarchy, a detailed comparison precedes my analysis of this novel.

7.3 Politics

7.3.1 Mühlbach’s political motivation

Before 1849 and at the time of writing Aphra Behn, Mühlbach was witness to opposing historical currents that had dominated not only the political arena of Prussia (it will be remembered that she lived in its capital, Berlin), but Europe more widely. On the one hand the Prussian King, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, famed as originator of the “Christian state” (Nipperdey 426, 434), implemented conservatism and enforced divorce restrictions. (Mühlbach depicts this situation in Aphra’s difficulty in obtaining a divorce, as discussed below.) On the other hand Theodor Mundt and the movement of the Young Germans considered religion and priesthood as the “cement of the damnable status quo” (443) and an enemy of freedom and emancipation. For Hugh Ridley, this period involves “the conflict between modernization and more archaic social forms, between an increasing freedom of thought and the mechanisms of repression” (816). These contrary forces provide rich material for an analytical mind like Mühlbach’s to record and publish her observations. From 1838 to 1847 Mühlbach published one or two novels every year.93 It seems that she worked on Aphra Behn from the end of 1848 until its publication in 1849.

This is evidenced in her correspondence to Gustav Kühne, the editor of the magazine, Europa, between 6 May 1848 and 31 May 1849 (Tönnesen, Vormärz 259-69). In these letters Mühlbach discusses the Aphra Behn chapters “Das Budget” (“The Budget”) and “Der Staatsschatz” (“The State Treasury”) (letter of 27 November 1848). One week later, on 4 December 1848 she submits her chapters, “The Budget” and “King Charles II,” for possible publication in Kühne’s In die Wochen Kommen (267) (Inclusion in the Week). In this correspondence Mühlbach comments on the political climate. With reference to the chapters, “The Budget” (Aphra Behn volume two) and “The State Treasury” (Aphra Behn volume three, concerning the sale of Dunkirk, discussed below), she hopes that these are of interest “obwohl sie Karl II von England und nicht Friedrich Wilhelm IV betreffen—” (266) (“even though they concern King Charles II of England and not Friedrich Wilhelm IV—”). The dash (like modern English ellipses) at the end of the German sentence suggests that Mühlbach was indeed referring to Friedrich Wilhelm IV. Her caution in light of the policing of critical expression is understandable.

Mühlbach discusses other topical events in these letters: the King’s unpopularity (the one issue that reactionaries and democrats could agree on) (letter of 6 May 1848); that on 22 June Berlin

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93 1838 Erste und letzte Liebe, Die Pilger der Elbe; 1839 Frauenschicksal; 1840 Des Lebens Heiland, Zugvögel; 1841 Bunte Welt, Novelettenbuch; 1842 Glück und Geld, Der Zögling der Natur; 1843 Justin; 1844 Eva, Nach der Hochzeit; 1845 Gisela, Novellen und Scenen; 1846 Ein Roman in Berlin, Federzeichnungen auf der Reise; 1847 Hofgeschichten; 1849 Aphra Behn (Tönnesen, Vormärz 245).
should have been proclaimed a republic, that numerous arrests had taken place, and that the support for the erecting of barricades on the eve of the revolution was followed by Countess Czartoriska’s imprisonment (letter of 22 June 1848); that as a result of the personal (this is underlined) hatred of the King for her husband, Mundt, they had been banished from Berlin to Breslau (letter of 14 August 1848); that stones had been thrown by the “Volk” (people) at the “Minister Präsidenten” (“prime minister’s”) soiree, and that the “Kabalen” of the Catholic priests prevented Rosenkranz’s appointment to minister (letter of 29 August 1848 [these critical comments about the Catholic priests are related to her adverse exposé of the fictional character, Father Matthews, in Aphra Behn, discussed below]); Mr Wrangel’s censorship (letter of 27 November 1848); and resignedly: “Wir sind in allen Dingen in die Zeiten des dreißigjährigen Krieges zurückgekehrt, nicht bloß, was die Zeiten der Barbarei und des Kriegsunfugs, und der Niederschmetterung des Volkes betrifft, …” (269) (“We have returned in all things back to the times of the Thirty Year War, not only concerning the times of barbarity and the mischief of war and the crushing of the people . . .”) (letter of 31 May 1849).

Mühlbach’s observant commentary on the radical events surrounding the 1848 Revolution indicates that she uses her narrative skills purposely and decidedly to critique, both overtly and covertly, what she saw as political and social inequities. Witnessing the implementation and adherence to ideologies that conflicted with her own thinking, Mühlbach was eager to offer her views for public debate. This is evident in her endeavour to publish in Kühne’s periodicals the two chapters of the novel that aptly depict the unsettling atmosphere of her times. By recreating in her narrative the times and historical characteristics of the Stuart Restoration in 1660 England, Mühlbach uses artistic licence to disguise social and political issues that she observes in Prussia and effectively camouflages her criticism of the House of Hohenzollern, whose lineage began with the Zollern in 1061. Tönnesen observes:


The author [Mühlbach] illustrates here the political circumstances of 1660 England that are determined by corruption. She describes the relationship of tension between monarchy and peoples sovereignty. She attacks the absolutism of the state system and with this the figure of Charles II combines with
extraordinary sharpness a parallel to the current political situation of the failed Revolution as well as an instinctive comparison with Friedrich Wilhelm IV.

In her second volume, “The Restoration,” and third volume, “Aphra Behn the Poet,” Mühlbach presents in her fictional Charles II the characteristics of three monarchs (the Kings Friedrich Wilhelm II, III, and IV), though Charles is predominantly modelled on Friedrich Wilhelm II, who reigned from 1786 to 1797.

7.3.2 Prussian Kings

Friedrich Wilhelm II had many liaisons with “young girls from the Corps de ballet or washing girls” (Vehse 214) whom he richly rewarded. Other mistresses were socially elevated with titles and positions. His long-time lover, Wilhelmine Enke, became Countess of Lichtenau (Koch, H.W. 146) and Julie von Voß became Gräfin Ingenheim (Hintze 407). He organised a sham marriage for one of his mistresses (before her royal elevation to Countess Lichtenau, Wilhelmine Enke became a ‘respectable’ Madame Rietz through a legal marriage, but a false front, to his valet [Hintze 406, Vehse 210]). Friedrich Wilhelm II was also a bigamist who married first Julie von Voß, and then Gräfin Sophie Dönhoff, whilst being married to the Queen (Hintze 407; Koch, H.W. 147; Feuchtwanger 83). The church sanctioned these morganatic marriages (Koch, H.W. 147, Hintze 407), Feuchtwanger states that:

the subservience of the Lutheran ecclesiastical authorities is illustrated by their willingness to cover the King’s irregular liaisons with an air of respectability through these morganatic marriages; as an alibi they cited the precedent of Philip of Hesse during the Reformation. (83)

In addition to his exuberant love life (according to the Preussen Chronik eines Deutschen Staates, all of Potsdam was a bordello [Preussen, Episoden 1]), Friedrich Wilhelm II loved merry and expensive festivities. Politically, Friedrich Wilhelm II was dependent on his minions with both Johan Rudolf Bischoffwerder and Johann Christoph von Wöllner becoming influential advisers (Hintze 407) who actively fostered his initiation into the brotherhood of the Rosenkreuzer (Hintze 406, Feuchtwanger 84). For their services Bischoffwerder and Wöllner were thoroughly rewarded with honours, positions and presents. Due to his excessive spending, the treasury was diminished and Friedrich Wilhelm II accumulated a large state debt consisting of 54 million “Talern” (“three-mark pieces” [English 1044]) during his reign (Koch, H.W. 156). Towards the end of the eighteenth century, following the excesses of Friedrich Wilhelm II, “a backlash against the Enlightenment developed” (Goodman 735).

The Puritanism of the Cromwellian era that Mühlbach depicts in her fiction is also evident during the reign of Friedrich Wilhelm III (1797-1830), who lived during the German Restoration
period of 1815 to 1830. This King “utterly rejected the flamboyant lasciviousness and frivolous Mätressenwirtschaft that had characterized his own dissolute father’s eleven-year reign” (Barclay 27). He banished his father’s mistresses and minions from court, rigidly restored firm order, and instigated the censorship of press and books (Gray 37). Under Friedrich Wilhelm III, Prussia became a police state that spied on its writers, scientists and politicians; the liberal phase under Friedrich Wilhelm II had dissipated by 1819. While in 1815 Friedrich Wilhelm III had declared that a representative body of the populace should be formed, he broke this promise in 1821 (the fictional Charles II too breaks promises he makes to the general public, as discussed below) (Koch, Rainer., Deutsche 238).

The citizenry initially welcomed the reign of the third King—Friedrich Wilhelm IV (1840-1861). The liberals had anticipated political freedom and unity not only in Prussia but also in other German states. Encouraged by the philosophies of eighteenth-century natural law and the Enlightenment, the German people demanded the political right of “Volksouveränität,” (Griesshaber 2) to participate in state affairs. Unlike the kings of other German states, the Prussian monarch declined the Vereinigten Landtags (united state parliament’s) request in 1847 for a constitution, as this would have undermined his absolute rule (Barclay 128). However, after the 1848 Revolution, Friedrich Wilhelm IV made concessions by retracting censorship of the press and by promising a united German constitution. Yet in his constitutional deed for the Prussian state, published on 5 December 1848, Article 43 confirmed his absolute power: “Dem Könige allein steht die vollziehende Gewalt zu. Er ernennt und entläßt die Minister. Er befiehlt die Verkündigung der Gesetze und erläßt unverzüglich die zu deren Ausführung nöthigen Verordnungen” (Huber 7) (“The King alone is entitled to executive power. He appoints and dismisses the ministers. He orders the announcement of laws and implements without delay the necessary decree for their execution”).

Following the advice of his confidante, General Joseph Maria von Radowitz, the King drafted the Constitution to grant sole rights to the sovereign (Mann 112). The King surrounded himself with close advisers, a self-styled “Kamarilla” (Nipperdey 397) who influenced his decision-making. Due to the control of this ultra-conservative, patrimonial and absolute-minded body he was unable to recognise the constitutional demands of the bourgeoisie (Koch, Rainer, Deutsche 239). By bowing to the pressure of his advisers, Friedrich Wilhelm IV followed the modus operandi of his grandfather. Mühlbach, in her fictional Charles II, depicts Friedrich Wilhelm IV’s broken promises to the people and his reliance on his advisers. Mühlbach also critically emphasises the legitimation to rule “Dei Gratia” (“by the grace of God”) as did, the two Kings, Friedrich Wilhelm III and IV

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94 After the French Revolution and the German reforms, the Deutsche Bund attempted to restore the Ancien régime from the period of the Vienna Congress in 1815 until 1830. These attempts culminated in the March 1848 Revolution (Duden-Lexikon 1892).
While generally most kings tended to maintain their divine right, some, as for example James I, accepted at least that their actions were subject to the law; he was “constitutional” by operating “within the framework of the common law” (Jones 178). Accordingly, “The Crown and the Courts in England 1603-1625” states that James I “hath no prerogative but that that is warranted by law and the law hath given him” (Jones 178). Friedrich Wilhelm IV adopted a self-proclaimed privilege, which rendered his people devoid of any recourse to action. This disregard of reciprocal rights may also have influenced Mühlbach to respond with her narrative reflections.

7.3.3 Systems of power

The notion of reciprocity is based on a sense of fairness that benefits the individual and the community in a mutually responsible manner. The roots of such an arrangement that constitutionally confirms a bond of reciprocity between groups of people are traceable to the Greeks around the fifth century B.C. (Wormuth 6). In most early Western societies, people lived under a code of conduct administered by one leader or a select group. The idea of unifying different tribes under one ruler who implements a centralised system of governing has existed for centuries. By the Middle Ages, the ruling class in German speaking lands comprised aristocrats who elevated their lineage into royalty. The rule of those whose sense of justice was blinded by greed and selfishness enabled the establishment of a structural system that maintained serfdom and slavery, abusing with this act the law of reciprocity.

In such an atmosphere of inequity and oppression, John Locke’s argument that men could change governance, if its responsibilities were neglected, did not fall on deaf ears (Bullock and Trombley 799-800). Francis D. Wormuth states in The Origins of Modern Constitutionalism that the function of a government is twofold: it must “enable the government to control the governed”; and second, it must “oblige it to control itself” (3). Constitutionalism defines the “auxiliary precautions” (3) to this central arrangement, which has been redefined from ancient Athens to present times. In regard to monarchies, “[a]ccording to orthodox theory the king should exercise the executive power, subject to the laws” (Wormuth 69).

The Houses of Hohenzollern and Stuart disregarded this stipulation which, theoretically, ought to maintain complementary obligations between leader and followers. The historical figures discussed in this thesis who ignored these laws of reciprocity were the Kings Friedrich Wilhelm II, III and IV and the English Kings Charles I and II. Charles I was charged at his trial in 1649 with breaking the reciprocal bond between King and subject by declaring war on the people. He was beheaded while the other rulers enriched themselves without too much concern for the population’s welfare. Mühlbach’s second volume’s title, “The Restoration,” has the double meaning of the German “Restauration” (1815-1830) as well as the Stuart Restoration in (1660-1688) England. By
setting her novel in the Stuart Restoration, Mühlbach uses an astute stratagem to conceal her critique of institutional power.

Teun van Dijk defines power as a system in which a claim by those who are privileged in status and wealth provides the basis of control over another group (84-85). Fictional Charles, through his birthright, has status, through the scheming of his two minions has gained the means, and through the financial pledge of the Church of England and the people, has acquired the wealth, to assume power over the population. Foucault states: “Power exists only as exercised by some on others” (The Essential 138). Charles’s power is based on an understanding that those over whom he exercises this power, the people, respond with “reactions, results and possible inventions” (138) in this relationship. The power relation between the King and the people is less of a “confrontation between two adversaries” (138) than a system of directing the conduct of an individual and of a group.

According to Foucault, power can only be used over “free subjects” (139); they are free because they have choices of conduct, of reacting and of behaving. By paying taxes the citizens respond to Charles’s directives and submit to the state apparatus. Furthermore the people ceded their participation to the sovereign due to their exhaustion of “self-governing,” (LM AB 2: 191) and because of tiredness “of having to think.” I will discuss this passage, in which the populace is sardonically blamed for their demise. The narrative indicates that, to a certain degree, the people remained apathetic, and that they could, to a certain degree, have elected to take action and to engage their minds, but they chose not to, enabling the King to reign with absolute power. However, for a phenomenon in which a majority is governed by a minority to exist, it is essential that those in power expel social and political critics from public offices (Finney 272). Mühlbach depicts such expulsion when Charles II has critical voices removed and executed as happened to the Marquis of Argyle and Sir Henry Vale.

Louis Althusser puts forth a theory that all “State Apparatuses” (110) involve repression that operates with violence (111) and coercion. Althusser shows that so as not to diminish its power base, the apparatus has to maintain a relationship with various essential controlling institutions like the police, the military, and the educational system. (In the novel this relationship is shown in the King and his powerful figureheads, Matthews and Buckingham who, in turn, head their own power base). Althusser states that these institutions have to be nurtured in an effort to maintain and to “reproduce” (112) power, and that such a state apparatus can be controlled by one leader. Althusser’s theory, applied to the novel in my reading, demonstrates that the people accept the rule of only one, though he is supported by his power bases—even if they are being exploited.

Michael Rosen addresses this phenomenon in which “societies are systems that produce the kind of consciousness that prevents” their members “from behaving as their interests would
otherwise dictate”; in other words, they contribute to a Marxian “false consciousness” (1). Rosen cites a case of extreme and cruel subjugation (in which chained people are forced to witness the torture and death of their companions before their own execution). Here instead of facing the reality of their imminent death, these victims do not think about their fate but falsely believe in some illusionary happiness (68). (One may wonder, though, how Rosen obtained his data.) This assumption of a false consciousness occurs on an individual as well as a mass level.

Rosen refers to the sixteenth-century author, Étienne de la Boetie, who questioned in *De la Servitude Volontaire (Of Voluntary Servitude)*: “Why, when the balance of force is so obviously on their side, do the mass of men submit even to the rule of tyrants?” (62). Boetie offers three answers: first, people are gullible and accustomed to their servitude. They are not easily moved to break habits. Second, they are subdued by the lull of the opiates (as Marx said later) offered by the tyrant in the form of public performances, gladiatorial shows and the dazzle of medal awards to favourites. Third, the tyrant’s advisory minions and their support groups maintain a network retinue of massive and controlling proportions (Rosen 62-63). This occurs in political as well as religious settings. Throughout history some soldiers have endured pain in a state of fright, of inebriation, or for the glory of battle and for a belief in a heavenly salvation, both quite intangible concepts. Mühlbach unequivocally depicts all three characteristics that Boetie had identified, and offers a sophisticated picture of the exhaustion of power in her literary symbolism.

First, the King and his minions deceive and then plot the continued servitude of the gullible people, as shown in Charles’s and Buckingham’s unequivocal contempt. Charles proclaims that he who brings tears to the people’s eyes becomes their master. In response Buckingham compares the people with women: “Wer ihnen [Volk und Frauen] am meisten Thränen erpreßt, den lieben sie am glühendsten, und wer sie mit Füßen tritt, den beten sie an!” (LM *AB* 2: 65) (“He, who extorts most tears from them [people and women], they love most fervently, and he who kicks them, they worship!”). The narrator pities the masses by drawing a comparison to a happy Russian marriage, in which it is only when the wife receives her weekly brutal beating on a Saturday that she feels assured of her husband’s affection. “Das Volk ist in dieser russischen Ehe immer das Weib, und sein Fürst ist der Mann!” (2: 8) (“The plebeians in this Russian marriage are always represented by the wife, while their ruler is the man!”). The sado-masochism is evident in the wife/people being satisfied by getting brutal attention rather than being totally neglected. The comparison continues that Charles wooed England (which had been widowed of its King); and his easily convinced bride, the people, succumbs to this marriage contract in Biblical fashion: “und er soll Dein Herr sein” (2:
8) (“and He shall be your Lord”). This suggests that they (people and women) willingly wear the monarchy’s yoke that supports this liaison.

Second, handsomely adorned, Charles dazzles the people with a public performance of gladiatorial splendour. Upon arrival on English soil he kneels, thanks the people who line the path with a “bezauberten Lächeln” (“captivating smile”) while he inwardly condemns them: “Fluch und Rache also über dieses Volk” (2: 137) (“curse and retribution thus over these people”). Riding through the streets from Dover to London, Charles pretends to love the public, who adore him. Away from the public gaze he is relieved to discard the “krampfhafte[n], stereotype[n]” (2: 140-41) (“convulsive stereotyped”) smiling grimace that he assumed for this performance. The people are easily fooled by the glamorous display of their future monarch who propounds to his two close advisers that the purpose of people’s existence is to live in bondage (2: 66). Our clear-sighted heroine, Aphra, can see through Charles’s charade and the consequences of public opinion. Disregarding the public’s adulation of Charles, she detects his boredom with those who show their love for him, and astutely perceives an analogy between suppressed people and women (2: 234).

The third component of Boetie’s theory is evident in the hierarchical support-structure of the monarchy that controls the servitude of the populace. The trio of male characters: Charles (monarchy), Father Matthews (church) and the Duke of Buckingham (state), attain their different ambitions in a reciprocal and co-dependent manner. Boetie’s explanation of the phenomenon of many being governed by one, suggests that those in power “surround themselves with close associates who become directly dependent upon them; that these associates in turn have their own dependents, and so on” (Rosen 63). This theory corresponds to Charles’s chain of command system. Charles, in similar vein to Friedrich Wilhelm IV’s “Kamarilla,” relies on his two socially elevated minions, Father Matthews and the Duke of Buckingham,96 for counsel, support and, importantly, the continuation of his indulgent lifestyle.

Apart from organising meetings between members of Parliament and Charles, Buckingham fulfils the role of pleasure purveyor to Charles, organising women and orgies for his pastime. In return he is rewarded with prerogatives and appointments such as that of first minister to the crown (LM AB 2: 153), and secret minister of state and royal upper equerry (2: 261). Matthews fulfils a similar, and equally rewarding function, he and Buckingham are in turn able to foster their personal interest and social standing that are built on their own power support groups. This structure filters through to the level of the masses, who can then be readily policed. Thus the single figurehead, Charles, has built his power on a solid foundation of sub-groups, whose own interest is upheld by

95 The reader will remember that Faustine too had succumbed to Mengen’s persuasion quoting the same wording.
96 The historical Buckingham was an influential member of historical Charles’s “Cabals” (The Oxford Companion to English 145).
supporting those above their station. By going along with this tyrannical authority the populace, and by default women, participate by assuming a false consciousness in order to live in a situation that they were forced into but that they accept rather than rise up against. This is where the four female characters Barbara, Nelly, Lady Monk, and Aphra, distinguish themselves. They react against this institutional yoke, rise, and assume control by means concordant with their individual natures.
8.1 Subjugation and corruption

8.1.1 Slavery

The first volume of Mühlbach’s novel, entitled “Oronooko,” depicts the corrupt institutional power that upholds slavery in Surinam. The slave trade was a topic of intense debate in the mid-nineteenth century. Judith E. Martin lists eighteen books and papers on the topic that were published in Germany between 1788 and 1845 (“Oroonoko” 316). Rainer Koch considers slavery in North America and the West Indies to be on a par with the “grundherrliche Hörigkeit” (“bonded obedience”) in Germany and the “gutsherrliche Erbuntertänigkeit und -pflichtigkeit” (“inherited bonded subservience and -duty”) (“Liberalismus” 551) in the Prussian provinces. Koch argues that the early German liberals used the emerging atmosphere of liberality to engage in forms of social criticism, and the slave issue served as a springboard to voice their criticism of social, economic and political conditions in Germany (533). Such a political climate enhanced Mühlbach’s stance of literary social criticism in line with that of the Young Germans (an act no doubt debated and supported by her liberal minded editor husband and their literary circle).

According to Judith E. Martin, Mühlbach transforms “the indictment of slavery in Behn’s original narrative Oroonoko, and Behn’s critique of the woman artist’s denigration into contemporary social criticism. This fictional Aphra Behn is, like Mühlbach, socially aware, and she voices politically progressive views on slavery, divorce, and political reform of corrupt monarchy” (“Luise” 586). Yet it should not be forgotten that in the wake of the confiscation of the writings of Heine, Gutzkow, and Mundt “for their criticism of political institutions” (Peterson, “Luise” 207) Mühlbach still had to disguise her point of view.

In this first volume Mühlbach cogently draws attention to the savagery of some colonisers, epitomised in the authoritarian governor of Surinam Bannister, while covertly drawing parallels with an oppressive Prussian regime. For instance, in a dialogue between Aphra and Oronooko, the protagonist is able to voice her criticism freely, due to the historical and geographical remoteness of this ‘fictional colourful’ world. Aphra is appalled at Bannister’s cruelty towards the helpless slaves, whom he mercilessly tortures on his sugar plantation (LM AB 1: 8) and accuses Bannister, and other colonisers, of destroying what was once a paradise:

Aber Sie haben dieses Eden verwandelt in eine fluchbeladene Stätte der Greuel, das Paradies ist geblieben, aber statt der Menschen haben Sie die Gottheit daraus vertrieben, und die Menschen sind zurückgeblieben, um mit todeswunden Gliedern und blutender Brust ihre Hände zum Himmel empor zu ringen, und ihn
zu fragen: ob denn da droben kein Gott mehr wohne, der ihres Jammers sich erbarme, und Mitleid habe mit ihrer Qual! (1: 9)

You, however, have transformed this Eden into a cursed site of atrocity. The paradise remained but instead of the people you have expelled the deity, and the people remained in order to wrench their hands upwards to heaven, and to ask him with deathly wounds to their limbs and their bleeding chests, whether no God reigned up there, who had mercy on their misery, and compassion for their anguish!

In this emotional passage the deeds of the colonisers, who defiled paradise and robbed the natives of their ‘innocence,’ are condemned. While the powerful forces of nature can still maintain a pristine innocence, human purity, represented by the slaves, is powerless against the barbarous onslaught of the coloniser. Mühlbach alludes to an expulsion from paradise in three ways. The ‘civilised’ people of Christian faith have chosen to leave their Garden of Eden. But the indigenous Indians, who had inhabited the paradise of Surinam, were expelled by the colonisers and retreated into the interior of the land. The Africans had been taken captive in their paradise by colonisers who had sold them as slaves in Surinam. Thus the Indian and African ‘savages’ had not been expelled from their paradise by their chosen deities, but by interfering and conquering colonisers such as Bannister. The colonisers left paradise as a result of their own actions but the Indians and Africans had no choice, for the colonisers had defrauded them. Confronted and defeated by the dishonest and cunning conquerors, the ‘noble savages’ lose their innocence and dignity. Enslaved and deprived of their humanity, the slaves respond to the oppressors’ brutality, but—because of their initial innocence and subsequent bondage—they are no match for the evil with which they are confronted. Their courageous spirit is broken. Their leader Oronooko was first betrayed by the white captain, who invited him under false pretences onto his ship, only to drug, chain and sell him as a slave. From Bannister, Oronooko then experiences the savagery extended to him and his people. Aphra’s internal monologue compares the ‘uncivilised’ Europeans to the ‘civilised’ natives:

> diese civilisierten Leute in Europa die haben diesen Schmelz göttlicher Ursprünglichkeit von ihrer Seele abgestreift, die sind alle so sehr in das Menschthum übergegangen, daß sie darüber ihre Gottähnlichkeit verloren haben. (1: 47)

> these civilised people in Europe, they have discarded this glow of godly origin from their soul, they all transformed so much into mere human beings that with this they have lost their godliness.
In this passage Aphra deplores the loss of Europeans’ seraphic innocence since they became ‘civilised,’ a passage reminiscent of Gräfin Faustine: “Civilised people no longer have this sublime instinct” (HH GF 22), which also deplors the loss of an original and natural state. Aphra implies that the loss of “godly origin” would not have occurred if Europeans were less civilised but more in tune with nature and the powers of the universe. By finding a man whom she loves amongst those who have been “gebrandmarkt, in dessen Seele noch das göttliche Feuer der Wahrheit glühe” (1: 47) (“branded, in whose soul the godly fire of truth is still glowing”), she distinguishes between civilisers, who spoil what nature was meant to be, and savages who maintain their unspoilt dignity. For her, this is the result of interfering in the state of nature, and she condemns the slave-owning colonisers.

In contrast to Aphra’s outrage, the black slave Oronooko is portrayed as “edle[s] Beispiel” (1: 12) (“noble example”), to instil compliance and hard work in the slaves, an ironic Westernised ‘ideal’ of a ‘noble savage’ whose role serves to enrich the European colonisers’ greed. For Bannister, the slaves are only inferior objects: “daß sie nur Geschöpfe meines Willens sind” (1: 100) (“that they are only creatures of my will”). Aphra is nauseated by Bannister’s cruelty to the slaves: “meine schwarzen Hausthiere haben den romantischen Einfall bekommen, Menschen sein zu wollen, wahre, veritable Menschen!” (1: 163) (“my black domestic animals have conceived the romantic idea to want to become human beings, true, genuine human beings!”). Bannister enforces the legal status of the slaves, that of animals, while Aphra advocates equality by pointing out that the slaves, like Bannister, are created in the “Ebenbilde Gottes” (1: 16) (“image of God”). However, it is noteworthy that, ill-treated as they are in captivity, in their home country their ‘state of paradise’ is not flawless.

In the African kingdom cruelty towards non-aristocratic subjects is common, and the oppression is not dissimilar to that of Europe. The monarchical African hierarchy reveals that the King, and Oronooko too, kept slaves (1: 72). In addition their social structure also maintained a system of oppressor and oppressed, and was commensurate with the inequities of those of Western culture. Torture was a measure of punishment as well when the King had Oronooko tortured by the jailer (1: 75). At this point the power of the people induced his release: “Es [das Volk] empörte sich, und verlangte mit wildem Geschrei die Befreiung seines Lieblings, des Helden Oronooko” (1: 76) (“The people were outraged and demanded with wild screams the release of their favourite, the hero Oronooko”). In Coramantine the people were brave enough to rise up in order to free the jailed Oronooko. Enslaved and powerless in Surinam, however, they had lost their courage. For a brief moment Oronooko stirred them out of their stupor: “aus ihrer Erstarrung und ihrem Blödsinn aufzurütteln, und sie zu dem vernichtenden Bewußtsein ihrer Sclaverei und ihres Elends zu

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erwecken” (1: 178) (‘to rouse them from their frozen stupor, and to awaken them to the devastating realization of their degrading slavery and their misery’).

Mühlbach depicts a similar apathy in the European people as discussed below. The slaves were so frightened after the betrayal of their futile revolt that in their confusion, they deserted Oronooko to accede to the governor’s orders, instead of rising against the injustice committed on their leader. As free people in their own country, they had defied the King’s orders; as slaves in a foreign land they lost courage and their ‘noble’ savagery. While the depiction of these events suggests that the nature of their institutionalised slavery is savage this does not detract from the injustice suffered by their own people in their own ‘idyllic’ country. Their hierarchical power structure denies the underprivileged the equality and freedom in the same manner as in the colonisers’ land. Mühlbach implies that ‘power’ and oppression is prevalent everywhere, a complex view which may be an attempt to draw her readers’ attention towards a democratic way of thinking, to “feel [her] way into [their] minds” (Peterson, “Luise” 209).

In what I perceive as a narrative strategy to foreshadow the corruption of Charles’s monarchical hierarchy, the youthful, but astutely socially observant Aphra, discusses with Oronooko the governance of Europe. Aphra proclaims that very few sovereigns are real rulers, as most are slaves of their passions, their desires, and their social influence (LM AB 1: 54). Oronooko replies that in his home country only those who excel because of their virtue deserve to lead and are willingly obeyed by their subjects: “Wer eine große Seele ist, wird Großes vollbringen, wer klein ist, bleibe in der Niedrigkeit” (1: 54) (“whoever possesses a great soul will accomplish great things, whoever is insignificant will remain in lowliness”). Aphra replies that to question a hierarchical royal structure would evoke punishment for high treason in Europe (1: 54). With connotations of Mühlbach’s lament about the political situation in her letters to Kühne, her protagonist explains that someone who suggests to people that they should rise out of a dictatorship is classified as a “Hochverräter” (1: 57) (“traitor guilty of high treason”) and punished more severely than a robber or murderer (1: 57). Aphra tries to explain the birthright of the monarchy which proclaims the son of a King to be appointed by the grace of God (1: 55). The character of Oronooko acts as naïve interlocutor to whom Aphra can unequivocally condemn the custom of governing by the grace of God:

Millionen ihrer Brüder beherrschen, daß sie blind sind, und das Elend ihrer Völker nicht sehen oder taub, und den Jammerschrei ihrer Völker nicht hören können, es kann kommen, daß ein Wahnsinniger König ist, oder ein lasterhaftes Weib, oder ein blutgieriger Tyrann über Völker zu gebieten hat! (1: 55-56)

No, he [God] granted them total grace when he allowed them to be born into royalty and he granted them the undeniable right to rule over their fellow human beings. With us this law is inherited from generation to generation, and no matter how degenerate these beings might be, from the moment they are born into royalty, they call themselves rulers by the grace of God. And guess what, it can thus happen that such rulers, who, with powerful words subjugate millions of their brothers, are blind, they cannot see the misery of their people; or deaf, they cannot hear the wailing of their people. It can happen that a lunatic is King, or a profligate woman or a bloodthirsty tyrant rules over the populace.

Aphra lays bare the concept of a claimed inherited right versus a right gained through meritorious achievement. The privileged justify and defend their claims of succession over others by means of a legalised claim of superiority that is supported in their own circles. Through fear and exploitation the rulers subdue those whom they govern. Sufficient instances of deranged, profligate and bloodthirsty tyrants give credence to Aphra’s outburst. By referring to Tönnesen, Judith E. Martin points out that: “Mühlbach utilizes discussions between Aphra and Oroonoko about political systems and natural rights to comment on the contemporary German history of the failed 1848 revolution” (“Luise 592). To openly criticise royal succession in nineteenth-century Germany may be close to committing “high treason.” Aphra’s more abstract monarchical criticism in Surinam becomes literal upon Charles’s accession to the English throne, the subject of Mühlbach’s second volume.

8.1.2 King Charles II

Overt similarities between the Hohenzollern and Stuart Houses feature prominently in the second volume, “The Restoration,” which commences with the return of the exiled Charles II from France to England. The opening paragraph poetically sets a reflective and satirising mood in the disguise of what happened two hundred years ago. While Mühlbach writes the novel from the perspective of the year 1860, that is two hundred years after 1660, indications are that she is not concerned about the future but about the political climate of her own time:

Es war im Mai des Jahres 1660. Der Mai hat von jeher das Privilegium gehabt, der “Wonnemond” genannt zu werden, er ward es vor zweihundert Jahren so gut, wie jetzt, obwohl er damals so gut, wie jetzt, seine kalten Nächte, sein rauhen
Tage, und seine spärlichen oft vom Frost geschüttelten und zerstörten Blüthen hatte! Vielleicht nennen wir in unserm nordischen Klima den Mai nur um deswillen den “Wonnemonat”, weil in demselben bei uns die Dornen blühen, und ihre drohenden und verwundenden Stacheln unter milchweißen Blüthen verbergen, während wir sonst das ganze Jahr hindurch von den Dornen ohne Blüthen zu leiden haben! (LM AB 2: 1)

It was in May of the year 1660. May had always had the privilege to be referred to as the “merry month”; this had been the case in the same way two hundred years ago as now. Even though then, as now, May had provided cold nights, harsh days, and sparse blossoms, this had often been shaken and destroyed by frost! Perhaps we only refer in our Nordic climate to May as the merry month solely because during that time the thorns blossom, and their menacing and wounding thorns are concealed underneath milky white blossoms, while throughout the rest of the year we have to suffer the pain of the thorns without flowers.

The reference to the difference in centuries suggests that this punishing hardship may be aimed at the Prussian population around 1848. Hidden underneath the “merriness” that is associated with the European May is pain and distress. The temporary lull in turmoil that this month provides will be overshadowed by the remaining seven months of the year, or perhaps the remaining years of Charles’s reign or people’s suffering. The image of concealed but hurtful thorns also suggests further the crown of many thorns that inflicted pain on Jesus Christ. The following paragraph elaborates the thorn theme further, with the son of the beheaded Charles I. Even though Charles II had been wounded by many thorns in exile (1: 4), this month was blissful for him as he was now preparing for a triumphant return to his rightful crown in England (1: 8).

Thus the temporary joyful projection of his, or perhaps Friedrich Wilhelm IV’s, reign seems fraught with future complexity. After the puritanism of Cromwell, the English initially welcome Charles with enthusiasm. The German people too felt such excitement in 1840 upon Friedrich Wilhelm IV’s ascendancy. Charles II’s characteristics, though, are closer to those of Friedrich Wilhelm II, as discussed previously. He approves a sham marriage for his ex-lover Sara; royally elevates his mistress Barbara to Duchess of Cleveland; indulges in courtly debaucheries; surrounds himself with a close circle of friends; is indoctrinated by his minions the Duke of Buckingham and Father Matthews; squanders the treasury; deceives the people; revokes an amnesty; and claims to rule by the grace of God.
Mühlbach depicts an anti-hero in Charles II, who lives for pleasure without any consideration of his people: “Was kümmerte ihn die Regierung und die Wohlfahrt seines Landes” (2: 295) (“Governance and the well-being of his country were of no concern to him”). However, when it suits his purpose (seeking financial support), Charles feigns humbleness and equality by asking the Protestant delegation to rise in front of him, for no human being ought to kneel in front of another (2: 53). Charles’s humble image is shattered by the vindictiveness of his inner thoughts when he condemns the English people for having reduced him, after his father’s execution, to an exiled, fleeing, hungry and thirsty monarch (2: 59). No doubt he is still haunted by feelings of revenge and is psychologically branded by the experience of his father’s beheading.

It is not too surprising that he proclaims with vindictiveness to the Duke of Buckingham: “Bah, die Völker sind da, um geknechtet zu werden [. . .] Ein einziger Gott regiert die Welt, und ein einziger König regiert das Volk!” (2: 66) (“Ah, people are created to be subjugated” [. . .] A sole God governs the world and a sole king governs the people!”). Being divinely appointed, Charles aligns himself with God to legitimate his subjugation of the people. He calculatingly declares to Buckingham that the people are a king’s natural enemy since, if they were to rise out of their shackles to collectively gain power, the King would be superfluous and reduced to the status of a slave. Charles is realistic enough to acknowledge that, given equal conditions, he would lack the leadership skills to command, be it the masses or the aristocracy. His determined intent to elevate himself by the subjugation of others, without acknowledging their support or consideration for their welfare, demonstrates his arrogant attitude.

Concurring with Charles’s infringement of basic human rights, Buckingham compares the people to a horse that has to be tamed into obedience with cruelty: “ihm die Sporen in die Seiten stemmen, daß es blutend und schreiend vor Schmerz in Euch seinen Herrn erkennt” (2: 147) (“heave up the spurs into his ribs, so that he, bleeding and screaming with pain, recognises his master in you”). Symbolically, the horse is said to represent “pastoral contentment, but also [. . .] dynamic natural energy” (Charlton 11). From the time of the Celts it has also represented stamina, strength, power, devotion, wildness and, significantly, a readiness to act for one’s country (Davidson 54). Buckingham’s attitude towards, and intended ill treatment of, the people is a poor reward for their labour, their tax contribution and their ‘loyalty’ when they have to defend the country. The common people’s welfare was of little concern to those who ruled.

Instead of leading their trusting people, kings suppress and mercilessly exploit them: “indem sie ihr Volk in den Staub treten, Tyrannen, welche in der Entehrung ihres Volkes ihre eigene Größe suchten” (LM AB 2: 136) (“while they trample their people into the dust, they are tyrants, who sought their own greatness in the degradation of their people”). These statements condemn the monarchy unambiguously. Yet the monarchy’s selfish exploitation, as depicted in the King’s abuse,
is contrasted with the apathy of an amorphous mass of people. In a Foucauldian sense, as discussed above, this represents a relationship that is based on action and reaction—oppression and apathy. The people submit to Charles by allowing him to direct their conduct.

The common people are initially pitied: “Arme Völker!” (2: 7) (“poor people!”), they are so used to subjugation and have been betrayed by republic and monarchy alike. Cunningly manipulated by Cromwell, the general population incorporated his devout psalms into victory hymns; they were forced to silence their triumphant screaming in prayer (2: 6). The shackles of the monarchy under Charles I were replaced by the sanctimoniousness of the Lord Protector Cromwell; England replaced one tyrant with another (2: 6). The satire continues that rulers all have one thing in common—they command the people into sheer “Seligkeit” (2: 6) (“bliss”): with King Charles I, an enforced near-Catholicism, and with Cromwell Protestantism. The religious characteristics of bliss changed but the yoke that suppresses the people remains the same (2: 6). Charles II schemes to maintain his feudalistic power over his people through ruthless exploitation and disregard of people’s expectations for better living conditions. Here, their fate parallels that of vulnerable women. A laconic interjection questions how a king could keep his word to the people, when his own comfort was at stake? His promises are all lies and words that are meaningless. Contracts between kings and people have to be sealed in blood otherwise they are not valid (3: 88).

The irony of this suggestion is evident by its futility. First, concerning wars, leaders sign contracts in blood with the people. They instil fear of a perceived threat. This fear subdues the people sufficiently for them to unite with the leader. Through fear of an attack they become agitated and aggressively violent, and fight with a preparedness to shed blood in battle for their ‘protective’ leader. The bond between leader and people is thus sealed in blood, as they now stand united against the common enemy. However, the duration of such a blood alliance is fickle (though it lasted thirty years in the German lands, ending in 1648) (Duden Geschichte 256).

Second, Moses sealed an alliance with the people through blood sprinkling at Sinai. This did not ensure unity. Similarly the Christian ritual of forging an allegiance with God by symbolically drinking Christ’s blood does not ensure an enlightened or good human being in harmony with Christian doctrine. In the two scenarios of blood sealing, disunity amongst the people is not prevented, of which the narrator would be fully aware. Furthermore signing in blood connotes a feeling of passion, be it warlike, religious or other. Both Charles II and the people are lacking this fervour, the former through debauchery and the latter, in spite of their short-term energy and lust for a spectacular beheading, as discussed below, through apathy.

Confident in the support of Buckingham and Father Matthews, Charles argues that the people have no rights, adding sarcastically that he dreads the possibility of their being granted such:

How could this stinking lazy crowd, that calls itself the people, these silly, dog-tail wagging worms, who, if I press my foot into their neck, are still delighted because of my royal grace, how could this miserable, godforsaken brood, that rolls in excrement while screaming with stinking muzzles for bread and work, how could they, I say, dare, to hold a king accountable?

This leaves no doubt about the contempt with which Charles regards his people. The views of a tyrannical king about his deprived subjects are very drastic. Mühlbach shows a system where the people become an indistinguishable mass that is denied rights; and the King is a parasitic individual supported by their taxes. This lack of consideration for the people motivates Charles to sell Dunkirk to France, so he can fill the royal coffers and indulge in more court orgies. Chancellor Hyde has tried to counsel Charles against this sale which includes its English inhabitants who are, with a resulting change of nationality, treated like a herd of cattle. Charles denies these people any right of nationhood, proclaiming that they are like sheep that follow its leader. He reasons: “zum Gehorchen sind die Menschen geboren, nur die Könige machen davon eine Ausnahme” (3: 188) (“people are born into obedience, only kings make an exception to this rule”). This blatant injustice is reminiscent of Bannister’s oppression of the slaves in Surinam, of Captain Behn’s directive to his wife Aphra “You are a woman, and as such [. . .] your freedom is buried” (2: 169), as discussed below, and of the radical policing of liberal activities after 1848.

Corrupt Charles and Buckingham are contrasted to the principled Lord Argyle, who had been Charles I’s faithful friend. Charles I had recommended Argyle to his son as a trusted advisor. Indeed Argyle, irrespective of the consequences, speaks his mind by warning Charles that the people will not tolerate his misdemeanours for much longer:


This soil [England’s] has drunk the blood of a king [Charles I], and believe me, King Charles, from that day on there can never again be a king by the grace of
God in England and perhaps even in all of Europe! This superstition has been splashed away with the blood of your father!

The analogy of England’s soil being sprinkled with the King’s blood and Prussia’s soil being sprinkled with the blood of 1848 revolutionaries may come to the reader’s mind. Argyle’s literary prophecy was to gradually take effect in Germany where struggles between the monarchy and common people were not yet successful enough to abolish the monarchy. However, anticipation was prevalent with the emergence of the Industrial Revolution, the conflict between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, and the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The historical setting of the novel may to some extent disguise its political statement, thus minimising possible repercussions for the author. Oddly enough, being a woman may even have been to Mühlbach’s advantage. For one, authorities were not readily acquainted with, and therefore perhaps not prepared, to deal with too much public criticism from a female pen. In a letter to Georg von Cotta in 1856 Mühlbach herself wrote: “Am meisten macht lachen, wenn die Herren Kritiker gegen mich sanfte Nachsicht üben wollen, weil ich eine Frau bin und sagen, sie wollen nicht schärfer mit mir ins Gericht gehen, aus ritterlicher Galanterie, weil L. Mühlbach eine Frau ist!” (Tönnesen, “Überhaupt” 219) (“It is most laughable when the gentlemen critics exercise gentle leniency towards me because I am a woman. They say also, they don’t want to take me too severely to task due to their chivalrous gallantry!”). Also, why should they take a woman, who is categorised with the “unspecified groups” of the “others,” (Sagarra, Germany 47-48) seriously? Second, not being considered as a historian enabled Mühlbach to use poetic licence. She thus writes her characters outside the constraints of verifiable authenticity and academic scrutiny, thereby assuming liberties without the threat of being discredited.

Mühlbach writes popular women’s fiction and presents a fantasy-rich tale that nevertheless is closely related to fact and has a long-lasting meaning. True equality, achieved through true accountability, is yet to eventuate. Argyle forecasts this sentiment: “Denn die Wahrheit ist das Licht der Erde, und selbst die Könige dürfen jetzt nicht mehr im Dunkeln wandeln!” (LM AB 3: 115) (“Because truth is the light of the earth and even kings are not allowed anymore to stroll in darkness”). This statement aims for the equality of democracy. It seems to echo the sentiments of the Enlightenment thinkers, Rousseau and Humboldt, who aspired to a society “in which no one man or group of men coerces another” (McGilvray 198).

On the announcement of the forthcoming marriage between Charles II and the Portuguese Princess, Argyle tries to extract good behaviour from Charles. He pleads with Charles to at least pay the Princess the courtesy of removing his mistress Barbara from court while the Princess is present. In this scenario Charles’s disrespect towards the Princess can be compared to his mistress’s manipulation of him, as discussed below. Argyle’s reprimand annoys Charles, who asserts that he
has no responsibility to anyone. Argyle proposes that a king is accountable to God and to his people (LM AB 3: 113). Charles grants the possibility that such an “Individuum” (3: 113) (“individual”) as God may exist and ask for accountability. Questioning the existence of God highlights Charles’s atheist leaning, which enabled him to switch roles easily between the major Catholic and the Protestant faiths. Charles, with wicked energy, does not shy away from displaying his contempt for both the Church of England ministers and the population in front of Argyle: “Genug der Quälerei, daß ich jeden Sonntag diesen Euren langweiligen Pfaffen zuhören, und dabei zur Erbauung meines vielgeliebten tölpelhaften Volkes ein höchst ernsthaftes Gesicht schneiden muß” (3: 112) (“Enough of this drudgery whereby I have to not only listen every Sunday to your boring clerics, but I also, for the edification of my most beloved oafish plebs, have to put on a most serious face”).

Buckingham, in contrast to the upright Lord Argyle, and to maintain his own base of power, supports Charles’s self-righteous attitude by affirming that indeed: “Gott hat ihn [den Menschen] geschaffen, damit er Unterthan sei; das Volk ist Staatseigenthum, und wenn Ihr wollt, Staatsschatz, weiter nichts!” (3: 192) (“God has created human beings to be subordinate, the people belong to the state and should You so desire, to the state treasury, nothing else”). Kings need no nobility or duty, just benefits. Buckingham, pandering to Charles’s ego in an act of self preservation, reassures Charles: “Wenn ein Volk zu Grunde geht und stirbt, indem es seinem König dadurch eine vergnügte Stunde bereitet, dann stirbt es eines seligen und beneidenswerthen Todes!” (3: 195) (“If by their destruction and death the people give their King pleasure for an hour, then they die a blessed and enviable death!”).

This desire for momentary pleasure depicts merciless savagery by individuals as well as large social groups, as observed in Charles’s riddance of Sara, and the people’s lust for the short-lived spectacle of Vane’s beheading, both discussed below. The atmosphere of chasing after brief and hasty pleasure seizes everyone, but who will pay for all these excesses? In order to finance the exorbitant costs of the royal court, Buckingham suggests to Charles that the financial proceeds from the sale of Dunkirk be publicly deposited in the Tower during the day, only to be removed at night. With this act the people are deceived further, and Charles is able to maintain his opulent lifestyle. Satisfied with their dishonest scheme, Buckingham reassures Charles that the people are so susceptible that they will believe anything:

Die Völker sind wie die Kinder, Sire, sie glauben an Mährchen, sie werden Euch daher glauben, wenn Ihr sagt, daß der Staatsschatz gefüllt ist, und wenn sie ihn leer finden, werden sie Euch wiederum glauben, wenn Ihr sagt, daß das Geld für sie verwendet sei. (3: 194)

The people are like children, Sire, they believe in fairytales. Therefore they will believe you when you say that the state treasury is filled, and when they find it
empty, they will again believe you when you tell them that the money has been used for their benefit.

The people are only puppets who have given their labour to provide funds to build a fleet that can fight Holland. The futility of their effort is shown when Charles, who has squandered the earnings of their toil, needs a peace treaty with Holland (3: 250). Ironically, while Charles exploits the people mercilessly, his mistress Barbara applies the same method in her treatment of him. She demands whatever pleases her caprice. Her lament about Charles to Aphra corresponds to that of Charles about the people:

[Barbara] Zu denken, dieses Thier [Charles], welches da heulend und winselnd zu Deinen Füßen liegt, und Deine Hände leckt, und wie ein verliebter Affe schmeichelt und wedelt, dieses willenlose Ding, welches sich wie weiches Wachs in meinen Willen fügt, das ist ein König, ein Geschöpf, welches sich höher dünkt, als alle andere Menschen. Das ist der Götzte, vor dem sich diese erbärmliche Menschheit in den Staub wirft, und sich glücklich fühlt, von ihm geknechtet zu werden, weil er ein König ist! (3: 243-44)

[Barbara] To think, that this animal [Charles], that is howling and grovelling at your feet, and licking your hands like an amorous monkey, flattering and wagging, this weak-willed thing, that obeys my will like soft wax, that this is a king, a creature that considers itself to be above all other human beings. That is the idol, for whom these miserable human beings throw themselves into the dust, all the time feeling happy to be suppressed by him because he is a king.

This expressive language renders a callous account of Barbara’s contempt for King and people. She ruthlessly assesses her options in a patriarchal institution and determinedly sets out to achieve her goals. The passage depicts the dichotomy of a king who is unable to control his mistress, and of a mistress who controls the King, leaving little doubt as to who possesses the stronger personality. The population are no concern to either.

Buckingham had earlier pointed out that a king without money is a miserable human being laughed at by even a beggar (3: 14). Yet the people, who include the beggar, are in awe of this one human being who has been elevated above all the others. The narrator’s view of the people’s apathy: “one was so exhausted from the efforts involving freedom and self-governing . . .” (2: 191), suggests that the people acquiesce in this power relationship, a phenomenon observed by Boetie and Foucault, as discussed earlier.
8.1.3 The common people

On the one hand the narrative shows the exploitation by the monarchy while on the other the common people are shown to accept with confusion and lethargy any governmental rule. This scenario is reminiscent of Mundt’s observation of public sway as co-editor of Blätter für Literarische Unterhaltung. The people’s mood vacillates from hysterical enthusiasm to phlegmatic indifference when the monarchy returned after republicanism with Charles II’s accession to the throne:

In der Republik hatten sie oft vor unbekannten Schrecknissen gezittert, es hatte ihnen gewissermaßen das äußere Symbol ihrer Knechtschaft gefehlt, sie hatten eine Art Scheu empfunden vor diesen heiligen Tempelhallen der Völkerfreiheit, in denen kein einziges Götzenbild als Schutzpatron und Fetisch angerufen werden konnte, deshalb hatten sie zu dem Königthum ihre Zuflucht genommen, und aus dem Tempel der Freiheit das Hoflager eines Königs gemacht, den sie mit gläubigem Herzen anzubeten kamen als ihr Götzenbild und ihren Fetisch, und in dessen Nähe sie sich gesichert glaubten gegen alles Ungemach und alle Lebensstürme. (2: 289)

Under the republic they had often trembled at the prospect of unknown horrors. They were, so to speak, lacking the outer symbol of their bondage, they had felt a certain shyness in confrontation with these sacred temple halls that give freedom to nations, in which not a single idol could be called upon as patron saint and fetish. Therefore they had taken refuge in the monarchy, and out of the temple of freedom they had made a courtly camp of a king. They came to worship him with faithful heart as their idol and their fetish, and in his vicinity they believed themselves to be secure against all adversity and all storms in life.

The population is depicted as swaying with the prevailing wind. To evade the wrath of the excited population and after the overthrow of his father’s dynasty, Charles II fled and hid for twenty-four hours in an oak tree (2: 193). On his return from exile to England, the people express their glowing love with the same joy and fanaticism with which they had cheered his father’s beheading (2: 234). This is noted by Lord Williams in his comments to Barbara: “Es [Volk] haßt morgen, was es heute liebte” (3: 75) (“They [population] hate tomorrow, what they loved today”). They were happy and

97 Mundt assessed the public attitude of 1830 Paris: “In Deutschland hat die Sympathie mit der Julirevolution selbst da, wo sie sehr lebendig gewesen, nicht lange angedauert” (Mundt; “Zeitperspective” 2) (“In Germany the sympathy for the July Revolution did not last long, even in places where there had been active support”). Mundt added that the remainder of any political enthusiasm for this Revolution quickly dissipated from the German social salons (3). Indeed eighteen years later, after the unsuccessful civil German Revolution in 1848, most of the population settled back into their lives, seemingly “content” (Sagarra, Tradition 3), albeit under the threat of the authorities.
excited to witness the bloody execution of Henry Vane (3: 93), who was one of the signatories of the warrant for Charles I’s execution. Nobody wanted to miss out on this “ergötzlichen Schauspiel” (3: 92) (“delightful spectacle”).

The irony here is that the “delightful” event is re-enacted on the same spot where Charles I had been beheaded. Those who signed his death sentence meet the same fate in the same location, yet for opposing ideologies (3: 94). Blood is shed to please the people. Those who lose their heads change, but the act of beheading remains. Thirteen years earlier the monarchy was condemned, but it is now celebrated. What was feted then (the Commonwealth) is now condemned. But at least the ceremony of beheading remains ‘entertainingly’ stable. This suggests that as long as people can have brief ceremonial splendour, like a bloody execution in line with Boetie’s gladiatorial spectacles (Rosen 62), they are content.

Mühlbach, no doubt affected by her husband’s disenchantment with public attitude,98 illustrates this phenomenon of first, the populace sanctioning the status quo from one regime to another and second, a majority being governed by a minority, as an important theme. The status quo of oppression is twofold, the state has power over the population, and men have power over women. In this progressive novel women are, on the one hand, shown to outwit social, political and legal restrictions to achieve their goals while, on the other hand, the population remains inactive. What meaning is Mühlbach imparting to a receptive readership? Her subliminal meaning cloaked in literature contrasts early mid-nineteenth-century male critics who attempted to keep the “status quo” by denying women the opportunity to deal with “socialen Fragen” (Goetzinger 86) (“social questions”).

The sense of mockery continues in the depiction of the people and the ladies of high society, who are united in their disappointment with the bareness of the execution: “das Volk murrt darüber” (3: 97) (“the people grumbled about it”). The King has granted Vane (due to Barbara’s influence, which was prompted by a slight feeling of culpability, as discussed below) the privilege to wear his uniform: “daß man das Armesündershirt und all den rührenden Apparat, der zu einer feierlichen Hinrichtung durchaus erforderlich sei, entbehren sollte” (3: 97) (“that one had to miss out on seeing the poor sinner’s shirt and all the touching apparatus that is so absolutely essential for the entertainment of a ceremonial execution”). The people’s response is as ruthless as that of the King, his cohorts, the aristocrats and the upper classes. Edward and his father Henry recognise this degeneration of behaviour. Henry, aware of the savage mood of the people, says to his ally, Murray:

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98 The public mood was influenced by an environment of fear that discouraged opposition even by a majority. Germany’s preventative measures against the population’s opposition toward the states in 1848 were based on a political milieu in which “no protesting citizen’s voice was safe” (Finney 272).
Sieh sie an, diese Menschen. Sie haben sich Alle in blutgierige Tiger verwandelt, und sie würden Den zerreißen, der ihnen diese Beute, mit welcher sie auf eine Viertelstunde ihre Langeweile vertreiben, entreißen wollte. (3: 100)

Look at these people. They have all turned into bloodthirsty tigers and they would tear apart that person who would deprive them of their prey, with which they want to relieve their boredom for a quarter of an hour.

The atmosphere of gladiatorial savagery is vividly evoked. The people want to see the bloody spectacle of an execution for but a brief moment’s entertainment. The analogy to the King, who expects the people to sacrifice themselves in order for him to enjoy an hour’s pleasure, is observed by Buckingham, as noted above. The narrative suggests that the King and the people deserve each other with their fickle desires. It is pointed out that after six years, the passionate love of the people for Charles II turned into equally passionate hate (3: 282). While they had only felt dissatisfied during the years of the Republican leadership, they now feel miserable and very unhappy. They had to concede that they (to whom the republic had once given the right to call themselves free and self-governing men) had sunk back into the position of obedient underlings, governed by a false idol. They realised that the King, whom they had considered to be God-like, was no different from any ordinary person and that life under the monarchy was subject to the same shortcomings as in the republic (2: 289). The citizens had changed from thinking and potential republicans into non-thinking subordinates (2: 290).

Oppressed by institutional power, the population succumbs to lethargy. Here, by denying ‘the people’ any political agency the novel reveals a rather elitist attitude. After all, they have participated in both the removal and reinstatement of the monarchy. The illustrated passivity of the population’s acquiescence reveals a certain conservatism in this potentially radical critique, revealing an ambivalence in the text. Nonetheless, the novel demonstrates that irrespective of which regime is in power, the ordinary person’s welfare is of little concern to those who are in control. The powerful are far too occupied with their own interests.

Mühlbach probably recalled the mood of disenchantment that followed Friedrich Wilhelm IV’s accession to the throne. Disappointment combined with apathy produces non-responsive or incoherent behaviour, as aptly illustrated in the depiction of the population when they come to a rude awakening after Charles’s accession. Disillusioned upon realising their error, they follow the example of their King by drowning themselves in mind-numbing indulgences. Mühlbach draws out the consequences of an unopposed, universally oppressive political situation when her character, Buckingham, sardonically compares the people to slaves, who change their tune daily (2: 138).
Even though slaves have limited options regarding their conduct, the peoples’ bondage is mordantly projected as self-inflicted:

Man war so ermattet von den Anstrengungen der Freiheit, und des Sichselberregierens, daß man sich sehnte nach der Ruhe der Despotie und der bequemen Pflicht des Gehorchens. Man war es müde selber zu denken, selber sich Gesetze zu geben, und mit ermattetem Herzen war man freudig bereit, diese schwere Pflicht abzutreten an den König und an das Parlament. (2: 191)

They were so exhausted from the efforts involving freedom and self-governing that they longed for the calm of despotism and the convenient duty of obedience. They were tired of having to think for themselves and to devise laws for themselves. With an exhausted heart they were happily willing to hand this difficult duty over to the King and the parliament.

Tired of Cromwell’s severity and disappointed by Charles II’s indifference, the populace is unwilling to take action, thus submitting to yet further tyranny. Be the motive fear of authority, indifference, a general feeling of ease or other reasons, seventeenth-century English as nineteenth-century German population at large did not possess the fervour of the barricade-climbing French to voice their protest about a prevailing situation. While, together with industrialisation, many economic and social changes did take place in Germany, the political and social transformation did not result in an empowerment of socially and economically marginalised groups. The underprivileged embodied a majority and their suppression was upheld by an elite minority.

General Monk laconically comments that people grumble when they have freedom since they like to worship an idol to whom they willingly subjugate themselves:

Oh, die Völker sind wie die Kinder, sie bedürfen eines Götzen oder einer Puppe, um damit zu spielen. Man thut ihnen zu viel Ehre an, wenn man ihnen erlaubt selbständig zu sein, denn in der Selbstständigkeit verwildern sie! (2: 83)

Ah, nations are like the children, they need an idol or a doll to play with. You afford them too much honour, if you permit them to be independent, because they turn feral in independence.

Monk unambiguously blames populations for their demise because they lack the urge to rouse themselves into political activism. This assessment corresponds to the Kantian idea of a non-enlightened mind. Aphra too suggests to Oronooko that the people in her country are like children who obey the whip of their taskmaster (1: 56). She tells of political and social activism, that occasionally a man rises and speaks to children about their human rights and the injustices of the
Aphra explains that some people follow this prophet but the majority shy away, calling such prophets of future happiness “Wahnsinnige, Tobsüchtige” (1: 56) (“lunatics, raving lunatics”) and fostering the princes’ ambition to throw the prophets into dungeons. Yet these “lunatics” want to free people and bring them happiness:

stand up and rise in your magnificence! Do not tolerate that a puppet is ruling on your throne, and calls himself your master. Do not be oppressed by a fawning woman, or a blind boy, or by a poor idiot, or a bloodthirsty tiger, or by a hypocritical servant of priests, or a gold-craving tyrant. Stand up and ward off the ignominy that shall subjugate yourselves to those who are unworthy!

While referring in this context to English rulers, the critique applies to any monarchy, oligarchy, or oppressive power system, and to unjust institutional regimes. The Kantian directive to the people, to “stand up,” to be accountable for their inaction about their inequities represents a call for action. In his essay: “In Answering the Question: What Is Enlightenment?”, Kant’s pivotal hypothesis is: “It is so convenient to be incapabe of thinking for oneself” (“Aufklärung” 1). The passage about the population’s apathy: “One was so exhausted,” echoes this meaning. Kant’s theory argues for people to be responsible instead of being lazy and cowardly, which reveals an inability to discard apathy and thus become pliable under any ruler’s governance. Kant’s directive: “Have courage to engage your own mind” (1) as echoed in Mühlbach’s “stand up and rise” (LM AB 1:57), is lacking in this depicted mass conformity. As a consequence, and unsurprisingly, people’s lives do not improve from one regime to another. The analogy in Mühlbach’s passage shows two scenarios of mass behaviour: mindlessness and militarism—both presupposing obedience, both evident throughout history, and both essential ingredients in oppressive governance.

While their King continued with his orgies, many people lost their possessions in the Great Fire of London. Confronted with hardship, they gradually wake from their lull and the opiates of the gladiatorial spectacles, and from adhering in non-thinking manner to the status quo. The reader may deduce any forthcoming social and political consequences. Against this mob mentality both Henry

99 Note the plural form ‘princes’: England had one monarch while the German confederation was governed by fragmented principalities.
Vane and Lord Argyle are singled out as being prepared to die for their principles. Disillusioned with the way he has been treated and by the regressive state of the people, Vane does not want his son Edward to rescue him. In his last public address before his execution, Vane condemns the populace that permits the tyranny of Charles.

However, drowned out by the drummers, the remainder of his speech becomes inaudible to the population, prompting him to utter to Murray: “So gefährlich ist die Politik, daß man selbst einem Sterbenden nicht gestatten will, seine Meinung zu äußern!” (3: 103-104) (“Politics is so dangerous that they won’t even allow a dying man to express his opinion!”). This may be a covert reference to the oppression which prevailed when in 1843 censorship of the press was enforced by Friedrich Wilhelm IV (Griesshaber 12). It may refer to the King’s many broken promises: “Insbesondere die heftige Kritik an Karl II. wegen zahlreicher gebrochener Versprechungen spiegelt die Enttäuschung über Friedrich Wilhelm IV. wider, auf dessen ‘ klares Wort eines geborenen Königs’ in den Frühjahrsmonaten von 1848 vergeblich gehofft wurde” (Tönnesen, “Überhaupt” 236) (“In particular the fierce criticism of Karl II’s numerous broken promises mirrors the disappointment about Friedrich Wilhelm IV during the spring months of 1848, on whose ‘clear word of a born king’ people had put their faith in vain”). It may also refer to the imprisonment of some Young German writers, and the confiscation of their books. Importantly, and on a personal level, it may also concern Theodor Mundt’s banishment from Berlin and, with him, his wife—Louise Mühlbach.

When Mühlbach was writing the novel, political suppression in Germany denied Mundt an academic appointment, due to his censored literary leaflets and his involvement with the Young Germans (Lexikon 85). In this mid-nineteenth-century ferment of political and social upheaval, it is not surprising that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels theorised the injustices of a class-system (Wood 524). After the unsuccessful 1848 German revolution, Marx was banned from the Prussian territories for inciting revolt, and Engels moved to England (231). In such an intellectual climate, Mühlbach was prudent to veil any form of critique.

By staging the perilous events surrounding the action of her tale in a different century and country, she was able to fantasise freely so that her readers might think about the ideas presented in the narrative. While the following is speculative (a detailed assessment goes beyond the scope of this thesis), I believe that in view of the influence that is ascribed to Hahn-Hahn’s emancipatory writing on her readership, it stands to reason that Mühlbach’s critical writing had the same effect. Due to her immense popularity as a writer, the question arises how much her graphic depiction of ‘the people’s’ fickle compliance contributed to the arousal of affirmative public action; how much it fostered the people’s demand for more democratic processes of governing and for equality rather than upholding the custom of maintaining the privileges of only a few. Perhaps the reason for portraying the citizens as a whole nebulous, dithering and fickle mass is to emphasise the personal,
and yet collective, misdemeanour of the institutionalised governance apparatus, that is headed by one King.

8.2 Civil rights—guaranteed equality, personal, and religious freedom

Based on the hypothesis that the plot of this seventeenth-century novel camouflages a contemporary criticism of mid-nineteenth-century Prussia, I refer to three articles 4, 5 and 11, of the Prussian constitutional deed of December 1848 to examine its abuse by those in power, as suggested in the character Charles II. Article 4 guarantees equality among its citizens:

Alle Preußen sind vor dem Gesetze gleich. Standsvorrechte finden nicht statt.
Die öffentlichen Ämter sind für alle dazu Befähigten gleich zugänglich. (Huber 1)

All Prussians are equal before the law. Class privileges do not exist. Public offices are equally accessible to all those who are suitably qualified.

While this constitutional deed grants equality, the King is ultimately able to override it. As discussed above, Friedrich Wilhelm IV disregarded constitutionally established equality by denying official appointments to ‘suitably qualified’ people like Mundt. Probably in response to this personal experience by Mühlbach, attention is drawn to the fictional Charles II’s bias. We are familiar with Charles’s overall abuse of, and contempt for, his people. Being the sole authorised and unethical executor, his absolutism invalidates the ethical checks and balances necessary to ensure impartiality. Encouraged by Charles’s pliability and lack of principles, Matthews and Buckingham maintain their influence over the royal figurehead by coercing Charles into nepotism: Matthews is appointed as “Geheim-Secretair” (LM AB 2: 40) (“secret secretary”), and Buckingham as “geheimen Staatsminister” (2: 261) (“secret state minister”).

Both Matthews’s and Buckingham’s corruption distinguishes them as ‘suitably qualified’. This favouritism enhances a system of class privileges and public office appointments without merit or “suitable” (Huber 1) qualification. Together they interpret the law with elasticity for their explicit and corrupt benefit. It will be remembered that such flexible interpretation had also been applied to Friedrich Wilhelm II’s morganatic marriages. Charles violates the impartiality that is attributable to the role of a “fair” (Wormuth 69) king. He influences the Lords and Commons with bribery, and plots successfully to control the legislature and the executive.

The second article of the Prussian constitutional deed, Article 5, states: “Die persönliche Freiheit ist gewährleistet” (Huber 1) (“Personal freedom is guaranteed”). From the fifteenth to the late mid-nineteenth century the Schollenpflichtigkeit in Prussia denied the farmer personal freedom, leaving his fate to the caprice of the Gutsherrn (estate owner) (Preussen, Schollenpflichtigkeit). Since the majority of the population lived and worked on the land, it was not only the farmers who
lived under the three Hohenzollern Kings under discussion, who were deprived of this article’s constitutional guarantee. Most people’s lives and services were subject to the will of the aristocrats who maintained their position as master. The aristocrats in turn comprised one link in the King’s chain of a network retinue that deprived people of personal freedom.

In the novel, two incidents highlight the infringement of Article 5 by Charles: the deprivation of Sara’s personal freedom, and his revoking the republicans’ guaranteed freedom and safety under the amnesty. First, before departing from France, Matthews (in conspiracy with Charles) kidnapped Sara from her parents. Matthews then connived that she sacrifice her virtue and honour for Charles as his mistress (LM AB 2: 29). Persuaded by false love declarations, she fell in love with Charles. When Charles tired of her, Matthews restrained, gagged, removed and then sold Sara to Count Rochester for a thousand “livres” (2: 27-35). Here we see the clergy in alliance with a law-offending ruler, dealing in human slavery.

The second violation is the revoking of the amnesty that granted personal freedom and safety to the republicans. As Charles strengthens his position and influence on the English throne, he disregards the amnesty to those loyal to Cromwell, that he had legislated, and instigates procedures against them:

Der König willigte also mit frohem Muthe darein, sein feierlich gegebenes Wort zu brechen, und statt der versprochenen Amnestie Untersuchungen einzuleiten gegen alle diejenigen, welche Cromwell gediehnt und der Republik sich mit freudigem Herzen ergeben hatten. (2: 294-95)

Thus the King agreed with cheerful courage to break his ceremoniously given word and, instead of keeping the promised amnesty, to instigate investigations against all those who had served Cromwell and who had submitted themselves with an enthusiastic heart to the republic.

The people and sensitive or gullible individuals are only pawns that are useful as long as they serve their purpose as taxpayer or pleasure provider. Upon the fulfilment of their function, or upon ceasing their usefulness, they are discarded with disdain, or dispensed of like an annoying limb, as in the case of Sara.

The third article, Article 11 of the Prussian constitution concerns religion, it states: “Die Freiheit des religiösen Bekenntnisses, der Vereinigung zu Religions-Gesellschaften und der gemeinsamen öffentlichen Religions-Übung wird gewährleistet” (Huber 2) (“Freedom of religious confession, the formation of religious associations and public religious congregation is guaranteed”). A disagreement about differing power bases, mixed marriages and other disputes
between the Protestant and Catholic Churches resulted in religious conflict in Prussia during Friedrich Wilhelm III’s reign.

In nineteenth-century Prussia political, cultural and academic restrictions enacted by the prevailing absolutism worked in tandem with the influential religious institutions—the Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches—whose ideologies justified these power structures. Religion provides a tool by which those in power can effectively maintain discipline over the individual and society (Adler 198). In a 1847 letter to the Prussian Minister of the Interior, Minister Eichhorn observed that the “close connection between civil order and religious order” influenced “his political decisions” “fundamentally” (Adler 198). Karin Friedrich states that even though many of the German principalities sought control over school education, both denominations remained very influential (92). Furthermore, after the 1848 Revolution, and in reaction to the French Enlightenment and Kantian rationalism, a religious revival occurred (92). While adopting a philosophy that expressed itself in “a cult of ultimate subjectivity that needed no church,” “German cultural life” (93) remained religiously flavoured.

In predominantly Protestant Prussia, the clergy represented a quarter of all university lecturers and professors (Janz 382). This dated back to Friedrich Wilhelm II who, with his “Edict on Religion,” attempted to “enforce theological orthodoxy on clergy and professors” (Williamson 31). Indeed after 1815, government and ruling bureaucrats encouraged the political involvement of the clergy and their influence on the population through directives such as: “We must give our consciousness of God a political form!” (Bigler 440). The Protestant Church forged a strong alliance with the Prussian government, and this theologically-influenced authoritarianism was partly responsible for the failure of the revolutionary movements of 1819 and 1848. Both influenced the middle-classes against any political and social revolution (Friedrich 93) and, for large parts of the population, “the idea of authority was stronger than the idea of freedom” (Bigler 426).

As discussed in Mühlbach’s correspondence to Kühne about the “cabals of the Catholic priests” (Tönnesen, Vormärz 264), an atmosphere of religious intrigue and hypocrisy may have motivated Mühlbach’s depiction of religious underhandedness as expressed in Father Matthews’s demonic dominance. Tönnesen comments:


100 Prussian Minister of Education.
Repulikaner, Presbyterianer und Anhänger Cromwells, obwohl er Amnestie versprochen hatte. (“Überhaupt” 236)

Once again the author describes in history the power alliance between aristocracy and clergy, Charles’s dependence on the Catholic Church, his depraved life, which is rewarded with indulgence and absolution, as well as revoking the promise of free practice of religion. In analogy to the worsening censorship and the repression against dissidents in Prussia since 1843, the English king on behalf of the Catholic Church persecutes members of parliament, republicans, Anglicans and followers of Cromwell, even though he had promised amnesty.

The novel depicts that under Matthews’s influence, the deed guaranteeing religious freedom is soon revoked. On ascending the throne, Charles promises the Protestants religious tolerance. But he breaks his promise by obeying Matthew’s instructions: “Tod und Verdammniß den Feinden der allein seligmachenden [katholischen] Kirche” (LM AB 2: 38) (“death and damnation to the enemies of the one and only beatifying [Catholic] Church”). Matthews effectively declares all those of another religious denomination to be enemies and subject to prosecution.

8.2.1 Criticism of clerical blackmail

In their quid pro quo arrangement, the priest grants spiritual comfort while the monarch grants elimination of religious opponents. Matthews requests from Charles “easily” achievable favours, such as the death of a rebelling Protestant or a Cromwell supporter who criticised the monarchy-supporting clergy (2: 294). The irony is farcical, with the ‘all forgiving’ Catholic representative determining the death of religious adversaries who, according to the law, are free from prosecution. Matthews fosters inequity and exploits Charles for his own ruthless gain. This theme of religious hypocrisy turns into demonic fanaticism with Father Matthews who forms a fraudulent pact with Charles and grants absolution for the preconceived committal of sins: “Um sündigen zu können, bedarf man durchaus der katholischen Kirche und des Beichtvaters” (2: 42) (“In order to sin, one absolutely needs the Catholic Church and a confessor”). Charles’s confident knowledge, that Matthews would not only grant him absolution at night for past misdemeanour but also give him licence for the committal of new sins, clears his mind of any wrongdoing that may trouble his conscience (2: 294). Bitingly and no doubt with bias, it is pointed out that Charles was a very good Catholic who enjoyed being able to sin: “Es ist sehr süß zu sündigen, wenn man des Ablasses und der Verzeihung gewiß ist!” (2: 40) (“It is very enticing to sin, when one is assured of absolution and forgiveness”).
This relationship between the King and the priest is based on a disturbing duality of dependency and domination. Matthews menacingly reminds Charles that his return to England was only possible with the support of the Catholic Church: “Die Krone Englands war der Preis, um welche Ihr Katholik geworden” (2: 36) (“The crown of England was the reward of your conversion to Catholicism”). Matthews executes his extortion further and with vehemence: “Vergebt das niemals, König Karl, die Kirche und der mächtige Orden der Väter Jesu, diese beiden heiligen Gewalten sind es gewesen, welche Euch die Krone wieder erkämpften” (2: 36) (“Never forget, King Charles, that it was the Church, and the mighty order of the Jesuits, that captured the crown back for you”).

The cleric thus blackmails the King to convert to Catholicism and to appoint him (Matthews) to the position of “Geheim-Kämmerer” (2: 30) (“privy councillor”). Matthews controls Charles during the day and hears his confession at night. He functions not only as Charles’s spiritual adviser but as clerical representative to uphold and spread the power of Rome. The satire of Matthews’s double role is illuminated when, as father confessor, he ought to dissuade Charles from entering ‘sinful’ liaisons with Sara or other mistresses but, as personal valet, he procures her (2: 30). Here Mühlbach clearly demonstrates the lack of ethics of a clerical representative who, with the regent’s consent, displays an ability to disguise his corrupt behaviour under a mantle of piety.

Ironically, in a literal and unconventional understanding of religious freedom, the King pledges his soul to both Catholic and Protestant religious institutions. Yet in this, from what is divulged, his intent is motivated by greedy deceit rather than tolerance. Charles swears allegiance to a bishop of the Church of England and prays with him in Westminster in the morning, only to more fervently repeat the same oath and prayers with Catholic Father Matthews in his palace at night (2: 293). He then promises to fight the Church of England’s infringement of Catholic rights, thereby breaking the promise and law that guarantees freedom of religious practice to all. He aims to convince, hidden behind a curtain, an audience of twelve Protestants of his unconditional devotion to their faith with a feigned prayer. On another occasion he says false prayers: “um das arme, bethörte, trunkene Volk glauben zu machen” (2: 293) (“in order to deceive the poor intoxicated beguiled people”) that he is of Protestant faith. Charles maliciously plays one faith against the other.

The theme of clerical despotism is also illustrated in another cleric, Pater Abranto. As father confessor to Katharina, Abranto seeks to exert his influence over the King by instilling threat and fear in the Queen. Initially, the arrival of the strictly Catholic Princess pleased the Pope’s supporters. They had hoped that the King would now openly convert to the “allein seligmachenden” (3: 111) (“sole blessing”) Roman Church and then, in very ‘Christian and love your neighbour-like’ manner, proclaim a law that would prosecute all those of another Christian denomination:
die Verfolgung der Protestanten und Presbyterianer zu einem Gesetz zu erheben, und das war es, wonach diese Katholiken sich voll christlichen Eifers und voll jener erbarmenden christlichen Liebe sehnten, welche stets der bluttriefenden Opfer verlangt hat (3: 111)

to elevate to a law the persecution of Protestants and Presbyterians, and that was what these Catholics had longed for, imbued with Christian fervour and full of this compassionate Christian love, which has always demanded blood-dripping sacrifices.

Here the Catholic theme of blood sacrifice in combination with Christian vehemence displays a passion that was, as noted above, generally lacking in the King and the people alike. The fanaticism of religious characterisation is evident. By juxtaposing religious fervour with the debauchery of the King and the apathy of the people, little room is left to speculate on who is more likely to achieve their ambitious goals.

The Princess met her future husband with strict instructions from Abranto, who threatens her with a curse if she does not obey his commands. It is her mission to convert the King of England to Catholicism so that he will annihilate the heretics: “das ist Eure Aufgabe, Königin! Wehe Euch, wenn Ihr sie nicht erfüllt!” (3: 143) (“that is your task, Your Majesty! You will be sorry if you do not comply!”). Abranto emotionally blackmails Katharina and triumphantly predicts the expected outcome in anticipation of his completed mission: “Belohnung für die Katholiken, und Scheiterhaufen für die Ketzer!” (3: 143) (“Reward for the Catholics and the stake for the heretics!”). However, dissatisfied with the lack of progress on his project, Abranto accuses Katharina of being possessed by the devil. Charles’s conversion to Catholicism has not eventuated, because Katharina falls in love with him. Abranto therefore denies Katherina salvation until her heart is saturated with pious lamentation (3: 144).

The Queen’s Pater Abranto is as ruthlessly threatening in his endeavour to convert the monarch\(^{101}\) as the King’s Father Matthews, discussed above. The Queen is a pawn in the scheme of the powerful clergy, whose involvement and interest in the royal union aims to produce results for the benefit of Rome. A similarity in the relationship between the Queen and Abranto, and the people and the King, becomes evident. Lacking the cunning of Barbara and Mrs Monk, the Queen and the people succumb to those more dominant and more ruthless. Yet ironically, with the exception of Matthews, the happiness of the male characters: Charles, Buckingham, Captain Behn, General Monk and Abranto, is due to their involvement with women. This questions a seeming

\(^{101}\) According to Burnet’s *History*, Charles “was professing to be of the church of England, expressing both zeal and affection to it, yet secretly reconciled to the church of Rome: thus mocking God, and deceiving the world with so gross a prevarication” (Airy 472).
solidity and poignantly exposes their weakness as supposedly omnipotent males, perhaps an
innuendo by the author.

In contrast to the explicit criticism of the demonic behaviour of the clerics Matthews and
Abranto, the characters of Nelly and Oronooko express a general contempt for the clergy, as
depicted first in carefree Nelly’s repartee:

Diese Herrn da [die Geistlichkeit] mit [. . .] den über dem Ränzlein gefaltenen
Händen, diese Herrn mit den begehrlchen, dick aufgeworfenen Lippen, und den
lüsternen, fromm verdrehten Augen, das sind die Männer Gottes, das sind die,
welche uns das Heil des Himmels verkünden, und uns armen Mädchen auch
recht gerne glauben machen, daß wir gesegnet sind und heilig, wenn wir uns ihre
Umarmungen und Küsse gefallen lassen! (2: 232)

These gentlemen [the clergy] there [. . .] with their hands folded over the well-
fed tummy, these gentlemen with their voracious thick pouting lips and their
lecherous eyes piously turned upwards, these are the men of God. These are
those, who herald to us the salvation of heaven, and, who want to convince us
poor girls that we are blessed and sacrosanct as long as we put up with their
embraces and kisses!

This deftly expresses the hypocrisy with which this group of clergy is tainted. Nelly enhances her
observations with the acerbic addition that the clergy, being followed by chaste virgins in this
procession, is “höchst sinnig und tiefgedacht!” (2: 233) (“highly clever and deeply thought out”).
Nelly astutely disrobes this clerical charade of its pretensions. From her easy-going attitude emerges
a socially critical observer and commentator.

Second, religious exploitation, since time immemorial, is condemned also from the lips of an
‘other’ in Surinam. During Bannister’s savage torture of Oronooko, his life ebbs away but, unlike
Christ, who preaches forgiveness to his tormentors, Oronooko accuses them:

Einen Gott nur kennen die Menschen, es ist der Gott des Eigennutzes! Ihm
dienen sie mit rastlosem Eifer, und nur wenn zu ihm sie beten, ist Wahrheit auf
ihren Lippen. Dieser Gott ist ein grausamer Gott, er treibt die, welche ihm
dienen, zum Haß und zur wilden Blutgier, er zwingt sie, mit lachendem Munde
das Blut ihrer Brüder zu vergießen, und die Unschuld zu erwürgen, die Tugend
mit Füßen zu treten, und dem Laster zu dienen! Sie können es nicht ändern, die
armen, schwachen Menschen! Sie dienen ihrem Gotte, und ihr Gott ist der
Eigennutz! (1: 217-18)
The people only know one God, it is the God of selfishness! Him they serve with restless fervour, and only when they pray to him is truth on their lips. This God is a cruel God, he drives those who serve him to hate, and to wild greed for blood. He forces them to shed the blood of their brothers with a laughing grimace, and to throttle innocence, to kick virtue and to serve iniquity! They cannot change it, the poor, weak human beings! They serve their God, and their God is selfishness!

Mühlbach’s dying hero’s attack on selfishness condemns the greed that drives the urge to possess more than a friend or neighbour. This greed and desire for power supports the birthright of the monarchy that Aphra condemns. It also upholds the religious institutions that not only amass material wealth but inculcate and foster a dogma of fear, a cruel God, and a God of retribution. As an integral part of a controlling apparatus, church and state are effectively empowered to indoctrinate and govern the people with fear. Aphra says that injustices are based on a hierarchical monarchical power structure, and that people’s greed is itself supported by a pietistic system.

Historically, wars of all kinds, be they motivated by avarice or religious oppression, have been fought apparently with divine encouragement and empowerment to shed blood and kill in a sanctified manner. The repercussions of criticising the ideas of such powerful social constructs are potentially ominous to an author who earns an income from her writing. Oronooko’s outcry in far away Surinam can attract open sympathies and even support, for his ideas about institutional power inequities echo from a place conveniently remote from Prussia, or other states. His criticism is less targeted to ‘us,’ who are far (but not necessarily safely) away from the place of action.
Chapter 9  

**Aphra Behn—Female Response and Empowerment**

9.1  

**The aristocrats**

9.1.1  

**The courtiers**

In response to the institutional power structure that is upheld by a select few, groups of people, such as the courtiers, or individual characters, such as Barbara, Nelly, Mrs Monk, Aphra, Imoinda and Sara adjust by either swimming or drowning in its social current. In examining the depiction of the self-perpetuating support system of Charles’s courtiers, Boetie’s theory as to why so many are governed by so few, is fitting. In order to maintain their high standard of living the courtiers and aristocrats support their King while reaping benefits. Mimicking his behaviour, they establish their own reinforcement structure. The narrator sardonically comments: “Das Beispiel des Königs hatte dem Verbrechen selber das Siegel der Göttlichkeit aufgedrückt, und mit verhülltem Antlitz hatte sich die Tugend von dem Hofe dieses Königs von Gottes Gnaden abgewandt” (3: 39) (“The King’s example itself had pressed the seal of godliness onto the crime, and with veiled countenance virtue averted its gaze from the court of this King, appointed by the grace of God”). Though supposedly divinely appointed, the King contravenes all that is sacred. Without ethical guidance, chaos unsurprisingly descends:  

Das Laster blüht an den Höfen, und wer denn sollte es pflegen, wenn nicht diese nichtsthuerischen und stolzen Herrn, denen das Vergnügen die einzige Arbeit ist, und die zehren von dem Schweiße des Volkes, um vielleicht in einer tollen Nacht zu verprassen, was der Arbeiter mit Seufzern an Steuern eingezahlt! Wer denn sollte es pflegen, wenn nicht diese stolzen Damen der Aristocratie, die in träumerischem Müßiggang und in gelangweilter Üppigkeit ein nutzloses Leben durchschwelgen, zu erhaben, um Hausfrauen und Mütter zu sein, und ihre Gedanken vergiftend mit dem Wahn, etwas Besseres und Erhabeneres zu sein als die geringste Bettlerin, und das schmuzigste [sic] Weib der Straße! (3: 39)

Iniquity thrives at the courts, and who then ought to indulge in it, if not these lazy and proud gentlemen, whose only work consists of pleasure, and who draw on the sweat of the people, in order perhaps to squander in one night, what the labourer paid in taxes with sighs! Who then should nurture it, if not these proud ladies of the aristocracy, who, in dreamy idleness and in bored abundance revel in a useless life, too sublime to be housewives and mothers. Their thoughts are poisoned with the delusion to be something better and more superior than the lowest beggar woman and the dirtiest woman of the street!
The King, with his salaciousness, debauches not only himself but also, apart from his two minions, his male and female courtiers who are socially elevated to enjoy a class system that divides the idle rich from the labouring poor. In aping the King, the aristocracy treats the people with contempt as exemplified in Buckingham’s mistress Lady Shrewsbury:

Die Aristocratie muß doch Etwas haben, wodurch sie sich vom gemeinen bürgerlichen Pöbel unterscheidet! Dieses Volk drängt sich ohne dieß mit seinen Ansprüchen überall hervor, nun wohl, unsere noblen Laster sollen sie uns wenigstens unangetastet lassen! Die sind das unbestreitbare Besitzthum der Aristocratie! (3: 30)

The aristocracy ought to have Something, with which to distinguish themselves from the common bourgeois rabble! Anyway these plebeians push themselves everywhere into the lead with their demands; well then, at least they should not encroach on our noble vices! These are the indisputable privileges of the aristocracy!

Hyperbole abounding, the aristocrats and monarchy are menacingly portrayed as being mercilessly exploitative. The aristocratic perception of the social divide between the upper and lower classes is illustrated with sarcasm and provocation. While the passage alludes to some activity by the people to improve their conditions, the reader is not illuminated about the ordinary people’s feelings and motivation. All individual characters are upper class, aristocratic or clerical, and their voice is generally vile. The inequities of seventeenth-century English royalist society are vividly illustrated, inequities that also prevailed in upper-class nineteenth-century German society.

This unjust contrast between the ordinary citizens (who, inspired by the declaration of human rights in North America, aspired to reform their restrictive circumstances) and the authoritarian and squandering monarchical apparatus, prompted a revolutionary wave throughout Europe (Duden Geschichte 318). The explosive political mix of liberal, democratic and national movements in combination with social injustice was a contributing factor in the events leading to the 1848 Revolution (Griesshaber 12). It seems yet again that Mühlbach wants to arouse a response for accountability, a striving for the equality of human beings, an undertaking, described by Singer as a “prescription of how we should treat human beings” (Writings 31). It is small wonder that the disparity here depicted provided the basis for Marx (though he thought himself humanitarian), to advocate Socialism in preference to “ethical or humanitarian” reasoning (Russell, History 753).
A recurring theme of pretence and reality in high society is shown in a collectively hypocritical aristocratic behaviour. A case in point is Lady Shrewsbury’s enjoyment at being the centre of attraction as a newly widowed woman.\textsuperscript{102}


They were listening to this touching narration [Lady Shrewsbury on the duel which killed her husband] with sympathetic and believing mien and conducted a comedy act as it is still being practised in high society today. They lie to each other, they know that they lie, and they take on the appearance of considering the lie to be the truth. This is what is referred to as “good form in high society.”

In this portrayal of hypocrisy in high society, all participants adhere to the same rules of the game by constantly and openly pretending. It is thus an honest pastime as everybody knows that everybody is lying. The narrator’s comment reflects Mühlbach’s own time—emphasised by “still being practised [. . .] today”—and she no doubt aims to raise people’s consciousness with her critical observations. While she successfully entertains with her cornucopia of thoughts that breathe, and words that burn, and unvirtuous aristocrats that readily engage the reader in their world of utter corruption, her upper-class perspective is not without bias. As discussed above, privileged society is portrayed in individual characters, and the people are depicted as a nebulous mass. It is therefore difficult for the reader to elicit a relationship with any one character of ‘the people’ and their inequitable circumstances.

\textbf{9.1.2 The role of women—the survivors}

Five distinctive female characters illustrate the different methods that can be applied on a personal level to deal with the social restrictions caused by institutional injustices. The protagonist, Aphra, plots her career as a writer while Barbara Villiers achieves fame, power and fortune. Nelly Gwyn’s pliability ensures her adjustment to any situation, while Sara and Imoinda see suicide as the only means to relieve their grief. In contrast to these four characters, Elizabeth Monk holds a position that instils fear in even the most powerful. When Aphra, Barbara and Nelly meet, eighteen-year old

\textsuperscript{102} Mühlbach describes how Lady Shrewsbury, dressed as a page, accompanies her lover Buckingham to the duel in which her husband Shrewsbury is fatally wounded. Samuel Pepys’ Diary entry for 17 January 1668 confirms that this duel, in which “Lord Shrewsbury is run through the body from the right breast through the shoulder” (Pepys 27), took place. This entry is annotated as: “perhaps the most notorious [duel] of the period in England” (27).
Aphra is introduced as Minerva, nineteen-year old Barbara as Juno, and sixteen-year old Nelly as Venus, a trio of youthful beauties (2: 195). In solidarity, aided by their youth and physical beauty, Aphra, Barbara and Nelly use female wiles to circumvent the subjugation of women by men and society. At Aphra’s instigation, they form an alliance against men to regain what should never have been taken away from them: freedom, human dignity, honour and with that—happiness (2: 220). All three women swear to punish men and to avenge women (2: 223).

In her arranged marriage with Alfred Palmer, Barbara tries to love her husband but he openly despises his wife who, in response, feigns an outwardly proud calm and indifference. At this stage she represents those women in higher socio-economic strata who silently suffer their husband’s infidelity and indifference towards a wife whom they had married as a result of a pecuniary transaction arranged by a third party. This situation highlights the prevailing custom not only in upper class marriages but for other women, too. Detested and insulted by her callous husband, and inspired by Aphra’s courage, Barbara now sets out to avenge herself. Barbara predicts that, with King Charles, an epoch for the benefit of women will commence (2: 197) (this hints at the favours that the many mistresses of Friedrich Wilhelm II enjoyed).

She becomes Charles’s mistress, entwines him in her charms and exerts her power by demanding jewellery, titles, estates and autonomy. In yet another twist of irony, one of the first official documents that Charles signs after spending the first night with Barbara is the promotion of her husband to Count of Castlemaine. This is based on the outstanding services of Mr Palmer (who has never met the King), and on the faithfulness he has proven to the monarchy (here irony abounds again). From now on his wife, Lady Barbara Castlemaine (who has played her part exceptionally well), occupies an opulent apartment in close proximity to Whitehall (2: 261), and her position at court demands respect. (This incident mirrors Friedrich Wilhelm II’s elevation of his mistress, Wilhelmine Encke to Countess of Lichtenau [Feuchtwanger 83]).

In dialogue with Aphra, Barbara exposes the hypocrisy of female aristocrats who feign a demure blush at every suggestive remark, thereby revealing their understanding of immorality. Barbara basks in their adulation in the full knowledge that behind their polite and bowing facades they curse her. Barbara seeks self-fulfilment in her newly established social position and through the material gain dispensed by Charles. The common denominator between high-handed Barbara, as discussed above, and the King, obedient to her, is their scheming. In order to gain access to the social power of patriarchy, Barbara needs Charles to remain in his position as King (in a similar way that the existence of the matriarchs, like Frau von Stein and Adele, is dependent upon the patriarchs). The King’s openly accepted social arrangement with his mistress, now Duchess of Cleveland, depicts another avenue for women dealing with patriarchal rule. Because of his position,
Barbara manoeuvres Charles by steering him to do whatever pleases her, be it the death of Henry Vane or his marriage to a non-threatening Infanta. She finds consolation in her manipulations. As part of her game she refuses to see Charles for some days as a means of increasing his desire but, driven by an ulterior motive, she pays him a visit, as the text shows ironically:

Und wie sollte der König von Gottes Gnaden, in dessen kindische Hand ein bethörtes Volk das Recht über Leben und Tod seiner sogenannten Unterthanen gelegt, wie sollte der König den Schmeicheleien seiner Geliebten widerstehen können? (3: 87)

And how should the King, appointed by the grace of God, in whose childish hands a beguiled populace had placed the right to decide over the life and death of his so-called subjects, how should the King have resisted the flattery of his mistress?

Barbara’s control over Charles is such that, as a matter of principle, she insists that he signs the death warrant of Edward’s father, Henry Vane. On his return from exile in France, Charles II had granted amnesty to his father’s enemies but he revokes this decree in order to please his mistress. Barbara’s decision in favour of Henry Vane’s death is based on her hurt pride. While the whole court pays tribute to Charles’s mistress, Chancellor Hyde, the second most powerful man after the King, does not acknowledge her. This irks her and she seeks revenge. She mocks the sombre Lord Williams who, as Hyde’s delegate, is on a mission to spare Henry Vane’s life by courting her. Barbara sardonically says of this social ineptitude that it is indeed a corrupt world, when a virtuous Lord of the court has to pay homage to the depraved and profligate mistress of the King, and by suggesting that he should cry while she laughs (3: 74).

To satisfy her ego and in order to punish Hyde for his refusal to pay homage to her earlier, Barbara now insists that he should come personally to ask for the favour of saving Henry Vane’s life. Barbara has also promised Aphra to use her influence positively on Henry Vane’s behalf. Even the ‘powerful’ General Monk (commissioned by his bribe-hungry wife) strives for an audience in Barbara’s boudoir. However Monk, in contrast to Hyde and Aphra, and in the disguise of seeking her support to punish any rebelling republicans, advocates Vane’s death warrant. Monk supports his argument by pointing out that men who think are the enemy of the monarchy, since the monarchy relies on an obsequious populace (3: 61). Barbara though can see through him. She recognises his real motive (apart from Mrs Monk’s), which is the beheading of his enemy Henry Vane, with whom he had been on friendly terms during Cromwell’s rule. She astutely comments:

Die Armee will selbst nicht dem General Monk mehr unbedingt gehorchen, die Soldaten fangen an zu denken, und das ist ein sehr schlimmes Ding für die
Barbara hints at a revolt by the soldiers if they were to engage their minds instead of blindly obeying orders. This recurring theme of the general population’s acquiescence to mindless regimentation was also critiqued by Hahn-Hahn. However, in Monk’s estimation the army, just like the people, is best led as an amorphous, regimented and non-thinking mass. They unquestioningly accept governance by an unjust and biased system. This inequity in turn allows Barbara to thrive in opulence. The life of Henry Vane lies in the power and at the whim of a royal mistress, who is flattered at the prospect of entering the pages of history as decider of Vane’s fate (3: 62). When Barbara eventually finds out that Chancellor Hyde has approached the King directly on Vane’s behalf, she contravenes Hyde’s wishes and influences the King to authorise the death sentence. Even though Barbara earlier promised Aphra that she would solicit on behalf of Henry Vane’s life, she now breaks her promise to her friend. To satisfy her vanity, a man must die.

Surprisingly, Barbara’s reneging of her promise to Aphra does not appear to sever their friendship, and we are not enlightened about Aphra’s feelings over Vane’s execution and Barbara’s betrayal. Nonetheless, Barbara has exerted her power over the King and Chancellor Hyde—too bad that Henry Vane had to pay with his life to satisfy her narcissism. This is not her only influence in state affairs. Barbara’s active plotting about the King’s marriage to a woman who poses no threat to her, is depicted acerbically. It is ironic that the King’s mistress, empowered by her illegitimate social arrangement, determines that the King should marry so that the people can be ruled with legitimacy. In this her motivation is like that of the royal sycophants who, in order to maintain their own privileges, support the hierarchical scaffolding. Barbara informs Chancellor Hyde’s delegate:

Er [Charles] muß sich vermählen, und seinem Volke einen legitimen Thronerben geben, da dieses Volk einmal so albern ist, durchaus von Etwas Legitimen geknechtet werden zu wollen. (3: 75)

He [Charles] has to get married in order to present his people with a legitimate heir apparent, since these people can’t help themselves being so silly as to absolutely insist on being tyrannised by Something Legitimate.
The people have to have their idol and their fetish, an observation already made by General Monk. Established traditions uphold for the people a belief in a fairy-tale existence that is not only implemented by the King’s mistress’s manipulative involvement but also by Buckingham and Aphra, as we shall see. The hypocrisy of society, the corruption of government, the custom of arranged marriages, and the population’s apathy form links in this chain of power relations. The King is but a marionette controlled by his mistress and minions. Barbara feels confident in her hold over Charles, and even boasts to Buckingham: “Gewiß! Denn nichts befestigt die Macht einer Maitresse so sehr, als diese drückende Last einer aufgezwungenen, rechtmäßigen Gemahlin!” (3: 85) (“Certainly! As nothing secures the power of a mistress more than this oppressive burden of an enforced, lawful wife!”).

Barbara’s secure position is emphasised in the way she calculatingly plays mind games with Charles’s feelings. As a powerful mistress, she overcomes the gender problem by attaining social status due to her domination of the monarch. Her sense of being is satisfied by demanding recognition and homage from all, but particularly those of high rank. Barbara is depicted as a woman who drowns the disadvantaged role of her gender and her dissatisfaction with life in intrigue, conspiracy and revenge. As representative of a corrupt arrangement (her position as mistress to the King), she openly manipulates an inequitable social situation to her advantage with vehemence and targeted determination. She is deliciously deceitful amongst a royal entourage of sycophants.

Easy-natured Nelly is not too concerned about the issues that motivate her friends, Aphra and Barbara, to revenge. She accepts life without too many complications and expects to find a prince who will provide her with happiness. Rather than questioning, she relies on male dominance: “Die Männer sind einmal doch die Herren unseres Geschickes. Von ihnen kommt uns unser Glück!” (2: 219) (“After all men are the masters of our fate. From them comes our fortune!”). Originally Nelly mistakes Aphra and Barbara’s plan for revenge as a joke. However, upon realising her friends’ serious intent, Nelly is happily convinced to join the alliance, so long as it does not preclude the pursuit of her prince. Nelly represents those who comply readily and without too much thought. As long as their basic needs are met, they enjoy life and any additional treats are a bonus—they are the survivors and form an essential member of any ruler’s, or institution’s, flock.

The counter-caricature to this trio is depicted in Mrs Monk who is, by her own admission, very ugly. Only two things would stir a sense of amusement in her: a reference to women as “das schwache Geschlecht” (2: 90) (“the weaker sex”), and if she were to be referred to as part of the “schönen Geschlecht” (2: 90) (“fair sex”). Hidden behind a partition, Mrs Monk witnesses Aphra’s complaint about becoming merchandise if Captain Behn decides to sell her in the market place. After Aphra’s departure Mrs Monk says with glee to General Monk that she would be quite safe
from such a fate, as her unfavourable appearance would prevent the enticement of any potential purchaser. Mrs Monk bemoans being a woman for different reasons from Aphra. While Aphra, happy as a woman, desires the same rights for women as men, Mrs Monk derides being a woman outright (2: 91). Publicly, General Monk is portrayed as powerful. He is in charge of the English army and has been victorious, and Charles can ill afford to alienate either the man or his cohorts. Indeed, Monk considers Charles to be a puppet (2: 85). This rock solid and unconquerable general with his iron will holds England’s fate in the palm of his hand (2: 80). Monk is depicted as a person of omnipotence, afraid of neither republican nor monarch.

However, in a very humorous surprise this exterior projection is shattered when his wife, Lady Monk, confronts him. The fearless general is in trepidation of her and, if he dares to question her, her “Imperator”-look comes crushing down on him (2: 99). When she was single she had caught Monk unawares and blackmailed him (by threatening to publicly denounce him) into marriage (2: 92). Being astute, she has assumed control over her husband for her advice and political acumen surpasses that of his generals. General Monk is in awe of Mrs Monk’s penetratingly cunning mind, and he believes that she is not only the “überlegenste” (2: 98) (“most clever”) woman in England but in the whole world. Not surprisingly, the chapter of the novel dealing with Mrs Monk is titled: “The Real Queen of the Real King of England” (2: 90). Knowledge of her power is widespread. Motivated by material gain she uses her authority and is able to negotiate high bribes without any scruples. Even Charles needed her support for his return to England and persuaded her with “one million” and diamonds of the purest clarity (2: 87), while those who had opposed Charles’s return the loudest receive a favourable response by paying her a double bribe (2: 112).

The depiction of the General and Lady Monk constellation amusingly incites the adage that behind every powerful man is, but in this instance, a much more powerful woman. Juxtaposing the young and attractive beauties Aphra, Barbara, Nelly, Sara and Imoinda with ungainly and fearful looking Mrs Monk, Mühlbach didactically emphasises that good looks alone are no guarantee for success in life. Instead, the attributes of purpose, astuteness, cunning and ruthlessness provide power that is not reliant on physical features. Mrs Monk depicts a very interesting and, perhaps from a Romantic perspective, unusual character. Apart from the characterisation of those women who apply positive social survival strategies in institutional oppression, those who are sensitive, or who become resigned when confronted with unjust practises, have less chance of survival, as depicted in the characterisations of Sara and black Imoinda.

9.1.3 **The role of women—the non-survivors**

There is no racial distinction in the treatment of women, since both black and white men are shown to treat women as inferior beings. Black women, like their white sisters, do not hold equal rights. This is evident when the old African King desires Imoinda. Without soliciting Imoinda’s affection,
he abducts her into his harem, disregarding the fact that she loves Oronooko (1: 70). There she is kept like a prisoner and watched over by eunuchs. This tyranny is the privilege of the King. The monarch rules with omnipotent fist, like his white counterparts in Europe. The ‘noble savage’ Oronooko, too, reveals his belittling of women: “Sind Eure weißen Völker Weiber, daß sie vor Gespenstern zittern und sich in den Staub werfen, statt sich wie der Leu empor zu sträuben?” (1: 56) (“Are you white people like women, that they are afraid of ghosts and throw themselves into the dust, instead of resisting like a lion?”). Oronooko seems to display less regard for women than Bannister (who, albeit deceitfully, vies for love favours from Aphra). Oronooko claims, quoting the black people’s Great Spirit, what is embedded in Lutheran doctrine: 104 “ich habe die Frauen geschaffen, daß sie gehorsam sind” (1: 179) (“I have created women to be obedient”). Oronooko, like the old King, dominates women.

He disregards the possibility that women may possess any kind of courage, he considers them as weak and fearful beings. This is particularly insensitive since he is aware of Imoinda’s great courage. She valiantly fled the harem, where she could have been a queen, boarded a French ship, offered herself for sale to be with Oronooko (1: 96). Imoinda’s free spirit motivates her not to accept what destiny brings. After Oronooko’s death she could have lived on the plantation in bondage and accepted her fate, perhaps in similar fashion to that of some of the women of the English court who have little choice and bow to etiquette. Instead she jumped into the flames to die with tortured Oronooko rather than submit to the tyranny of Bannister’s rule (1: 224).

Another woman who will not bow to her fate, as determined by men, is Sara. The despicable part that Father Matthews plays in her abduction is discussed above. When Charles experiences a tinge of guilt about Sara’s suicide, Matthews abets him by affirming that, though Charles had abandoned Sara after swearing faithfulness to her, he is not guilty of her death (2: 27). To pacify Charles’s slightly remorseful conscience further, Matthews evokes the image of a limb, in connection with Sara, which represents a dispensable part in the whole scheme of Charles’s diversions. Matthews declares that the Holy Scriptures order the purging of an annoying limb and that Sara, becoming such due to her affection for Charles, had to be eliminated:

Es steht geschrieben: hütet Euch, daß Ihr kein Aergerniß gebet! sagte der Pater mit frommen Händefalten. So Euch ein Glied ärgert, so hauet es ab, und werft es von Euch! Diese Sara war ein Glied, welches Euch ärgerte, Ihr mußtet es also von Euch werfen! Die heilige Schrift selber befehlt es! (2: 27)

It is written: beware so not to cause offence! said the father with piously folded hands. If a limb were to annoy you, you would have to chop it off, and throw it

104 “God created woman’s body to keep a man company” (Luther 327).
from you! This Sara was a limb, which annoyed you, so you had to throw it away from you! The Holy Scripture itself commands!

It is evident that Charles’s and Matthews’s motive in ridding the future King of his mistress was not the nature of the illegitimate arrangement, but Sara’s devotion. She did not play the role of a mistress. Her love for Charles blinded her to his real intent of keeping her as a briefly pleasing object of his fickle desires. Unlike Barbara, who calculatingly assumes control over Charles, Sara’s true feelings become a liability. Therefore Matthews ungraciously and ruthlessly removes her. In my reading, the characterisation of used, abused and betrayed Sara alludes to the fate of the people of England or Prussia or, indeed, any land that is governed by despotic rule. Sara’s innocence and sheltered background make her an easy target for the manipulations of cunning Matthews. Sara’s fate most clearly represents that of the downtrodden masses. They too have been wooed, betrayed and discarded. While Sara drowns herself in the river, the populace, in what seems like an analogy, drown their sorrow in inebriating drink.

Aus den nüchternen, besonnenen und überlegenden Republikanern wurden jetzt trunkene, weinberauschte, kindisch lallende Unterthanen, welche in Strömen Weins ihre Beschämung und ihre Demüthigung hinuterspülten, und sich dabei bemühten, sich selber und der Welt weiß zu machen, daß sie mit diesen wilden Festgelagen die Rückkehr ihres Königs feierten, und zu seiner Ehre von einem Bachanal [sic] zum andern taumelten. (2: 290-91)

From the sober, sensible and considered republicans they became now inebriated, wine-intoxicated, childishly blabbering subjects, who washed down with gallons of wine their shame and humiliation while at the same time trying to convince themselves and the world that they celebrated with these wild feasts the return of their King and that they staggered in his honour from one bacchanal to the other.

Without any other guidance they drowned their “bittere Enttäuschung” (2: 289) (“bitter disappointment”) in oblivion. In manipulative hands or leadership, the population and the Saras in a social system are doomed. Sensitive Sara and other easily exploited types of people represent a necessary, compliant part of an oppressed populace. The divergence of subdued characters, like Sara and Katherina versus domineering women, like Barbara and Mrs Monk, shows that in order to survive in a patriarchy, cunning manipulation seems to be necessary. Perhaps Mühlbach is saying, women take note, if you are pliable and trying to please, men have no respect for you, though there are also other ways of female survival and accomplishment, as depicted in our heroine.
9.2 Aphra’s personal actions

9.2.1 Youth

In Surinam, sixteen-year old Aphra is a romantic heroine in a style reminiscent of Hahn-Hahn’s Faustine. She combines the attributes of a naïve child and a full-blooded woman with a bold streak of independence:

In jenem Moment ein liebliches, zartes Kind, war sie in diesem ein volles, glühendes Weib, das mit seiner Lebenskraft und seiner Lebensgluth dem Schicksal und dem Unglück kühn sich entgegenzustellen schien. (1: 4)

In one moment she was a lovely, delicate child and in the next a full, passionate woman, who seemed with her vitality and energy to courageously oppose fate and misfortune.

Since Aphra’s mother is not mentioned, it would seem reasonable to presume that she (like the orphaned Faustine’s mother), is ‘respectably’ dead. Aphra displays strength, boldness, a sense of justice, self-determination, but she also possesses “jungfräuliche Schüchternheit und [ist] zugleich voll hohen weiblichen Stolzes” (1: 48-49) (“virgin-like shyness and is at the same time full of female pride”). Combining childlike naivety with ardour would appear a winning formula for narrative female representation, since Hahn-Hahn with Faustine, like other nineteenth-century writers, fashioned her heroine thus. Another parallel with Faustine is the personal stance that Aphra takes when she runs impulsively into the forest, as mentioned above. Upon realising that she has lost her way, and before her miraculous rescue by the hero Oronooko, she foretells with defiance that she will find her way: “Ich will mir selber meine Straße ziehen [. . .] nur nicht in dem sanften Geleise der Gewöhnlichkeit soll mein Lebensweg dahin ziehen!” (1: 51) (“I will make my own road [. . .] may my life’s path never move in the gentle track of ordinariness”). This self-determined exclamation reminds us of Faustine’s declaration: “never be half hearted! Always strive forward!” (HH GF 40)

Leaving her home country for exotic shores in the mid-seventeenth century had exposed this young heroine, Aphra, to an unusual experience. Such an adventure was bound to broaden her horizons which, in combination with her adolescent spontaneity, lends credibility to a youthful instability. This provides the author with a splendid licence for her fictional character and, in the genre of the Bildungsroman, allows the reader to follow the heroine’s development. Consumed by infatuation and blinded by love, Aphra misreads Oronooko’s body language and action. She assumes with an intrinsic confidence and without qualm that his furtive glances are aimed at her, and that the beautiful flowers that he presents to her black slave, Imoinda, are gathered for her (1: 61). Away from the social conformity of England, without any parental guidance and because of her
social inexperience, Aphra indulges in her love of the exotic other, represented for the reader in Oronooko, without restraints, without racial prejudice. In the enforced alterity of Surinam she fantasises about an incongruity: a white girl loves someone who, in her normal social hierarchy, is unacceptable—a black slave.\footnote{Between 1751 and 1807 the British slave trade had peaked with the transport “of more than 1.6 million Africans across the Atlantic” (Midgley 9). In 1787, seventy white women, the wives of black men, were transported back with their husbands from London to Sierra Leone (12). Aphra stayed in Surinam one hundred years earlier, when the British slave trade was in its infancy, and the occurrence of white women marrying black men would have been very rare.} By declaring her love for someone who embodies the social taboos of being an ‘other’—a Negro, an ‘inferior,’ a slave, Aphra contravenes conventions.

In a reversal of the usual colonising conventions, Aphra has even emotionally considered herself to be enslaved by love but, contrary to a master/slave relationship, she is possessed by Oronooko in a slave/slave relationship (1: 46). She pledges with passion never to love anybody else and is thus depicted (in contrast to her interaction with Imoinda) as being without racial prejudice. This presentation suggests a two-fold daringness: interracial relations and social class mixture. The two occurrences were socially unacceptable, hence the author was bold to suggest such a situation, but its depiction tantalised the readers’ reflections.\footnote{In The Magic Flute, in 1791, Mozart depicts the Moor Monostatos as wooing the imprisoned white Pamina. His attempts are, however, constantly foiled and end with Pamina’s union with her white prince, Tamino (Jacobs and Sadie 92).} To add to the dramatic effect, Aphra feels deceived when confronted by the love relationship of Oronooko and Imoinda. In her ignorance of this, she had earlier confided her love for Oroonoko to Imoinda (1: 111). As Oronooko’s lover, Imoinda possesses what Aphra can only fantasise about. Feeling deeply betrayed and enraged, Aphra threatens to hand the lovers over to Bannister (1: 104). In due course, however, Oronooko’s magnanimity persuades Aphra to set her hurt feelings aside, to fight against their common enemy, the evil Bannister, and to support Oronooko and Imoinda’s cause of freedom from slavery (1: 105).

The revelation of an appearance-and-reality theme, whereby it seemed to her that Oronooko had taken a love interest in her, brings Aphra to an abrupt awakening. In her initial fury, Aphra condemns all women as deceitful: “die Weiber sind doch alle so! Ich werde niemals wieder eine Freundin haben, denn ich werde keinem Weibe wieder vertrauen!” (1: 111) (“women are all like that! I shall never again have a girl friend, because I will never again trust a woman!”). She condemns her own sex because she feels betrayed by her friend. In time Aphra learns to value female friendship and solidarity when she forms a treaty with Barbara Palmer and Nelly Gwyn in order to achieve her goals.

Aphra’s lack of racial prejudice towards Oronooko may stem from a star-crossed attraction that considers the exotic male as a desirable love match regardless of the consequences. By contrast, in her interaction with the black female, Imoinda, she assumes an elitist attitude by maintaining her elevated social rank. Aphra, being the “Gebieterin” (1: 22) (“mistress”) initially treats her slave
Imoinda kindly, but with superiority. Her colonial attitude is exemplified when Aphra acknowledges and admires the black girl’s physical beauty but is unable to express her appreciation. Unlike the Westernised physical description of Oronooko as “Belvederische Apoll” (1: 14), Aphra cannot verbalise Imoinda’s good looks, which are described as “diese zarte, und doch zugleich üppige Gestalt, deren reizende Formen sich in nackter Schönheit dem Auge darboten” (1: 22) (“this delicate and yet at the same time voluptuous figure, whose charming form presented itself to the eye in all its naked beauty”). Aphra futilely resorts to paradoxical compliments that Englishmen would bestow on a beautiful girl, such as “white as the shining snow” or “radiant as the young morning sun” (1: 23). In my reading Aphra is confronted with the dilemma that Lévi-Strauss identified as not being able to judge “foreign cultures,” since the application of our own criteria is subjective and using the other standard “invokes the attraction (and, we should add, repulsion) of the other culture” (Waldenfels 41).

Eventually Aphra compares Imoinda’s beauty to that of the night. Here her harmless thoughts of a starry night (even though this becomes, on further pondering about her fate, “full of agonising thoughts”) is contrasted with womanly Imoinda’s perception (LM AB 1: 24). For Imoinda, the thought of night evokes sensual pleasure: “Oh, die Nächte können auch sehr schön sein, flüsterte Imoinda leise und mit einem reizenden Lächeln” (1: 24) (“O, nights can also be very pleasant, whispered Imoinda softly and with a charming smile”). Aphra’s naivety, suggested by her innocent image of the night, is again demonstrated. Imoinda shows her experience further by knowing when it is prudent to disguise her feelings. She avoids answering Aphra’s question as to whether she had ever loved someone by exclaiming: “die Liebe erblüht nur in der Freiheit!” (1: 26) (“love can only blossom in freedom!”). Had Aphra been more aware, she would have read between the lines that Imoinda had loved someone in her home country when she was free, and may thus have been more attuned to Imoinda’s and Oronooko’s secretly existing relationship.

Aphra maintains her aura of superiority when she asks her servant for consolation of her loneliness and misfortune in Surinam. Imoinda replies that she is unable to comfort her since her own fate is worse. As a slave, and in contrast to Aphra, Imoinda has lost the most sacred of human rights, her freedom (1: 25). Nevertheless the girls initially form a friendship that arises out of the bond of sharing the fate of being enslaved under Governor Bannister’s directives. The senselessness of Aphra’s class segregation and her perceived superiority is emphasised when Oronooko discloses that Imoinda “konnte eine Königin sein, aber sie zog es vor, eine Sklavin zu werden” (1: 96) (“could have been a queen, but she preferred to become a slave”). Here Mühlbach explores three issues. The first is that women, of all races, succumb to the power of love. (The white commoner Aphra intends to enslave herself to the black royal, but now enslaved, Oronooko, while the black Queen Imoinda freely chooses to become a slave.) Second, all human beings should be of equal
social standing as the fickleness of circumstances can readily reverse their status. In this they should also adapt to challenges in a positive manner, as shown in Aphra who is to reinvent herself as a woman of self-determination. Indeed, third, and as mentioned above, Möhrmann credits Mühlbach with creating in Aphra a heroine whose progression from naivety to self-asserting woman serves as an exemplary depiction of women’s emancipation (Andere 81).

In Surinam, Aphra is in the jurisdiction of Governor Bannister. The play for power between male oppressor and subjugated female emerges for the first time when Bannister acknowledges Aphra’s pretence of not sensing his presence with an “unheimliches, grausames Lächeln” (LM AB 1: 5) (“sinister, cruel smirk”). The authoritarian Bannister seeks to subdue Aphra. In retaliation, she discovers and resorts to the “Dämon der Coquetterie” (1: 116) (“demon of flirting”). Becoming aware of her inherent womanly power: “eine neue Macht war in ihr wach geworden” (1: 116) (“a new power had awakened within her”), Aphra uses it to achieve her first act of benevolence towards Oronooko. She endeavours to save his life by promising Bannister a kiss if he pronounces the slaves Oronooko and Imoinda man and wife (1: 115). Negotiating with an unfair opponent, she uses her sex appeal. Bannister is aware that he repels Aphra; with malediction he bets that in due course she will beg on her knees for his mercy (1: 133). Aphra engages in a tactic that is dangerous to her, of trying to trap Bannister in her room while a planned revolt by the slaves takes place (1: 169). Her valiantly naive plan of thinking, that she can contain a physically stronger man, is foiled when Bannister simply jumps out the window (1: 176). Ineffective as Aphra’s attempt is, with this action and her admission of love for Oronooko to Bannister, she increases her vulnerability. By contravening Bannister’s command, Aphra jeopardises her own position. Instead of taking the stance of a passive bystander, she acts. Further, in her youthful artlessness she does so on impulse, an action not commensurate with Bannister’s Machiavellian methods. Yet as the story progresses, she matures and learns to apply a wiliness in her interaction with the representatives of a governing system that is chauvinistic and ruthlessly powerful. This may serve as an inspiring example to an interested female readership.

Bannister’s prophecy, that Aphra will beg him for mercy, is realised when, after the failed slaves’ revolt, she pleads with him for a second time, on this occasion to discontinue Oronooko’s torture (1: 209). Her subsequent betrayal by Bannister, upon the realisation that she gave herself to him in vain (Oronooko’s tortures continue until he dies), becomes a turning point for Aphra. Her heart turns to stone and she now believes in a God of revenge, as for her a God of goodness does not exist (1: 240). In the same voice as Oronooko’s dying condemnation, as discussed above, Aphra expresses her resigned disappointment to Bannister:

Ja, ja, wenn man die Menschen betrachtet, wie sie heucheln, und sich einander verrathen, und sich Liebe schwören, indem sie sich meuchlings erwürgen, wie
Yes, yes, if one observes the human race, how they are hypocritical and how they betray each other, and how they swear love to each other while treacherously throttling each other, how they throw obstacles all over each others’ path while assuring that they are clearing it for one another! Ah, who would be in a position to take this seriously without going mad about it!

In her hour of despair and treachery she sees Bannister’s characteristics of brutality, hypocrisy and betrayal in all human beings who, in her perception and experience, act deceitfully to achieve what is to their advantage. Aphra is a young girl, whose moral fibre is shaped by her experiences. Witnessing the cruel torture of her envisaged lover, she intends to take revenge on all men for Oronooko’s death. The devious perfidy of Bannister and the presumed disloyalty of Imoinda exacerbate Aphra’s sense of desertion by those who died, father and pursued lover. This experience in Surinam sets the tone for the determined woman who confronts the reader in the remainder of the novel. The innocent young girl who left England some months earlier returns as a vengeful woman, whose disillusionment provides her with a motive to express her disappointment and anger in humanity. Aphra promises to fulfil the expectation of an exciting and adventure-driven, but also socially critical, heroine in the next two volumes of the novel.

9.2.2 Aphra’s subjugation by Captain Behn

Eighteenth-century Europe had witnessed a rise in philosophical thinking about individualism and an associated rise of the middle classes, which resulted in “an increasing contrast between bourgeois promises of equality for all human beings and laws that sanctioned the inequality of women” (Anderson, Susan C. 202). Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s point of view in his 1797 ideological Grundriß des Familienrechts (Fundamental Principle of the Rights of the Family) becomes evident in the characterisation of Captain Behn (Fichte 130). Fichte’s principle stipulates that a husband, as administrator of his wife’s rights, and as her natural representative in state and society, can exercise all but a “Zwangsrecht” (130) (“right of compulsion”) over her. Behn, who was the captain of the ship that had brought Aphra back from Surinam, epitomises a patriarch who is keen to retain the status quo of female suppression. During the return journey to England Behn, aware of Aphra’s inheritance, tricks her into marriage (LM AB 2: 167). Once married, his treatment of Aphra reveals itself to be worse than Bannister’s in Surinam:

“Because I [Behn] had ordered you [Aphra], never ever to appear on the street without me, because it is my earnest and stern intention, that you should only cross the threshold of this house in my company!”

Behn’s instructions to Aphra are reminiscent of Fanny Lewald’s memoirs which state that around 1830 some Prussian women were considered to be “heretics” and “criminals” (Anderson, Bonnie S., *Joyous* 32). These women were not supposed to venture outside their domicile to purchase groceries such as bread, dried fruit or processed meat, since they were expected to produce them within the confines of their home (32). On occasion, when Aphra manages to slip out of the house, Behn accuses her on her return of being “unanständig und gesetzwidrig” (LM *AB* 2: 162) (“indecent and unlawful”). In anger he threatens his wife: “Wage es nicht, dieses Zimmer zu verlassen, oder ich schlage Dich nieder!” (2: 176) (“If you dare to leave this room, I will knock you down”). In Behn’s estimation a wife has the same status as that of a servant and a slave.

This is evident when he proclaims, “Du bist ein Weib, und damit ist Deine Selbstständigkeit vernichtet, und Deine Freiheit begraben!” (2: 169) (“You are a woman, and as such your independence is annihilated and your freedom buried!”). Behn typifies the kind of man who bases the denial of his wife’s freedom on an (English) law that provides him with the authority to uphold the oppression of women. He asserts that the purpose of a woman’s existence is her labour; she is not created to think but to work. Whether or not she has a soul is irrelevant. Instead, she must have a nice body, an obedient and submissive mind and most importantly, two strong arms to work with (2: 172). Behn exceeds Fichte’s “Zwangsrecht” when he enjoys his wife’s suffering. This is demonstrated when her helplessness and trembling under his slavery (2: 175) makes him feel most proud. To Aphra’s outcry that during marital rape she feels like throttling him, he responds:

Ich wußte das sehr wohl, mein Engel, sagte ihr Gatte lachend, und ich darf sagen, daß dieses Wissen mein Glück vielleicht noch erhöhte, und ihm einen neuen Reiz verlieh! Es ist sehr pikant und romantisch, ein schönes Weib zu küssen, welches zähneknirschend in unsern Armen liegt, und welches uns verwünscht, indem es uns glücklich macht! (2: 170)

I knew this very well, my angel, said her husband laughing, and if I may say so, this knowledge perhaps heightened my happiness, and lent it a new appeal! It is very piquant and romantic to kiss a beautiful woman, who is teeth-grindingly lying in our arms and who curses us while she makes us happy.
Behn knows that his wife cannot retaliate, despite her teeth-gnashing, and that she despises him. This shows Behn's sadism to its fullest extent. The use of the adjective “piquant” shows his pleasure in inflicting pain and exerting physical power. Aphra replies appropriately, “Sie sind ein Ungeheuer!” (2: 170) (“you are a monster”). Significantly, the emotions during the act of rape are presented from both the oppressive male and the oppressed female points of view. Depicting a topic which is not generally elaborated on by means of sets of emotions, sadism and disgust, represents a new development in literary writing. Mühlbach’s incipient modern approach, like Hahn-Hahn’s (who also voiced her criticism of marital rape), is significant, all the more for its dual gender presentation. The protagonist’s furtive aspiration to break out of the domestic mould that Behn has constructed for his wife, earns Aphra the accusation of being incongruent:

Und Du verfehltest Deinen Lebensberuf, sagte ihr Gatte. Du wolltest nicht eine Hausfrau sein, welche in Küche und Keller wirkt und schafft, sondern ein Zwitterding, nicht Mann, nicht Weib, ein Wesen, welches das Antlitz eines Weibes hat, und doch die merkwürdige Prätension macht, einen Geist besitzen zu wollen, der sich über den Beruf des Weibes emporhebt. (2: 171)

And you have missed your life’s vocation, said her husband. You did not want to be a housewife, who is busy and active in kitchen and cellar, but a hermaphrodite, neither man nor woman, a being with the looks of a woman, but which yet makes the peculiar pretension to assume that it possesses a mind that can elevate itself above the occupation of a woman.

Because Aphra does not conform to conventional female roles, her husband denigrates her attempt to rise out of the domestic domain with a defiant sense of equality, by repudiating her femininity. The insult of describing Aphra as a hermaphrodite is based on what Behn considers to be ‘unnatural’ and ‘freakish’ behaviour. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, in their 1854 *Deutsches Wörterbuch* define *Zwitter*, apart from “hermaphrodite,” as “bastard” (1408), a child conceived out of wedlock. The 1811 *Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* lists *Zwitter* as a creature that possesses both male and female genitals (976). Behn’s definition is ambiguous, but what he does indicate is that being ‘hermaphrodite’ is monstrous, in line with the notions of abnormality and hysteria, discussed above, and exceeds gender definitions. He thereby deprecates his wife. Ironically, the concept of hermaphrodism also symbolises wholeness by combining both sexes so that Behn unwittingly acknowledges Aphra to be a self-sufficient being. Sara Friedrichsmeyer states that because physiological manifestations of hermaphrodism throughout history have been “extremely
rare,” “an androgynous entity has originated in the imagination” (*Androgyne 7*). According to Richard Exner, the German Romantics viewed androgyne as a way of achieving “completeness and perfection within oneself” (77). Their major appropriation of the androgyne concept was their espousal for a love of sexual opposites “as the key to individual and cosmic wholeness” (Friedrichsmeyer, *Androgyne* 62). Earthly Faust’s union with cosmic Helen may be seen in this sense as the culmination of universal wholeness (45). According to Behn, Aphra aspires to this also—to combine the physical purpose of her life with intellectual expression.

Faustine, in her conversation with Mengen, connects elements of the androgyne to the notion of genius: “Weil für mich das Genie geschlechtslos ist. Mag ein Fledermäuschen oder ein Titane schaffen—sein Genie ist mein Freund” (HH GF 230) (“Because for me genius is sexless. May a little bat or a titan create—his genius is my friend”). Heinrich von Kleist offers androgynous solutions in *Die Marquise von O* and *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*, where socially prescribed gender roles are confused. Each of his protagonists experiences a self-discovery in possessing the non-prescribed attributes of “feminine independence” and “masculine gentleness” (Exner 78). This phenomenon was debated in the early nineteenth century and was of particular relevance to Prussia, which had prided itself on “purely masculine (and military) virtues” (78). After the defeat by Napoleon, the Prussian image of masculine militancy “had undergone significant changes” (78) alluding to self-sufficient androgyne. This would have threatened the masculine establishment, epitomised in Behn, and the novel’s rejection of such a Prussian dictatorship may be detected symbolically in Aphra’s yearning for self-expressive independence:


I am woman, that is my entire misfortune, she said. They have taken everything away from us women, even the right of intellectual creation! We are only allowed to be the slaves to our men, and to bear their children, that is our duty

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107 A “quintessential ideal of perfection” that a “fusion of male and female into a single entity” creates, can be traced to “a prevalent expression of the divine” (Friedrichsmeyer, *Androgyne* 7) in primitive times. Junko Saeki states that in ancient Japan the union of male and female into an androgynous being was celebrated as possessing supernaturally powers, and that the resultant cross-dressing, as a deliberate transgression of gender boundaries, is still popular in festival performances today.
and our vocation. If we dare to express our own thoughts, own feelings, and own opinions, then the whole world screams: a sacrilege, a sacrilege! A degenerate woman! A woman, who possesses the temerity to be a thinking being, and who wants to vie with men!

Aphra’s outburst implies that potentially women had more freedom. (Liberal trends had, to a degree existed both in Prussia under Friedrich Wilhelm II, who was supportive of the arts, and in England, before Cromwell’s rigid control and after the investiture of Charles II). Having realistically assessed her own and all women’s subjugation, Aphra turns adversity into advantage: “Ich will kein Weib mehr sein, sondern ein freies, führendes, denkendes und handelndes menschliches Geschöpf!” (2: 284) (“I don’t want to be a woman anymore, instead I want to be a free, feeling, thinking and acting human creature!”). Like Faustine, Aphra: “will leben” (2: 285) (“wants to live”) as she likes. She is not defeated by being “only” a woman. Aphra bravely voices her intent to write books. This incites Behn to take her to task severely and rigidly:

Statt zu kochen, wollest Du verworrene romantische Bücher lesen, ja, ich glaube sogar, es spukte Dir zuweilen die alberne Idee im Kopfe herum, selber Bücher zu schreiben. Ha, ha, eine Frau, welche Bücher schreibt, welch ein Wahnsinn! Gott bewahre doch die Welt vor diesem neuen Unsinn und die Männer vor dieser Umkehr aller Dinge. (2: 172)

Instead of cooking, you would want to read muddled romantic novels, yes, I even believe, that at times you could be obsessed with the silly idea of writing books yourself. Ha, ha, a woman who writes books, what madness! God forbid! May He protect the world from such nonsense and men from this complete reversal of all things.

Some considered women writers to be oddities since the very act of writing contravened the housewifely roles prescribed for them (Ezell 25-26). Hyperbolic as he is, Behn epitomises oppressive and cruel men. Through him, the mid-nineteenth-century Prussian sentiment is conveyed of men who, irrespective of the feelings that women have, condemn that which they categorically oppose—female equality which includes, among other things, authorship. Behn condemns his wife’s fledgling literary ambitions in a way that mirrors a widely held opinion about seventeenth- and eighteenth-century women’s writing. He denies Aphra the personal ambition of creative expression. Fichte also commented negatively on women’s writings: on the one hand, if a woman is successful with her writing, the marital relationship with her husband is devalued and threatened (136). On the other hand, were she to be criticised for her writing, this would embitter the future of her wedded union (136). Luise Otto-Peters confirms this discouraging view by observing that
women who dared to write books that were published were often perceived as exposing and prostituting themselves (qtd. in Anderson, Bonnie S., Joyous 100-101).

Women, individually and creatively, threatened the smooth running of governing a country that ‘ideally’ consists of conforming and obedient masses. Women are much better subjugated, barefoot and pregnant. After the mid-nineteenth century, women in Germany were pressured “to fulfil their maternal obligation”, (Allen, “Mothers” 420) so as to supply the country with workers and soldiers. Towards the end of the century maternalism reached the heights of glorification, since it afforded middle-class women a status almost as enhanced as that accorded to the formally-educated male professional (Allen, “Spiritual” 323). Yet in 1848, German educator and founder of the kindergarten system, Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel, voiced his support of women’s emancipation from the mission of “passive nurturing” (322) to that of equality with men. However, the emancipatory endeavours of men like Froebel, Hippel, and writers like Mühlbach and Hahn-Hahn, were yet to achieve their full effect.

9.3 Aphra’s activism

9.3.1 Emancipatory endeavour

Disillusioned with the enslavement of her marriage, Aphra seeks to liberate herself from this legal bind by paying General Monk a petitioning visit. She believes that Monk has the authority to decree justice and to provide support for her endeavour to obtain a divorce (LM AB 2: 115). His telling authoritarian reply is that it is easier to grant a favour than justice. Aphra bravely demands the protection of her rights as an “Individuum ein Glied [. . .] dieses Volkes” (2: 117) (“individual, a member [. . .] of this populace”). She believes he is able to grant this: “Ich bin eine Tochter dieses Landes, dessen Beschützer Sie sind” (2: 117) (“I am a daughter of this land, whose protector you are”).

Aphra’s solidarity with other women is revealed not only by pleading on her own behalf, but on all women’s: “spreche ich für alle diese gemarterten, zertretenen, in den Staub geschleuderten Seelen, welche man Weiber nennt!” (2: 120) (“I speak on behalf of all the tormented souls, trampled on, and thrown in the dust, who are referred to as women!”). Aphra implores the reversal of the law that Cromwell had decreed and that denied women the ability to free themselves of marital bondage. She demands the return of dignity for women (2: 121). Monk, aware (in the farcical scenario mentioned earlier) of his wife hiding behind the room divider, and that she does not give a lapdog-barking signal (due to a lack of bribery) to approve this request, is unable to offer assistance.

Desperate but undeterred, Aphra overcomes Monk’s rejection of her appeal, and gathers strength to approach the solution to her dilemma from a different angle. She tries to reason with her husband. It is interesting that Aphra evokes nature as arbitrator of her request to obtain a just
solution to her liberation from her marriage to Captain Behn: “Sie lästern die Natur mit Ihren heiligen Gesetzen” (2: 170) (“You are blaspheming nature with your holy laws”). Aphra defends a natural state against clerical laws. The notion of a natural law had occupied Western thought since the times of the Ancient Greeks (Krieger 192). During the Renaissance the meaning of nature “provided men with a yardstick against which [social] shortcomings could be more clearly seen and evaluated” (Lowenthal 191). Towards the end of the eighteenth century, this concept was incorporated into human rights and encompassed universality, secularity, autonomy, and rationality (Vitaly 2). While at that time the implementation of these four components was not politically enforced (Klippel 268), Mühlbach empowers her protagonist to contravene, as an individual, the state’s laws restricting divorce by applying rationality to her request for autonomy.

From what we know of Captain Behn, it is not surprising that Aphra’s attempt to reason with him fails. Unmoved, he insists on being master of the house, but Aphra eventually outwits her husband by selling herself to Oroonoko (Behn is unaware of Oroonoko’s death) in exchange for her inheritance of £9340 (LM 2: 182). Since a man could sell his wife at “Woolwich” market (2: 180) with a piece of rope around her neck, this transaction (in popular belief) conformed to existing English law. Freed of her matrimonial bond, Aphra vows to finance her living from the rewards of her labour: “Die Arbeit ist das neue Evangelium, welches mich erlösen und mir Glück bringen soll!” (2: 181) (“Work is my new Gospel, that shall redeem me and bring me good fortune”). Relying neither on man, state nor religion, she aspires to independence. The fruit of Aphra’s labour aligns with (in the Greek interpretation of Evangelium) a reward for the bearer of good tidings (Universal-Lexikon 528). Aphra takes a positive step in the liberation of women and spreads a feeling of good tidings.

Aphra does bemoan to her new friends, Barbara Palmer and Nelly Gwyn, the inequity with which society and the law discriminate against women. She depicts the scenario that if women were, after years of neglect, to follow their husbands’ behaviour by being unfaithful, then society would condemn the wife for the same act that is admired in a husband. Aphra continues to say that everything, including personal dignity, has been taken from women (LM 2: 215). In Aphra’s evaluation, women are not blameless for this discrimination: “Gott hat es nicht so gewollt, aber die Thorheit der Welt, die Schwäche der Weiber und der Stolz der Männer haben es dahin gebracht” (2: 219) (“This was not God’s intention, but the folly of the world, the weakness of women and the pride of men effected this result”). Aphra, like Hahn-Hahn’s character Catherine (who blames women: “we stand by as onlookers”), puts the onus on women and men, who comprise the state and thus can influence its structure and authority, rather than on a God-like figure.

Aphra’s reason for her bold stance is motivated by her aspiration for equal rights for women. Based on her experience of abuse or abandonment by men (Bannister and Behn had brutalised her;
her father and Oronooko, by dying, had left her; and Monk was, from her point of view, unwilling to help her), she now sets out to claim rights for herself and other women. To achieve this, she willingly sacrifices all material possessions. As she does not expect to find happiness in love, she aspires to become famous. She makes it her task to popularise Oronooko’s fate. Born out of misfortune and pain, she feels (with allusions to the Romantic cult of genius) the writer’s genius awake in her (2: 267). Driven by obsession, Aphra writes ceaselessly and happily.

She aspires to become a demon against men and a sister to all oppressed women (2: 279) (fortunately she has overcome her curse against women as expressed in her interaction with Imoinda). Having completed her self-imposed mission of writing Oronooko’s life story she is, however, unable to find a publisher. The narrator assumes the voice of publisher and explains the reasons for Aphra’s literary rejection by both sexes: women are jealous of another woman’s writing and disguise their misgivings through offended virtue. Since men consider it their sole privilege to create intellectual writing, they hide their hurt pride at being outshone by a talented woman in a dismissive attitude (2: 283). Instead of resigning Aphra sets out to obtain, by any means, rights that are not naturally granted to women in her society.

Since their first meeting, the Duke of Buckingham has been smitten with Aphra. She rejected his earlier advances but realises now that she is powerless without an influential ally. Therefore she is prepared to accept him as a brother: “Aber ich werde mein Herz niemals verkaufen, sondern nur verschenken!” (2: 287) (“But I shall never sell my heart, instead I will give it away!”). She tells him that she is not going to prostitute herself, but takes the liberty to love whom she chooses, when she chooses. With this attitude Aphra, and, to a certain extent, Faustine, act in a feminist way and question the understanding of ‘everlasting love.’ Aphra aspires to independence and autonomy, and shrewdly achieves an economic self-sufficiency that is aided by influential allies. Due to Buckingham’s and Barbara’s persistent pressure, Charles grants Aphra an audience during which she reads her novel Oronooko to the court.

Instead of the usual style of debauchery, this gathering assumes an earnest tone that is expressed in its style of dress and atmosphere. As an aside, attention is drawn to Barbara, who would normally wear Bacchanalian attire, but on this occasion is dressed in “durchaus sittsamer und einfachen Kleidung” (2: 319) (“thoroughly chaste and simple attire”) of a black gown with high collar and long sleeves, prompting the observation that she looks more enticing than ever. After her trials and tribulations, Aphra succeeds in gaining attention. Her reading is well received by Charles and creates awareness of the inequity of slavery that Charles has thus far banished from his mind. Her writing is offered not only to all those who want to be in his favour but also to those to whom her work genuinely appeals. With the royal seal, she is able to publish and has achieved her goal of earning a living by her pen.
What is also evident is that no matter how talented an individual is, unless an affiliation is established with an influential ally it is very difficult to break through social barriers. In response to Mühlbach’s own experiences as a women writer Judith E. Martin observes: “to publish her writings, Mühlbach reflects on the situation of nineteenth-century women writers, suggesting that gender relations in the institutions of art had changed little in nearly two centuries” (“Luise” 592). Mühlbach thus depicts Aphra as being able to publish her work with the aid of her powerful allies. In her new role at court Aphra now adjusts her behaviour accordingly.

9.3.2  Role play
Mühlbach depicts the double bind that Goetzinger (104) refers to when *Vormärz* women conflate fact and fiction in their narratives. They express in fiction what they long for and what is denied in reality. Their heroine achieves the self-actualisation that is denied to the female author. In Aphra’s case the binary representation of her public versus her private roles, portrays issues and circumstances that appear to be what they are not. The public aura of Aphra’s personality presents her to those at the royal court in a role that is not apparent when she is alone with her private ‘reality.’ This is illustrated when she acts as the indulgent, carefree, outrageous, and bitingly satirical courtesan at the sovereign’s assembly. Yet, whenever possible, she retreats into a small Spartan chamber, away from the palace, where she lives frugally, enjoying an apparently meaningful contemplative life of reading and writing.

“Confined by social constraints at court, divided between appearance and reality, Aphra’s irreconcilable inner and outer selves” (Martin, Judith E., “Luise” 595) create in due course a torment that will inevitably contribute to a life-altering climax. This happens with her involvement in a romance that represents to her, in her corrupted outer existence, all that is untainted. It is debatable whether one of Aphra’s dichotomous personae is more real than the other. Is the real Aphra the vivacious courtesan at court, or the chaste girl in her frugal chamber? Is she a chaste girl who plays the courtesan, or is she a courtesan who plays the chaste girl? Is she neither, and instead an actor who plays both parts convincingly? Does Mühlbach portray Aphra’s ambiguity to enable the reader to create Aphra according to their liking?

Being acquainted with Aphra’s background since the beginning of the novel may suggest that a gradual development into the courtesan role occurred. Yet the reader will remember that the young Aphra in Surinam is already portrayed as “delightful, tender child” (1: 4) while at the same time being a “full, passionate woman.” This dichotomy in Aphra’s personal traits may be analysed in similar vein to Bertrand Russell’s rhetorical question: “Is there any knowledge of the world which is so certain that no reasonable [wo]man can doubt it?” (*Problems* 7). Thus the question of who is the real Aphra seems to remain ambiguous, cloaked in an ‘appearance’ and ‘reality’ theme, which presents her as an interesting heroine, full of contradictions, full of puzzles, and full of allure.
Additionally, the contrast between appearance and reality is blurred by each reader’s partiality. P.M.S. Hacker points out that any reader’s subjectivity is influenced by her own perception, experiences and cultural background (219). Aphra’s opposing attributes are bound to evoke different responses amongst the readership. However, three issues concerning Aphra’s public and private personalities arise.

First, in response to her time and society, Aphra takes action in public performance to gain independence in a male dominated society. Second, in her private role she is forced to respond to this self-inflicted action, by having to accommodate within herself that which her public role is forced to foster but which her private role seems to despise—contradictory personal behaviour. Third, society and characters like Buckingham respond jealously to Aphra’s action of partaking in their game (presenting herself in the role of a courtesan). This, in turn, produces a chain reaction of continued unnatural behaviour, which makes it very difficult to retain the purity of her inner self. Unsurprisingly, accommodating these contrary personalities in her acting and disguises results in conflict.

One year after her arrival in London, Aphra shapes her public role by continually adapting and responding to her surrounding society. London society also responds with duality in its acceptance of Aphra, who is considered to be a member of the inner circle at the court. Outwardly and openly it welcomes young and beautiful Aphra as a celebrated woman and an established author, while in private it sneeringly assumes her to be Charles’s mistress. She is publicly praised, but surreptitiously condemned: women feel overshadowed by her, while men fear her sarcasm, and their pride is hurt by her rebuttal of their romantic overtures (LM AB 3: 4). Nonetheless, Aphra has started a new phase in her life. She has determinedly buried her past—the brutal experience of life in Surinam, and her equally unhappy marriage with Behn. Disappointed with the way men have treated her, she seems to abnegate emotional involvement and now boldly subscribes to pleasure:

Sie glaubte nicht mehr, sie hoffte und liebte nicht mehr, sie verlangte vom Leben nichts mehr, als den kurzen Genuß, die rasch vorüberziehende Freude, und dann, nach dieser einen tiefen, traumlosen Schlaf, um neu gestärkt zu erwachen zu neuen Freuden und Genüssen. (3: 1)

She believed no more, she hoped and loved no more, she demanded nothing more of life but brief enjoyment, hasty passing pleasure, and then, afterwards, a deep, dreamless sleep, to awake with new strength for more festivities and pleasures.

The impression is created that Aphra indulges for enjoyment in mind-numbing activities. While her public personality enables her to survive without a husband and a steady income, her private and
inner self is dissatisfied. She thus transforms in chameleon-like fashion from “jauchzende, glühende Priesterin der Freude und der Liebe” (3: 9) (“exultant, glowing priestess of pleasure and love”) into a “heilige und keusche Priesterin der Vesta” (“holy and chaste priestess of Vesta”). As a result of her conflict with these dichotomies, she switches between the personalities required of either a cunning courtesan or a demure young girl. She was “[z]ügellos” (“licentious”) and yet “keusch, züchtig und sittsam” (3: 165) (“chaste, virtuous and decent”). As scheming courtesan, she shares accommodation with Buckingham who is her ‘dear’ friend yet, as virtuous girl, she despises him and excludes him from her other self by keeping her frugal abode secret.

Convincingly, Aphra initially presents two distinctly different personae to the reader. She performs her outer role as callous court wit with passion. In order to support this decadent life, she favours the replenishment of the empty royal treasury by suggesting an arranged marriage for Charles to Buckingham: “Laßt doch den König eine reiche Parthie machen, gebt ihm eine steinreiche Königin, die ihn zu ihrem Erben einsetzt, und für ihren frühzeitigen Tod laßt Barbara sorgen” (3: 14-15) (“Let the King make a wealthy match, give him an enormously rich Queen, who will nominate him as her heir. Then let Barbara take care of the Queen’s premature death”). After scheming, Aphra and Buckingham agree that the Portuguese Princess is a suitable match. Though actively promoting this union, Aphra paradoxically condemns it, thereby revealing her other side:

Aber sagt mir, George [Buckingham], ist dies nicht eine erbärmliche und verächtliche Welt! Eine Welt der Lüge, des Schachers und der Bosheit? Weiber werden verhandelt, wie eine Waare und aus dem heiligsten Bündniß der Menschen macht man einen Kaufkontrakt. [. . .] Geht, geht, George, es wäre zum Weinen, wenn man nicht besser thäte darüber zu lachen! (3: 18-19)

But tell me, George [Buckingham], is this not a miserable and contemptuous world! A world full of lies, of haggling and of malice? Women are being negotiated like a commodity, and out of people’s holiest alliance they make a contract of purchase. [. . .] Leave, leave, George, it is a crying matter, if it were not better advised to laugh about it!

Aphra’s standpoint is twofold. On the one hand, her inner voice condemns the tradition that treats women like merchandise only to enrich its negotiators. The Princess’s welfare and happiness do not concern the mediators who engage in this process to enhance their own personal ambitions. On the other hand, Aphra’s public voice actively augments this financial arrangement. To ensure her survival she compromises herself. The graces of the King’s minion Buckingham, and his mistress Barbara, monetarily benefit Aphra in a manner similar to that in which Charles finances his existence from the earnings of the population by establishing himself on the throne by the grace of
God. Little wonder that Aphra suggests frivolity to Buckingham in cavalier-like manner, to then break into “helles lustiges Gelächter” (3: 19) (“light, merry laughter”). This shows her desperation in realising the parallel irony of the Portuguese Princess’s situation and her own. Aphra hides her personal turmoil by satirising the clergy’s powerful role in conducting the marriage ceremony. She says to Buckingham: if the match between Charles and the Portuguese Princess succeeds, it will be without doubt God’s will, since marriages “werden im Himmel geschlossen” (3: 23) (“are concluded in heaven”). Here she draws attention to the unholy antecedent of this wedding negotiation. Aphra continues to say that naturally this ceremony will occur after all those involved in the bargaining negotiations for this marriage have reaped their rich rewards:

and when the Jew José has paid the money that you had demanded, and when the royal mistress has induced Charles Stuart to marry this Infanta, and when the priest then, thanks to the haggler José and our power over the King, blesses this sublime couple, then he [the priest] will fold his hands piously, turn his eyes towards heaven, and say: “what God joined together man must not separate!” (3: 23)

Aphra illustrates the irony of this arranged union, which is forged in chattel-like transaction for the benefit of all its negotiators (which includes Aphra), and which is particularly richly rewarding to its scheming secular brokers, who have little regard for the woman concerned. The dealers play their part, with the Church’s blessing, in a hypocritical manner and then pretend that it is God’s will. (This criticism may have been motivated by the bigamous marriages of Friedrich Wilhelm II, conducted with the Church’s blessing, as discussed above). Aphra condemns high society’s behaviour and clerical deception alike. However, by associating herself with this social clique, Aphra collaborates with those she accuses. Yet beneath her performance of displaying a scornful demeanour at court, Aphra is plagued by the battle of accommodating the inherently opposing forces of conforming to something she seems to dislike.

Here the polarities consist, on the one hand, of her sincere personal action in reproving the custom of enforced marriages (the reader will remember how she had condemned enforced marriages and pleaded for divorce legislation with General Monk). On the other hand, she fully supports the custom of arranged and enforced marriages, as in the Infanta’s case. The narrator does
point out that Aphra’s two differing natures do not reconcile, instead they rest compartmentalised side by side: “ein Dämon und ein Engel hatten Beide zugleich ihre Wohnung in diesem Busen aufgeschlagen” (3: 10) (“a demon and an angel had both simultaneously taken domicile within her bosom”).

To have an exciting and independent life Aphra has to compromise. She accepts expensive jewellery from wealthy admirers but passes these acquisitions on to less fortunate women and children (3: 162). The irony here is that she distributes the gifts in the name of her lover Edward: it would seem that she receives from the depraved to dispense under the mantle of the untainted. Perhaps she wants to redeem some of the courtly decadence. Some time later, in the same vein as a defender of wronged womanhood, she takes it upon herself, while on her appointment as spy in Holland, to right the deed of Vander Albert. The Dutchman deserted Catalina, the mother of his child, to whom he had promised matrimony, in favour of Aphra, as discussed below. The recurrent theme surfaces again: what appears to be, reveals itself yet again as that which it is not. Reality (unlike F.H. Bradley’s argument that reality “lies in the union and agreement of existence and content” (403), that is, it is rational and whole) proves itself to be inconclusive. The threefold appearance-and-reality theme is like a chain reaction that prompts the protagonist’s actions. In line with Russell’s rhetorical question regarding who can say for certain what someone’s (in this case Aphra’s), true personality is, Kant’s theory would seem germane when he suggests that the perceiver of an “appearance” will draw conclusions since “[t]he appearance depends upon the senses, but the judgment upon the understanding” (Prolegomena 45), and understanding is subjective.

Aphra’s duality causes her to reflect by sentimentally remarking to Barbara that the price that both girls paid for their enhanced social status since their adolescent years is high. Confronted with the duplicity of their lives Barbara, as dissatisfied mistress of Charles, and role-swapping Aphra are prompted to laugh with tears in their eyes (LM AB 3: 70-71). But this cannot hide their inward pain or drown the sorrows of a potentially shallow existence, as expressed by Barbara: “Wenn all dieser Flitterstaat und dieser glänzende Tand, mit dem wir uns das klappernde Gerippe des Lebens künstlich verhüllt haben, einmal abfiele, wär’s nicht grausig, Aphra?” (3: 241) (“If all this tinsel and these glittering trinkets with which we artificially conceal life’s rattling bags of bones, were to drop off, would that not be ghastly, Aphra?”).

Because Aphra is able to switch the dual elements of licentiousness and restrained behaviour, she can accommodate a close friendship with the debauched Buckingham and a love for a pure and principled Edward Vane. In this situation she precariously balances the realisation of the third quest in her life—her love for Edward. (Edward, the son of the condemned Henry Vane, had climbed into Aphra’s modest room seeking refuge from his persecutors [3: 50]. Realising his abhorrence of
Charles’s courtly indulgences, Aphra invents herself as righteous Barbara Johnson, maid to the fictitious Duchess of Buckingham [3: 147]). Aphra is fully aware of the potential repercussions that her disguised representation to Edward entails. She therefore treasures each day with him in the knowledge that it may be her last. The tension of the plot takes on melodramatic characteristics. Regretfully she would now have given anything to be the poor, orphaned Barbara Johnson that she pretended to be. Her dilemma is that she:

sich selber untreu geworden, in dieser Liebe [zu Edward] waren all ihre Principien, ihre Gelübde, ihre beschwornen Vorsätze untergegangen, sie mochte ihre Lippen nicht mehr öffnen zu Verwünschungen und Schmähungen, zu Racheschwüren und Worten des Hohns! Sie hatte allen Männern, sie hatte der ganzen Welt verziehen, weil sie den Einen gefunden, welchen sie liebte! (3: 164)

had betrayed herself; with this love [for Edward] all her principles, her vows, her sworn resolutions had perished. She did not want her lips to utter curses and vituperations, vows of revenge and words of disdain! She had forgiven all men and the whole world, because she had found the one she loved!

This love unbalances Aphra’s carefully crafted being. The conflict between her appearance and her reality is now not easily reconciled since she has become too involved with each extreme. Aphra does not declare her love for the refugee, Edward, to Barbara, even though she pleads for the life of his father, Henry Vane (3: 70-71). This suggests that Aphra is masquerading with Barbara too, concealing and perhaps protecting from her friend what she values most (the purity of her love for Edward).

Aphra plays her two roles (at court and for Edward) too convincingly. Knowing that it is impossible to combine or continue this dual existence, she plans to leave London with Edward. Alas, jealous Buckingham, having observed her transformation, discovers Aphra’s idyllic love arrangement with Edward and now insists on her company at every court festivity. Aphra knows that she is caught in her own web of deceit: “und jetzt ist das freie Weib die Sclavin ihrer eigenen Schuld!” (3: 179) (“and now the free woman is the slave of her own guilt”). This dissatisfied feeling may be the result of her indecision earlier or of playing each role with more passion than aloofness. Yet her inactive stance creates possibilities that a conventional romantic heroine would not be faced with, thereby revealing her as an interesting heroine who is prepared to take chances in life by navigating its vicissitudes. Aphra combats her dilemma with proud melodramatic defiance: “Mag das Unglück kommen, ich erwarte es! Bis dahin aber will ich glücklich sein!” (3: 183) (“May misfortune come, I am ready for it! But until it comes, I want to be happy!”). With desperate defiance she claims her right to happiness.
Buckingham reveals Aphra’s pretence to Edward in a drastic manner. Edward’s belief in the imaginary Duchess of Buckingham’s modest maid, Barbara Johnson, is shattered when he is confronted with the flippant courtesan, Aphra, at Charles’s decadent court. Edward’s love for Barbara/Aphra turns into contempt. Realising that she has lost his love she begs him to kill her: “Es ist wahr, ich habe Dich getäuscht, ich wollte mich in den Himmel einschleichen, während ich doch der Hölle angehöre!” (3: 229) (“It is true, I have deceived you, I wanted to sneak into heaven when really I belong to hell”). Unmoved by her plea, Edward leaves her with hate in his eyes and heart. The exposure of Aphra’s charade denies her what it seems she has most wanted and treasured—real love. After her disillusionment with Oronooko, Edward epitomised all that was honourable, noble and uncontaminated. Within the social constraints she was not free to choose her path in life but she had believed that she could assume the role of a modest maid while being supported as a court wit. However, confronted with the revelation of her other self to Edward, she is unable to disengage from either of her two roles, a choice imposed by the conventions of the time. She is now punished by her own ‘deceit.’ For many weeks after Edward’s desertion, Aphra is dangerously ill. When she recovers she feels that happiness and illusions have left her:

Sie hatte die Welt verachtet, und fühlte doch jetzt, daß sie ihrer Achtung nicht entbehren konnte, sie hatte der Liebe gespottet, und war ihr doch mit ihrer ganzen Lebenskraft unterlegen.—Sie hatte der Vorurtheile der Welt und Sitte gespottet, und diese hatten sich an ihr gerächt, denn von dem Vorurtheil und dem Gerede der Welt war ihr Glück und ihre Liebe gemordet worden, und die Geister, welche sie heraufbeschworen, sie hatten wider sie gezeugt, und sie gerichtet. (3: 233)

She had despised the world and yet she now felt that she could not do without its respect. She had ridiculed love and yet she had submitted to it with her whole vitality. She had ridiculed the prejudices of the world and customs, but they took their revenge on her because the prejudice and gossip of the world had murdered her happiness and love. Those spirits that she had evoked, had testified and judged against her.

Aphra has become a victim of her own making. Disillusioned, she alters her outlook on life and spitefully condemns “human kind” as “wretched” (3: 233). As a result of Edward’s rejection, she now throws herself into her court role with vehemence, playing the indulgent companion to Buckingham. She proclaims herself to be like a man, because men are callous in matters of the heart (3: 236). Here Aphra’s outburst seems ironic, though she no doubt learned through this experience, since in her plotting she has treated the Portuguese Princess in a similarly merciless manner.
Moreover, while planning her London getaway with Edward, she had received gentlemen in her other opulent court residence. She listened to her male callers’ “boring” love declarations and accepted their costly and precious gifts (though she had them distributed to those in need, as mentioned earlier) (3: 161). Not even her liaison with Edward had altered these customary visits. Also, while being involved with Edward as Barbara, the maid, she receives a marriage proposal in her role as Aphra from Count Dorset (3: 159). As noted above, Aphra plays both roles with conviction, appearing to be someone she may not be.

Edward is not without blame, however, in Aphra’s psychological damage. He is prejudicially blinded to love for his idea of love is bounded by social and institutional rules, expectations and conformities. Edward is unable to accommodate understanding and feeling beyond the scope of conventional behaviour. Now cynical, Aphra evaluates and compares her relationship with Edward to that of the pious believers in Christ. In their shared lodgings she describes to Buckingham the existence of religious worshippers who pray to a wooden cross that is carved out of a pear tree branch: “Liegen nicht die frommen Gläubigen heute in anbetender Verzückung vor dem Christus, dem Gott gewordenen Holze, der gestern noch ein Birnbaum in ihrem Garten war?” (3: 237-238) (“Are not the devout faithful lying in worshipping rapture before that Christ today, that piece of timber transformed into God, that was yesterday still a pear tree in their garden?”).

Aphra continues to say that the cross symbolises to Christians the same obedient worship with which Edward had crafted her into a wooden saint. Yet Aphra, like the pear tree branch, is imbued with nature’s instincts. She is alive with natural emotions, just as the branch sprouts shoots and leaves. However, Edward has discarded the tree branch that dared to blossom and live outside the constraints of his moralising world. Edward prefers a withered, shrivelled-up crucified saint image to Aphra’s other self, a lively full-blooded woman (3: 238). The hermeneutic of Mühlbach’s criticism is twofold and not unlike a virgin/whore dichotomy. First, because of compartmentalised morality, Edward idolises a compliant but lifeless artefact instead of a real living woman. He epitomises the patriarchal expectations of women, that is, to submit and to obey, to refrain from thinking and from active behaviour. This suggests that the free and natural vitality of life is substituted with artificial compliance and that women are restricted.

Second, the meaning of this passage also suggests that nature is more encompassing and organic than a constructed crucifix symbol that prompts obedient worship and piety. The inhibiting of natural impulses is restricting in that it promotes an apathy in life that is, however, glorified through a belief in a rewarding afterlife. Religious preaching frequently promises the poor salvation in heaven for good behaviour in adverse conditions to compensate for misery endured during their lifetimes, as in the Boetie example discussed earlier. Thus Edward’s worship of the wooden crucifix
symbolises not only a desire for the truncation of women but also the attainable glory of an afterlife. In this vein, Finney encapsulates Ludwig Feuerbach’s 1845 lecture as follows:

Christianity has distracted people from their problems on earth. In holding up the fulfilment of unfulfillable wishes as its goal, Christianity has neglected feasible human desires; in diverting attention towards the promise of a better and eternal life after death, it has discouraged people from working to improve their lives while here. (286)

Irrespective of the argument about the origin of this after-life idolisation (Feuerbach claims that it distracts people from their problems on earth, while Marx stipulates that it is human beings’ dissatisfaction with the current life), the phenomenon of afterlife worship is still prevalent long after Aphra’s pondering (LM AB 3: 286).

9.3.3 Emancipatory attainment

Recovering from her disappointment with Edward, Aphra focuses now on a new challenge. With imagination, interwoven with romance and drama, Mühlbach uses her poetic licence to embellish Aphra’s spying mission in Holland.108 Surrounded by an admiring Dutch crowd that consists of those who have come to greet this beautiful English lady, she decides that she does not need love to attain fulfilment and enjoyment in life. Instead she will satisfy her pride, being admired by others and by having an equal standing with men (LM AB 3: 254):

Man hatte sie für befähigt gehalten, diese schwierige Mission nach Holland zu übernehmen. Einem Weibe hatte man Klugheit, Besonnenheit und Verschlagenheit genug zugetraut, um das zu Stande zu bringen, woran die staatsklugen Diplomaten verzweifelten. Sie war berufen worden, um endlich dieses übermächtige Vorurtheil der Männer, welches die Frauen von jeder geistigen Berufstätigkeit entfernte, zu widerlegen, um diesen hochmächtigen Herren der Schöpfung zu beweisen, daß das Weib mit denselben Fähigkeiten, derselben Geisteskraft und Energie von der Natur ausgerüstet, und daß Gott sie nicht dazu verdammt, die gedankenlose Sklavin des Mannes zu sein, sondern daß sie das gleichberechtigte, gleichbefähigte, denkende Wesen, welches Gott an die

108 According to Woodcock there was “no romantic tale-spinning” (33) in Mrs Behn’s life while on her spying assignment in Holland. Summers discredits the Vander Albert episode as “pure fiction” (xxii) which Mrs Behn had intended to use as material for a future novel. Mühlbach refers to Behn’s biography to authenticate the Vander Albert love interest with Aphra (277-79) by quoting “Cibber’s Life of the Poets. Vol. III. p.22.” However, as mentioned above, Summers (quoting the Vander Albert/Catalina incident in “Charles Gildon’s History of the Life and Memoirs of Mrs Behn 1696; and with additions 1698, &c.”) disputes this. Todd denigrates Mrs Behn’s spying function as that of “a naive fool” (102), and Summers disregards the claim that Mrs Behn had tried to warn the King about the Dutch attack on his fleet (xxiv-xxv).
They had considered her able to take on this difficult mission in Holland. A woman was trusted to have enough intelligence, composure and deceitfulness, in order to accomplish that over which clever state diplomats despaired. She had been called upon in order to finally disprove this wanton prejudice of men that removed women from every intellectual profession, and in order to prove to these haughty lords of the creation, that the woman is equipped with the same abilities, the same greatness of mind and energy by nature. God did not condemn woman to be a thoughtless slave to man but to be a thinking being with equal rights and equal abilities, whom God placed beside man as his equal and his complement.

This narrative consideration accentuates Aphra’s ambitious aspiration for self-actualisation. She feels emancipated! Here lies an important accomplishment of Aphra’s journey; as a member of the marginalised sex she is considered equal to men. She even feels superior to the royal delegates with her diplomatic ability. In spite of her elation at this appointment, Aphra is realistic enough to comprehend that in order to survive she has to rely on means other than her physical appearance. She is fully aware that she is blessed with youth and beauty, which currently ensures the adoration of men. Were she old, with faded looks, these men, who so adore her now, would: “achtlos an ihr vorübergehen” (3: 256) (“pass her without noticing”).

Aphra has already proven herself a professional writer with Oronooko. Now with this diplomatic assignment she has the chance to fulfil a task that men are unable to accomplish. She is better than men. The probability that Charles may have chosen Aphra only as an alternative, because no man was willing to take on this challenge, does not appear to concern her. The disregard with which he treats Aphra on her return and on hearing her news, which may have prevented a great loss to England, demonstrates that Charles does not take her work as a spy seriously. Nonetheless, Aphra has briefly been considered by the King to be equal with men, for whatever ulterior motive.

Using her wit and charm, Aphra bewitches the important statesman, Vander Albert, and agrees to marry him if he will divulge to her, as a token of his true love, a state secret prior to their wedding ceremony. Aphra, clad in a heavily veiled wedding dress, hears the secret. Having now accomplished her mission, she secretly exchanges dresses with Albert’s lover, Catalina, who is then
lawfully wedded to Albert (3: 267). Here the appearance and reality motif emerges again. Albert weds someone who appears to be Aphra, but who turns out to be Catalina. Aphra accomplishes the nearly impossible task of spying for her King by discovering the Dutch plan to burn the English fleet at Chatam (sic) (3: 291).

Endangering her life, she rushes back to England to warn Charles, who, celebrating in the arms of his two mistresses Barbara and Nelly (who has found her prince at last), breaks into loud laughter at her revelation of the impending attack (3: 290). He tells her that she is a poet and as such she spices her fairy tales with piquancy (3: 292). In response to her urging of action to avert doom, Charles petulantly extends the festivities from one to two nights. Mühlbach quotes Cibber, as the source of Aphra’s repeated pleading: “Noch einmal versuchte Aphra den König andern Sinnes zu machen! Er glaubte ihr nicht! Und als sie immer noch in ihn drang, wandte er fast unwilling sich von ihr ab” (3: 293) (“Once more Aphra tried to convince the King to change his mind! He did not believe her! And when she still tried to force the issue, he almost indignantly turned away from her”). Charles forces Aphra to attend the festivities (3: 294). Resigned to the fact that the King refuses to give credence to her sensational news of an impending attack, she succumbs to a deep sadness and “aus innerer Verzweiflung zwang sie sich jetzt zu einer fieberischen, krankhaften Heiterkeit” (3: 295) (“out of an inner desperation she now forced herself into a feverish, obsessive cheerfulness”). The polarity of her reaction is reminiscent of when she, with Buckingham, plotted Charles’s marriage. The sense of satisfaction and equality that Aphra had experienced in gaining first, the appointment, and second, the state secret from the Dutch, turns into disappointed sarcasm. She contemptuously replies to Charles:

What truly does a woman understand about state intelligence and diplomacy. You should never permit a woman to occupy herself with serious matters, that is not considered to be proper for her, she is created to laugh and to amuse,—nothing else! That alone is our occupation, and I swear to you, Sir, I shall never ever concern myself with other matters.

The masquerade of this plot alludes to the historical Aphra Behn’s plays where, in The Rover, apparitions and intrigue secure the protagonist Willmore in the “noose of matrimony” (Summers 3). As noted above the modus operandi of quoting numerous historical sources suggests that Mühlbach’s research encompassed the narrative themes of the historical Mrs Behn.
Aphra is singled out as a “fallen angel” amongst the immature, sinful, and vulgar human beings at court (3: 296). She now drowns her rage in scornful defiance, and laughs and sings during the orgy to which Charles has confined her, but her soul is mournful. The laurel wreath that has been forcefully placed on her head feels like a crown of thorns that tears and makes her heart bleed (3: 296). Here the allusion to Jesus Christ is evident. When the news breaks that the whole fleet is ablaze, all eyes rest on Aphra, whose pale and noble countenance displays a proud smile of triumph. The King barely suppresses his anger. This scenario depicts the resentment that some people feel when the augury of the messenger, whose initial warning has been ignored, is proven to be correct. From now on Aphra lives for pleasure and diversion. She declines Charles’s offer to return to Holland as English ambassador to negotiate a peace treaty. She considers herself to be an independent, albeit lonely woman.

In her fourth and final quest in life Aphra “remains defiant and contemptuous” (Martin, Judith E., “Luise” 596) and finds solace and peace in her poetry, for which she has gained fame—and fame is a wonderful balm for a wounded heart (3: 303). Her prolific corpus of writing is read and she is celebrated as a popular writer. In a final triumph she finds self-fulfilment: “Sie hatte sich losgelöst von allen Vorurteilen, deshalb schwebte sie jetzt vereinsamt mit ihren von der Welt unverstandenen und geschmähten Ideen im All umher” (3: 302) (“She had broken away from all prejudices, and therefore drifted now through the universe alone, with only her ideas for company, which were not understood and thus reviled by the world”). The author hints in twofold manner at the protagonist’s anticipated, and the historical Aphra Behn’s actual, literary immortality. It also suggests that the emancipatory endeavour of fictional Aphra remains topical. Weigel proposes that “Fiction is a space in which to learn to walk, to fantasise, and to experiment in order to open up a creative way out of the tension between the limitations of the strategies and the unsuitability of the desires in the real lives of women” (“Double” 67). The endings of both Gräfin Faustine and Aphra Behn depict differing scenarios. Faustine withdraws from the world while Aphra embraces it. In their fiction the authors create heroines whose actions leave a profound and perhaps liberating effect on the reader.
Chapter 10 Conclusion

In this thesis, I explore how two nineteenth-century German women writers, Ida von Hahn-Hahn and Luise Mühlbach, protest in their novels Gräfin Faustine and Aphra Behn about the oppression of women, as well as other prescriptive social practices. The restrictive and policed intellectual environment in which they wrote gave rise to protest, activism and critical writing, in which women played a significant part. To demonstrate that it required courage to express critical ideas in the pre-1848 authoritarian, repressive and yet euphoric atmosphere, I provide a historical and socio-political background of the Vormärz, and discuss the position of women, literary traditions, and an awakening feminism.

My approach focuses on the writers’ depiction of their social reality, their “struggle against patriarchy” (Moi, Feminist 204) within personal, social and institutional power relationships. Both Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach impart the pleasure of a tale while challenging the reader to ponder the exploits and circumstances of their heroines. They express their aspirations for some liberating aspects of their real world in entertaining and thought-provoking manner and left a legacy worthy of feminist exploration.

As readers we are able to appreciate Faustine’s reflections on society, and Aphra’s exciting escapades within her adopted social circle. Hahn-Hahn condemns mindless regimentation, while Mühlbach’s resistance extends to the plight of the slaves and the failure of the majority of citizens to practice social equality. While she exposes the institutional corruption by, and exploitation of, the monarchy and the clergy, she illustrates that it results from the apathy of the silent majority. The distinction between the heroines is evident in a psychologically troubled Faustine and a more socially robust Aphra, however, both liberate themselves from a patriarchal system, in an affirmative manner akin to a symbolic transfiguration. Guided by their feminist awakening they acted against conventions, leaving a lasting legacy of their writing, “drift[ing] through the universe” no longer “alone” (LM AB 3: 302).

The rather self-centred protagonist, Faustine, has an unconventional relationship with Andlau which is both harmonious and platonic. Motivated by the binary characteristics of sexual frustration and attraction, she later enters into a conventional marriage with Mengen. In this marital arrangement she initially continues her criticism of social constructs such as education (she had earlier voiced her disapproval of a notion of everlasting love, of marital rape, and of societal regimentation), and maintains a degree of independence with her artistry. However, Mengen’s increasingly didactic endeavours contribute to a melancholy that manifests itself in her decision to leave him, and to enter a closed religious order, where she dies soon after. I see this combination of
events as a positive step to satisfy her yearning for personal liberation but it questions other scholarly interpretations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Because Hahn-Hahn uses three different narrators, and Faustine’s entry into the convent and subsequent death is told by Mengen, her motivation for taking this step is shrouded in ambiguity and thus invites a speculative interpretation. I propose that death signifies the final stage of Faustine’s self-fulfilment after experiencing spiritual harmony with Andlau, and sexual ecstasy and artistic achievement with Mengen. Having tasted some of life’s appealing offerings, she is now entering, in her words, a “transmigrat[i]on] from one form of existence to another” (HH GF 158). Incongruent and misplaced in a society not yet attuned to her feminist aspirations, I interpret Faustine’s passing as an affirmative and liberating step, because with this act, she frees herself of prescriptive norms.

Mühlbach disguises her broader feminist critique of social inequities by transforming nineteenth-century Prussia into seventeenth-century Stuart England. I base this point of view on Mühlbach’s political commentary in her correspondence with her publisher, Kühne. I thus compare the similarities of the three historical kings, Friedrich Wilhelm II, III, and IV, with fictional Charles II, and the historical Aphra Behn with Mühlbach’s fictional protagonist. I discuss three guarantees of the Prussian civil rights code as a basis to explore its abuse in the novel. As background to the monarchical corruption and oppression that is illustrated, I analyse the notion of reciprocity and systems of power that demarcate between one privileged group, that controls, and those less privileged. Mühlbach’s critique of patriarchal governance suggests that the people themselves can acquiesce passively in an enforced subjugation. The novel implies that as human beings we have agency, and that we enjoy or suffer the consequences of our own actions, or inaction.

Mühlbach’s novel transgresses a wider range of patriarchal boundaries by focusing not only on personal and social, but also on overt, institutional and political criticism. The slavery of the Negroes in Surinam and the subjugation of the general population in England are contrasted with a squandering king who, aided by an aristocratic minion and a demonic cleric, ruthlessly exploits a population that is, however, shown to contribute to its oppression. Mühlbach depicts the response to corruptive governance in courtiers and women who either successfully, and profitably, adopt survival strategies or who, as shown in the characters of Imoinda and Sara, resolve to commit suicide. By overcoming obstacles, the heroine Aphra consistently follows an agenda of fighting patriarchal injustices, on her own, and some in solidarity with other women. Due to the imposed conformity of an artificial set of beliefs, customs and conventions, Aphra is disillusioned with life, but she does rise above her circumstances to find immortality in her writing.

The broader spectrum of Mühlbach’s observations and commentary furnishes an appeal to a wider, and perhaps less elitist, audience. What distinguishes Aphra Behn from other writing of the
time is not only its contribution to literature, but also its challenge to social structures which Marx, Foucault and others were to analyse and develop in their works on systems of power. According to Foucault, some power structures are centred not on individual or class rule, but on “institutions with their architecture, their rules, and their discourses” that produce “the disciplinary individual himself [sic]” (Shumway 139). Such a system provides the environment to accommodate the majority of people, referred to by Hahn-Hahn as “most” people, and by Mühlbach, as apathetic “masses.” To effect change in such a system, a transformation of “the existing power structures” (Moi, Sexual 147) needs to occur. One approach towards achieving more equitable power transformation is alluded to in Hahn-Hahn’s disregard for blindly followed regimentation, and in Mühlbach’s appeal for personal accountability. Here my thesis highlights both authors’ analytical awareness of social power structures.

Both Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach address the crime of marital rape. Here it is significant that Mühlbach portrays the victim’s anguish as well as the perpetrator’s sadistic delight. Quoting Susan Brownmiller, Dane states that rape is a political crime since it is an expression of a patriarchal social system: “From prehistoric times to the present [. . .] rape has played a critical function. It is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in state of fear” (Dane 15). My study discusses this representation of violence against women in these two novels. In order to develop a feminist analysis of violence within a historical and psychological context, further studies of its literary representation are needed.

The common thread connecting Gräfin Faustine and Aphra Behn is the emancipatory endeavour of their main protagonists. Both writers depict what they envisage but what is not yet reality. I perceive the heroines to experience liberation instead of the double bind that women were faced with during the Vormärz: “Dem Emanzipationsappell der Romanheldinnen steht ihr Scheitern gegenüber” (Goetzinger 99) (“The appeal for emancipation by the heroines is contrasted by their failure”). The variance of the two novels is evident in the authors’ different depiction of social class, and philosophical outlook. Here I make a distinction between Hahn-Hahn’s feminism as being exclusive, conservative, and rendered from a psychological point of view, whereas Mühlbach’s feminism is inclusive, progressive, and socially aware. To the financially secure Faustine the price for achieving self-fulfilment is a certain social isolation, while the consequence of Cunigunde’s rebellious act of breaking off her engagement to Feldern, of unfulfilled longing for Faustine, is marriage to a ‘drab lad.’ Faustine takes a positive feminist step by following her convictions. Her action conflicts with the regimentation, and the marriage tradition of the society in which she lives. In Aphra Behn some characters, like Mrs Monk and Barbara, adopt patriarchal techniques to build their own power base. Aphra uses it out of necessity to achieve her personal goal to become a writer. This kind of feminism is “about power” (Lindemann 9) in contrast to Hahn-Hahn’s
psychological feminism. My findings contribute to necessary contrastive studies to extrapolate the various strands of feminism in Vormärz literary history.

I have shown that the legacy of Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach is pertinent, and suggest further exploration of certain issues. Hahn-Hahn’s progressive position is evident (apart from her stance concerning the concept of everlasting love, and the critique of societal regimentation), in her covert address of sexuality, as depicted in Faustine’s frustration, Andlau’s asexuality, and Cunigunde’s lesbianism. These topics have, to my knowledge, not been previously discussed in scholarly works about Gräfin Faustine. A further appraisal of Hahn-Hahn’s sub-textual sexual meaning in her other works may produce interesting results in view of Dane’s findings and present research on sexuality.

A systematic investigation of Mühlbach’s correspondence to Kühne in relation to the political events surrounding the late 1840s and her corresponding commentary in Aphra Behn may add another perspective to existing historical knowledge concerning the position of outspoken writers. Moreover, a comparison of Aphra Behn with its “modified” (Tönnesen, Vormärz 217) 1859 version, Charles the Second and His Court, might reveal the extent of possible pressure from the authorities and the possible resultant intellectual compliance of Mühlbach’s post-Vormärz writing. According to McClain and Kurth-Voigt, Mühlbach expressed in her novels a tendency to confirm the rights of the Prussian state for unity and leadership of nation (931), yet the meaning in Aphra Behn contradicts this sentiment. More research may yield interesting findings. I also believe that a translation of the complete Aphra Behn novel is warranted to enable a diverse exploration of Mühlbach’s social criticism by English as well as German-speaking scholars.

The reception of these two novels was diverse, however, without attracting the consequences of the prevailing censorship, the writers gained the support of their readers to voice their critique in a manner available to them, that is, in popular women’s literature. While the genre of novel-writing is not usually acknowledged to be a medium for direct social change, ideas and situations that are explored in an entertaining and thought-provoking manner may “shape attitudes” (Kontje 1) and may inspire not only thought but also action. In view of both writers’ popularity, an exploration of either novel’s influence on later writers would confirm perhaps not only the literary but also the social value of these works. Here I think not only of the attitudes of mid-nineteenth-century readers, but also of those who discovered women writers during the third wave of feminism, and those who read the 1986 edition of Gräfin Faustine. Reading the two novels I perceive the passion of the authors to convey forms of injustices, not only towards women but also of other subjugated peoples, be it the slaves or the masses. This compelled me to undertake the research for this thesis and I hope that the impetus for further research is continued.

I therefore offer this thesis as a contribution to the feminist scholarship of the Vormärz period and as a response, first, to Joeres’s observation of an absence of critical writing about nineteenth-
century German women writers and, second, to Frederiksen’s challenge to begin the task of conducting necessary and detailed research on them. I have shown that through the resistance of their heroines to, and the narrative observations of, prevailing institutional, social and personal oppression, both Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach—writing in adverse conditions—confront their readers with the existence of social injustices. The relevance of some of their criticism is still evident in present times. Herein lies the saliency of their literary contribution. I believe that these novels form an important contribution to the genealogy of feminist writing and the literary history of women’s writing today.
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