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Condemnation of Violence in the Literature of Two 19th Century German Female Writers

ABSTRACT

In this paper I am examining how the two nineteenth century female German writers Gräfin Ida von Hahn-Hahn and Luise Mühlbach addressed a personal form of violence, that of marital rape, in their literature. The two authors were ahead of their time by pointing their readers' attention to a social problem that has only been dealt with overtly by society and the legal system in recent times. The novels' significance is evident by the authors' expression of social consciousness and the innuendo for women to develop skills to resolve imposed conflicts in an inequitable society through the example of their free spirited heroines. My focus is on five themes, first the two writers, and second positioning the act of marital rape in Western society. Third I provide an overview of the historical background and position of women in mid-nineteenth century Germany. Fourth I discuss the issue of marital rape depicted in *Gräfin Faustine* (1841) by Gräfin Ida von Hahn-Hahn and *Aphra Behn* (1849) by Luise Mühlbach. Fifth I render the perceived legacy of these two novels.

BIOGRAPHY

Herlinde Cayzer is a postgraduate student in the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies at the University of Queensland. She is researching forms of social criticism in the mid-nineteenth century narratives *Gräfin Faustine* by Gräfin Ida von Hahn-Hahn, and *Aphra Behn* by Luise Mühlbach.

CONDEMNATION OF VIOLENCE IN THE LITERATURE OF TWO 19TH CENTURY GERMAN FEMALE WRITERS

BIOGRAPHY OF THE TWO WRITERS

Gräfin Ida von Hahn-Hahn and Luise Mühlbach share age, locality, career and success. They were born within a relatively short time span of nine years. Ida von Hahn (1805–1880) was born in Tressow (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), of an old noble family.ⁱ Ida enjoyed the privileged upbringing of the German aristocracy but received the ‘most rudimentary’ education,ⁱⁱ yet it is reported that ‘she excelled’ in the little tuition she did receive.ⁱⁱⁱ Because of her ability to narrate stories with suspense and in lively manner at a very young age, Ida was often called ‘Scheherezade.’^{iv} 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,^v for this reason adding the hyphenated second Hahn. The incompatibility of the couple soon became evident and her husband divorced her after three years, before the birth of their mentally retarded daughter Antonie in 1829.^{vi}

After the divorce Ida lived with Baron Adolf von Bystram (1798–1848) in an arrangement that was unconventional for the time. They travelled throughout Europe and the Orient, an experience recorded in her successful travelogues. With his encouragement she established herself as a popular writer. From 1839 to 1851 Ida was the most widely read and known female writer in Germany, with works translated into English, French,^{vii} and Russian.^{viii} Some of her novels had a print run of four thousand, a large number in the mid 19th century, when the average was between six hundred and one thousand.^{ix} Hahn-Hahn published forty-eight novels, books of poetry and travelogues of which twenty-one predate her conversion to Catholicism.^x According to Richard M. Meyer, aristocratic Hahn-Hahn felt that culture and beauty were threatened after the 1848 Revolution.^{xi} The death of Bystram in June of that year, and the earlier publication of Fanny Lewald’s *Diogenes*, a parody of her *oeuvre*, deepened her depression.^{xii} After the adoption of her new Catholic faith in 1850, Hahn-Hahn founded, and lived until her death, in the convent Women of the Good Shepherd, without taking the order’s vows.^{xiii}

The attitude of Hahn-Hahn’s *Gräfin Faustine*’s eponymous heroine 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, should not be ignored.

Luise Mühlbach (1814–1873), pseudonym for Clara Mundt, nee Müller, was born in Neubrandenburg (Mecklenburg). As daughter of the local mayor, Luise was ‘carefully educated.’^{xiv} 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’^{xv} 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: ‘no-one in the world will be able to keep us back.’^{xvi} 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.^{xvii}

In Berlin ‘liberal writers and critics’^{xviii} frequented Mühlbach’s literary salon in which ‘links had been established between the Romantic and the later representatives of the bourgeois realism in literature. One could encounter here all literary trends ...’^{xix} Female writers such as Bettina von Arnim, Luise Aston,^{xx} Ida von Hahn-Hahn and Fanny Lewald visited.^{xxi} Mühlbach had social intercourse with the ‘highest circles.’^{xxii} With Mundt’s support Mühlbach became ‘a successful and prolific author of social and historical novels, and travelogues’^{xxiii} with emancipatory tendencies.^{xxiv} Her novels contained ‘socially critical approaches, addressed issues such a free love, the emancipation of women and the ill-treatment of wives.’^{xxv} She ‘spotted a market for historical novels and successfully targeted her bourgeois readership.’^{xxvi} After the death of her husband in 1861, Mühlbach supported their two daughters entirely with her writing.

According to Brent O. Peterson, Mühlbach was ‘the single most popular German author’ between 1849 and 1888.^{xxvii} For two years, both Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach vied closely for popularity amongst their readership and enjoyed immense popularity throughout German-speaking countries. Hahn-Hahn was a staunch aristocrat in contrast to the democratic stance taken by Mühlbach. What they have in common, apart from various forms of social criticism in the two novels *Gräfin Faustine* and *Aphra Behn*, is that they both deplore the custom of enforced conjugal rights by reproducing their heroines’ agony.

WRITING WOMEN AND THE ENDEAVOUR BY SOME TO SHAPE SOCIAL ATTITUDES

In the numerous mid-nineteenth-century German states, male empowered political and religious governance upheld the historical marginalisation of women. The policed climate of press and book restrictions that was implemented in 1819 continued and the persecution of female and male dissenters and censorship of outspoken publications prevailed. During this censorship some women writers were motivated to engage either through literature or by deed in social, political and emancipatory activism. The police coined women's political participation 'democratic intrigues.'^{xxviii} Because of her radical attitude towards bourgeois morality and her personal stance of love outside the confines of marriage—'I have always remained true to free living and free loving'^{xxix}—Louise Aston was expelled from Berlin in 1846^{xxx} and remained in Berlin police chief Hinckeldey's active 'secret files.'^{xxxi} In the same year the authorities confiscated Louise Otto's *Schloß und Fabrik*.^{xxxii} While Otto was considered to be a Christian, and a 'courageous, patriotic German girl,'^{xxxiii} she was subject to persecution until 1858.^{xxxiv}

In this milieu of activism a feminine writing tradition sought to break out of established masculine writing modes. This is evident in the endeavour of some women writers who expressed forms of social criticism in their fiction before, and during the *Vormärz* (pre-March). Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach demonstrate an emergence in their narrative of 'pronounced feminist consciousness.'^{xxxv} In Hilde Lindemann's view feminism 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.'^{xxxvi} In other words, 'it's about power.'^{xxxvii} Todd Kontje states that the narratives of the 'feminists in the *Vormärz*' share a concern for women's rights, and thus for some power.^{xxxviii} Contrary to the general social mores of the period, women writers like Hahn-Hahn, 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.'^{xxxix}

According to Elke Frederiksen and Elizabeth Ametsbichler, these 'feminist'^{xl} authors sought in their writing 'to address social injustice, to question and reinterpret women's roles, and to break directly into the public sphere.'^{xli} 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?'^{xlii} 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.'^{xliii}

Scholars comment on the relationship of how historical reality is expressed in literary fiction. Literature reflects and engages with a wider social and moral context of its time. Rita Felski suggests that it encompasses a plurality that ranges from the historical, ethical, political, to feminist, thus approximating a universality that 'speaks to a common, shared humanity.'^{xliv} Yet, as Renate Möhrmann points out female readership, who usually left school aged thirteen, generally lacked a 'middle-class intellectual' interest.^{xlv} Some *Vormärz* authors realised this and purposely developed strategies to educate receptive women readers, as for example Louise Otto-Peters:

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.^{xlvi}

Mühlbach too saw her task as writer of historical fiction to convey her social and political observations to her readers: '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 understanding to the tendencies of political movements, and connect the facts of history with the events of actual life.'^{xlvii} I believe that in 1848 Mühlbach wanted to bring contemporary inequities to the attention of the people. Readers can be influenced by novels that they can understand and relate to. This is especially the case when the literary context reflects their situation in society. Kontje asserts that 'often-marginalised or -trivialised novels by German women played a central role in shaping attitudes toward class, gender, and the nation.'^{xlviii} It would seem plausible that if the works of an author such as Hahn-Hahn or Mühlbach are widely read, their meaning will be absorbed by some of their readers, generate debate, challenge public attitudes, and foreshadow social changes and law making.

I propose that Ida von Hahn-Hahn and Luise Mühlbach addressed social injustices by reproducing realities and forms of liberation from them in their novels *Gräfin Faustine* and *Aphra Behn*. This is evident in their criticism

of, and their liberation from a concept of everlasting love and the institution of marriage. Hahn-Hahn criticises systems of education and regimentation, and Mühlbach targets 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' equal opportunity.^{lix} 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.

SEXUAL DOMINANCE WITHIN MARRIAGE

Carole Pateman points out that the original social contract grants civil freedom that is protected by the state without taking women into consideration. The granted freedom constitutes a masculine attribute that is based 'upon patriarchal right.'ⁱ Men used the sexual contract as a vehicle to transform their patriarchal right over women^{li} who do not have access to 'civil life on exactly the same footing as their husbands.'^{lii} Humboldt's view of women's inferiority was dominant in nineteenth-century Germany. Fichte noted that 'women are submitted to their parents only conditionally, but to their husbands unconditionally.'^{liiii} Ursula 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.'^{liiv} Unsurprisingly, being attributed with intrinsic weakness and sensuality disadvantaged women. As women were still subject to 'sexual guardianship'^{liv} in marriage, 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.^{lvi} 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,^{lvii} the institution of marriage was considered to be the 'basic principle of civil order.'^{lviii} As a small social unit, it mirrored in miniature the 'ruler-subject relationship' of the German states.^{lix} Referring to Kant, Pateman cites that since a wife is devoid of being a 'civil personality,'^{lix} she is her husband's possession, a view propounded by Rousseau who maintained that the husbands' right over their wives ensures civil order.^{lxi} Upon marriage a husband gains the right of sexual access or conjugal rights to his wife's body.^{lxii} Referring to Fichte, Frischmann states that 'The wife's refusal of her so-called "conjugal duty" ... is a rightful ground for divorce.'^{lxiii}

Gesa Dane evaluates the legal position of women according to the General Landright (ALR): 'The physical weakness [of women] was supposed to correspond to lesser mind capability and lower ability for intellectual and rational abilities. At the same time it was presumed that the woman was endowed with a distinctive sensuality.'^{lxiv} The ALR recognised rape as a punishable crime, however, separating the criminal act into being physical as opposed to being cerebral does not advance the victim's right to justice. Considered to be a 'crime of the flesh'^{lxv} in contrast to a crime of 'mind and intellect' the act of rape is associated with being 'human and sinful.'^{lxvi} The gender polarity that considered 'the male sex' to be 'entirely active' and to engage the mind while 'the female sex' was 'entirely passive' and physical,^{lxvii} 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. Marital rape arises, amongst other reasons, from a notion that a wife or partner must be dominated so as to confirm the husband's or partner's superiority. This mindset is historically deeply entrenched. 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.'^{lxviii}

Dane states that with regard to the 'sexual self-determination of women as a legally protected right,' which is a modern view that was only reformed legally in the late twentieth century, that '[i]f one looks back in history, one must visualise the historically foreign juridical constellations.'^{lxix} 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. Long before the situation that denied women sexual self-determination was addressed legally, the writers voiced their outrage through their heroines' torment as some women were subjected to violent abuse in the form of marital rape without social or legal recourse.

MARITAL RAPE DEPICTED IN THE NARRATIVES BY HAHN-HAHN AND MÜHLBACH

The protagonists Faustine and Aphra depict the anguish of marital rape, an issue, as Dane points out, that has thus far been overlooked in the literary analysis of *Gräfin Faustine*:

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.^{lxx}

Not only from a feminist, but also from a legal point of view, Hahn-Hahn and Mühlbach were acting courageously by publishing for possible debate, and also personal persecution, the important issue of physical violence towards women within the domestic sphere. How did the two authors write about a taboo subject that is not mentioned in the novels of “polite” society? Faustine describes her experience of tormented sexual intercourse in her marriage to her first husband Obernau:

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.^{lxxi}

Fichte presented the dichotomous situation of women in the ‘Law of Marriage’ by observing on the one hand that ‘a woman loses her personality and her whole dignity when she is compelled to submit herself to the sexual lust of a man without love,’^{lxxii} and on the other that she ‘makes herself contemptible by surrendering herself without love.’^{lxxiii} While he seems to sympathise with woman who is subjected to her husband, he offers no solution other than pointing out that she feels degraded and possibly guilty. The only way that Faustine, in the above passage, can maintain her sanity and dignity in the face of enforced sexual intercourse is to consider herself to be a marketable merchandise. Her husband purchases a commodity (Faustine) therefore he is entitled to assume his legal and conjugal 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 hit or kicked her, his forceful invasion of Faustine’s body represents an act of violence, of rape. Whether in marriage or otherwise, ‘rape is a crime; for it is a most brutal attack upon the personality of a woman, and hence upon all her rights!’^{lxxiv} Even though marital rape was not legally addressed by then valid laws, the author’s ability to evoke sympathy for protagonist’s physical violation may have caused the reader to react with indignation.

Faustine bemoans with irony her situation as a wife in a marriage that incarcerates her as a bonded woman whose suffering is sanctioned by society:

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.^{lxxv}

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 maltreatment. Her last words, ‘and then it doesn’t matter,’ discount the possibility that any person would have sympathised with the despair that she experienced. Faustine had no recourse to turn to anybody for comfort or advice. Her twin sister, Adele, submerged in marital bliss, lacked the understanding to empathise. Her aunt had forsaken her, and law and church destined her to her misery. Faustine laments to her female friend Cunigunde: ‘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.’^{lxxvi} Using Cunigunde’s character as narrative device, Hahn-Hahn alerts the female reader, in somewhat oblique manner, about an intimate and unspoken issue.

Faustine internalised her torment and resignedly endured her husband’s sexual self-satisfaction: ‘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.’^{lxxvii} Because of Obernau’s coarseness, Faustine 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 might have enjoyed sexual intercourse. The spaced out ‘with’ and ‘within’ signify that even though they were legally and clerically bound together, during the sex act they remained separate entities—one powerful, the other subjugated. While Obernau lacks understanding of his inexperienced bride, he demonstrates his empowerment through his self-satisfying sexual act. He obtains his conjugal rights whilst being aware of his wife’s pain, misery, and repulsion. Fichte had stipulated that ‘a man who has not control over himself is a wild beast, and society, not being able to tame him, must not tolerate him in its midst. It evinces, moreover, an unlimited contempt for, and neglect of, all human rights.’^{lxxviii} However, society, represented by the state, ‘abandons all claims to consider the woman as a

legal person' in marriage.^{lxxix}

In reaction to Obernau's brutality Faustine finds the act shameful and becomes emotionally and physically withdrawn. Because of this socially-sanctioned marital rape, Faustine feels forlorn and condemned to a life of emotional suffering. Her feeling of self-worth is severely diminished and in seclusion she accepts her distress. As a legalised object of her husband's desire, she feels degraded by submitting to him:

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?^{lxxx}

Reflecting on her contented sister's fate, Faustine concludes that Adele would have made any man happy '—and this is at times praised in a girl! Well, I never deserved it—'^{lxxxix} 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 subsequent self-denial. The emphasis on the physicality of this traditional union underscores the mental anguish experienced by the protagonist. The narrative shows how Faustine will find the strength to leave this marriage.

Hahn-Hahn discusses the incident of forced sexual relations also in her novel *Der Rechte*. Vinzenze's mother advises her daughter: '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.'^{lxxxii} 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, discussed in polite society or mentioned by the matriarchs.

Mühlbach's novel *Aphra Behn* is based on the life of the seventeenth-century English writer. Fichte's point of view in his 1797 ideological *Fundamental Principle of the Rights of the Family* becomes evident in the characterisation of Captain Behn. 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 'right of compulsion' over her.^{lxxxiii} Behn treats Aphra like a servant and slave: 'I had ordered you never 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.'^{lxxxiv} His menace continues: 'You are a woman, and as such your independence is annihilated and your freedom buried!'^{lxxxv} Behn 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.^{lxxxvi} Behn exceeds Fichte's 'right of compulsion' by enjoying his wife's suffering; Aphra graphically expresses her disgust and despair during enforced conjugal intercourse:

All that I have endured, all that I have suffered in this year of my bondage! You [Behn] knew that I did not love you, and yet you forced me to suffer your intimacies! Know that a thousand times I cursed you while your kisses burned on my lips and that while lying pale and cold in your embrace, I had at times an urge that I would have to strangle you with these my hands in order to avenge the ignominy to which you subjected me.^{lxxxvii}

Aphra leaves little doubt about her agony during this marital ordeal and the author leaves little doubt about the topic. Behn replies:

I [Behn] 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.^{lxxxviii}

Behn knows that his wife cannot retaliate, despite her teeth-gnashing, and that she despises him. This shows Behn's sadism. His use of the adjective 'piquant' shows his pleasure in inflicting pain and exerting physical power. Aphra replies appropriately: 'you are a monster.'^{lxviii} Significantly, the emotions during the act of rape are presented from both points of view: the oppressed female and the oppressive male. As stated above Fichte acknowledges that '[t]he conception of marriage involves the most unlimited subjection of the woman to the will of the husband; not from legal, but from moral reasons.'^{xc} However, he stipulates also that: 'She must subject herself for the sake of her own honour. The woman does not belong to herself, but to the man.'^{xcii} Depicting a topic, even in a few concise sentences, that is neither considered being immoral nor generally elaborated on, by means of sets of emotions, disgust and sadism, Mühlbach presents a new development in literary writing. Her modern approach, like Hahn-Hahn's, is significant, all the more for its dual gender presentation. As is the case with *Faustine*, the author depicts a way for the heroine to disengage herself from this marriage. What is the legacy of these two novels?

THE TWO WRITERS' LEGACIES

The significance of *Gräfin Faustine* and *Aphra Behn* is evident by the authors' ability to evoke a sense of social consciousness and in the innuendo for women to develop skills to resolve imposed conflicts in an inequitable situation and society through the example of their free spirited heroines. Referring specifically to the conjugal rights situation depicted in Hahn-Hahn's *Gräfin Faustine*, Dane attributes the amendments to existing laws to literature: '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.'^{xcii} Dane commends Hahn-Hahn for her modern approach:

In view of the question, 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.^{xciii}

In an environment that may seem unfamiliar today both Hahn-Hahn's and Mühlbach defied the status quo. Here the social and political restrictions of the time and the insignificance that was attributed to the position of women in general must not be forgotten. Long before the situation that denied women sexual self-determination was addressed legally, the writers voiced their concerns. Ida von Hahn-Hahn's *Gräfin Faustine* and Luise Mühlbach's *Aphra Behn* offer a reflection of their times. They succinctly depict a painful but socially accepted incident that happened within the private sphere. I suggest that the two writers' social criticism and their specific albeit brief focus on marital rape, assisted in creating an awareness of domestic violence and gender injustice. Due to their popularity the ideology of their writing in all probability captivated some readers and their legacy can be perceived herein.

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