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# Why Weren't They Feminists?

## Parisian Noble Women and the Campaigns for Women's Rights in France, 1880–1914

Elizabeth C. Macknight

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

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**ABSTRACT** This article examines the responses of Parisian noble women to campaigns for women's rights in France of the early Third Republic. The methodology of the article is based on the works of Pierre Bourdieu. His concept of the habitus is used to analyse the effects of class and gender in noble women's attitudes to French feminisms before the First World War. The conditioning of Parisian noble women explains their resistance, indeed often outspoken opposition, to feminists' demands. These female aristocrats supported their own oppression within a social order governed by the state, the scientific and medical establishments, the expectations of family, and the Catholic Church of the time.

**KEY WORDS** Bourdieu ♦ feminisms ♦ France ♦ 19th-century Europe ♦ noble women ♦ women's emancipation movements

A recent volume of essays has refined and added complexity to our understanding of women's emancipation movements in 19th-century Europe. Paletschek and Pietrow-Ennker argue: 'In the nineteenth century all European states were confronted by the challenges of economic, social, and political modernization. The European women's movements were an important part of this process of radical change' (Paletschek and Pietrow-Ennker, 2004: 5).

Noble women generally took little part in these movements. In Britain, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Russia and Greece, women's emancipation movements were predominantly composed of women and men from the liberal urban middle class.

Socialist women's organizations attracted members of the lower middle class and working class. The Polish women's emancipation movement was comprised of *déclassé* gentry who merged with the middle-class intelligentsia. Only in Hungary during the 1860s was there a group of noble women who sought to improve women's access to education; by the turn of the century the Hungarian women's emancipation movement was filled with educated female professionals from the upper bourgeoisie.<sup>1</sup>

Few women born into the hundreds of great aristocratic 'houses' of Europe as detailed in the *Almanach de Gotha* joined women's emancipation movements before 1914. In his classic work, *The Persistence of the Old Regime*, Arno Mayer argued that 19th-century Europe was still made up of largely rural societies, controlled and dominated by old 'landed nobilities' (Mayer, 1981: 1–15). Mayer criticized historians for focusing too much on progress and modernization, while playing down or neglecting to account for powerful forces of tradition. Noble families celebrated their heritage and longevity. Their privileges and influence derived from land ownership, ecclesiastical ties and honorific positions at royal and imperial courts. None of this sat comfortably with processes of 'radical change'. It might be said, therefore, that nobles inherited an uneasy tension between class interests and progress on women's rights.

This article examines the responses of Parisian noble women to campaigns for women's rights in France of the early Third Republic. In the period from 1880 to 1914, the French feminist movement developed and grew, and the word *féminisme* first became widely used in France during the early 1890s. Employed 'principally as a synonym for women's emancipation', this and cognate terms spread to other parts of Europe by 1900 and to the US by 1910 (Offen, 1988: 126). Steven Hause and Anne Kenney list 17 French women's rights organizations operating in 1900. They estimate the French feminist movement then comprised at most '20,000–25,000 women whose recruitment to activity could be expected'. More than 95 percent of those women lived in Paris (Hause with Kenney, 1984: 42–3).

Paul Smith likens the feminist movement in France of the Third Republic to a 'mind-boggling labyrinth of personalities and organisations moving in irregular orbits around one another' (Smith, 1996: 2). In order to navigate this 'labyrinth', scholars have categorized French feminists by political allegiance, or by religious faith, or by radical vs moderate outlook. These categories have then been used to analyse tension between feminists and to interpret the ways in which republican anti-clericalism impacted upon the French feminist movement (Bard, 1995: 22–3; Hause with Kenney, 1984: 40–70; McMillan, 1981b).

What cannot be explained by such categorization is why many women in France did not become feminists. This is an important problem because negative responses or lack of response to campaigns for women's rights form part of the historical narrative of feminism (Bard, 1999; Reynolds,

2000). The early decades of the Third Republic witnessed the reintroduction of divorce in 1884; legislation granting women full legal capacity and the right to control their own property and earnings; the gradual opening of the medical, teaching and legal professions to qualified women; and the establishment of the first long-standing suffrage associations. Despite such developments, however, French society remained locked into discrimination by Napoleon's Civil Code. There have been several studies of change and continuities to women's place in French society over the 'long' nineteenth century (Foley, 2004; McMillan, 1981a, 2000). Much is known about the ways in which some bourgeois and working-class women negotiated new opportunities for their sex. Yet the female aristocracy, albeit a tiny fraction of France's population, has received comparatively little attention. What was it about being a Parisian noble woman that failed to inspire support, indeed often provoked outspoken opposition, to the claims of feminists?

#### CLASS, GENDER AND THE HABITUS

Historians have argued that in the wake of the 1789 Revolution, the resilience of the French nobility lay in its adherence to distinctive patterns of living identified as 'noble'.<sup>2</sup> In Paris, one expression of this 'noble' lifestyle was participation in the rituals of High Society. The women of this elite engaged in a broad array of social activities designed to maintain connections and enhance the couple's status. They hosted dinners, garden parties, salons, soirées and balls. They attended concerts, theatre, opera and exhibitions. They chaired fundraising committees for the arts and charities, and they invited guests to their country estates and seaside villas. Noble women were high profile public figures whose titles, ancestry, connections and material resources constituted a great mass of social and cultural 'capital'.

The social 'power' of Parisian noble women rested on a code of comportment and attitudes known as 'distinction'. Distinction was the aristocratic version of what Bourdieu called the habitus: that is, the way a person is conditioned to display certain attitudes and behaviour as well as the gendered bodily manifestation of that conditioning. In France of the Third Republic, distinction served a particular purpose for the nobility. It reinforced the 'natural' superiority of this class that was undergoing political and economic decline. From 1879, the republicans held a decisive majority in government. The aristocracy lost much of its influence in national politics at the same time that an agricultural crisis eroded its traditional sources of income and investment based in land. While many nobles sought to restore their fortunes by marrying into the rich bourgeoisie, they also relied on a social mechanism to preserve the class hierarchy in High Society. Wealthy commoners tried to imitate nobles'

distinction; only the 'blue-blooded', however, embodied the elusive aristocratic *je ne sais quoi* (Bourdieu, 2000: xi; Zeldin, 1973: 17).

How, then, did Parisian noble women, as powerful social agents, view the campaigns of bourgeois and socialist feminists in France? Why would a countess, for instance, who was accustomed to directing fundraising balls and fêtes, not have used her noble cachet, connections and organizing skills to stage a rally for suffrage? My approach to answering the question of why Parisian noble women were not feminists draws explicitly on Bourdieu's notion of 'distinction' as well as his later insights into 'masculine domination' (Bourdieu, 2000, 2001). Bourdieu argued that the key to masculine domination lies in the role of institutions such as the state, the scientific and medical establishments, the family and the church that serve to 'dehistoricize' or 'eternalize' the structure and principles of sexual division underpinning women's oppression (Bourdieu, 2001: viii). The following discussion unpacks the historical processes that led Parisian noble women, among others, to support a social order governed by these institutions in France of the early Third Republic.

## SUFFRAGE

During the 1880s and early 1890s, suffragists formed a minority within the French feminist movement, but broader support for the suffrage campaign developed around 1900, the year that three women's congresses were held in Paris. In 1909, the Union Française pour le Suffrage des Femmes (UFSF) was founded and it claimed 12,000 members by 1914. On the eve of the First World War, male politicians spoke in favour of French women obtaining the vote. Suffragists seemed on the brink of obtaining their goal (Hause with Kenney, 1984: 156–7, 169–90).

In 1901 and 1902, two related conservative Catholic women's organizations were founded whose objective was 'the rechristianization of France, not the emancipation of women' (Hause with Kenney, 1984: 63). By 1914, the Lyon-based Ligue des Femmes Françaises (LFF) and its Parisian counterpart, the Ligue Patriotique des Françaises (LPF), had 200,000 and 545,000 members respectively. Aristocratic women held most of the leadership posts in the LPF, serving on the Parisian central committee and as regional deputies (Sarti, 1984: 78–80, 132, 138). Their rhetoric was explicitly anti-suffrage because they believed voting was contrary to women's role within the family. President of the LPF, the Baronne Reille, stated: 'If it were a question of politics, I would not be here. But if it is a question of defending our faith and the souls of our children, is it not the duty of a true Christian and mother?' The Baronne de Boury declared that female suffrage 'would be a new breach in the constitution of the family, and a deviation from women's role such as it had been understood by Christian civilization' (Hause with Kenney, 1984: 64–5, 84).

For historical reasons, this argument held particular resonance for women of the aristocracy. Margaret Darrow has shown that in the late 18th and early 19th centuries French noble women embraced domesticity to compensate for the damage caused by their involvement in politics at court and in their salons prior to the 1789 Revolution. Darrow points out that the circumstances of emigration during the Revolution initially made it necessary for aristocratic women to become primary carers for their children and husband. On the return of these families to Paris, however, noble women 'consciously adopted domesticity for moral reasons . . . but also for political reasons'. The appropriation of domesticity as a class ideal was 'an effort to answer middle-class criticism of the nobility and, consequently, to forestall the political triumph of the bourgeoisie during the Restoration' (Darrow, 1979: 42, 53).

Darrow's study illustrates the 'work of inculcation and appropriation' required for 'products of collective history' to be reproduced in the habitus (Bourdieu, 2005: 85). Similar 'work' took place in the early Third Republic, when noble women made the ideal of domesticity the cornerstone of their opposition to republican anti-clericalism and to female suffrage.

The Catholic Church was one of the institutions in 19th-century France that 'eternalized' the structure and principles of sexual division rooted in that ideal (Bourdieu, 2001: viii). Catholic women were taught to valorize the example of motherhood set by Mary, thereby protecting themselves from temptation as daughters of Eve. Noble women in families with close ties to the Church were especially susceptible to this message (Macknight, 2006). Through convent schooling and relations with a confessor, they received a biblical understanding of female sexuality and its implications for women's roles that in Bourdieu's terms made 'practical sense'. The results of such conditioning were manifest in noble women's adherence to 'doxa': that is, submission to a set of arbitrary values and discourses that seem true and necessary (Bourdieu, 1990: 68–9). For the leaders of the LPF, the authority on these values was the pope. They obtained an audience with Pius X in order to have his opposition to female suffrage reported in the French press. Voting remained 'unthinkable' to these aristocrats before 1914. A group led by the Comtesse Lecointre quashed the efforts of Catholic bourgeois feminist Marie Maugeret to convince nobles of the need for women to vote (Hause with Kenney, 1984: 167). To combat the forces of anti-clericalism, the leaders of the LPF encouraged female 'influence' or guiding the hand that cast the ballot. In 1903, the Baronne Reille declared: 'We will be accused of dabbling in politics, of being feminist! We do not care for politics which are beneath us! Feminism! God preserves us from disturbing the order He established!' (Sarti, 1984: 148).

In the early Third Republic the scientific establishment also 'eternalized' the structure and principles of sexual division underpinning masculine domination (Bourdieu, 2001: viii). Paul Broca, an anthropologist, developed the notion that intelligence correlated to brain size. He and

other scientists argued that because the physical dimensions of a woman's brain were smaller than a man's, the intellectual faculties of a female were necessarily inferior to those of a male (Sowerwine, 2003). Monarchist aristocrat the Marquise de Breteuil disparaged suffragists on exactly these (arbitrary) grounds, and in her journal she declared: '*Électrices*, my sisters, rock your infants and thread your spinning wheels, you will never be great men!' (Mension-Rigau, 2003: 42).

There was one French aristocratic woman, however, who campaigned for female suffrage before the First World War. The Duchesse d'Uzès was introduced to feminist ideas through her acquaintance with the moderate English-born feminist Jeanne Schmahl. In 1909, when the Duchesse was persuaded to serve as honorary vice-president of the UFSF, Jane Misme, a bourgeois feminist, described the breakthrough as 'cornering the clerical and royalist party' (Hause with Kenney, 1984: 113).

The writings and speeches of d'Uzès in support of suffrage illustrate the potential for 'regulated improvisation' in the habitus (Bourdieu, 2005: 79). The Duchesse was a Catholic monarchist. The class background of d'Uzès meant that unlike most French feminists she did not look to the universal principles of 1789 to justify female suffrage (Bourdieu, 2000: 437–40, 453; Scott, 1996). Instead, in a speech at the Lyceum Club in 1913, she paid homage to ancient and early modern monarchic societies, arguing that women's place was indeed in the home and that the vote would give them the means to defend it (d'Uzès, 1914).

## MARRIAGE AND SEX

Virtually all feminists in the early Third Republic supported the institution of marriage. What they sought to change was the legal inferiority of married women set down in Napoleon's Civil Code of 1804. Feminists demanded the right for married women to control their own wages (obtained 1907), equal treatment for women and men in cases of adultery, and a lifting of the ban on paternity suits (obtained 1912). They also wanted to revise the wording of Articles 212–226 on 'The Respective Rights and Duties of the Spouses'. Read out at all French marriage ceremonies, these Articles articulated legal principles such as 'the wife owes obedience to her husband' (Waelti-Walters and Hause, 1994: 191).

Through Napoleon's Civil Code, the French state 'eternalized' the same structure and principles of sexual division espoused in the patriarchal doctrine of the Catholic Church. 'The man is the head of the woman as Christ is the head of the Church', stated Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical of 1880 (Bard, 1999: 42). The pope's words were echoed in publications of the LPF: 'The husband is the master . . . orders, even if inspired by you, must be given by him so that all who depend on you become accustomed to seeing him as the sole commander' (Sarti, 1984: 226).



There was vigorous debate on women's maternal role during the Third Republic because of the urgent need to raise the French birth rate. Karen Offen has argued that in the context of widespread fear about depopulation French feminists promoted republican motherhood to advance the cause of women's rights (Offen, 1984). This strategy either failed to convince or was ignored by the leaders of the LPF who enunciated a sharp division between feminist and Catholic principles. 'The League was not established to back the demands of feminists', declared the Baronne Reille in 1904 (Sarti, 1984: 236).

In an unpublished and undated document, 'Essai sur l'égalité des sexes', the Comtesse Greffulhe shows awareness of the barriers that women of her class and generation faced. Élisabeth Greffulhe suffered within her own marriage to a domineering husband, from who she never had the courage to separate despite crushing knowledge of his infidelities. In her 'Essai', she asks rhetorically, 'Society women are free . . . but do they not suffer like other women from the tyranny of marriage?' The Comtesse highlighted the grip of law and religion that instilled notions of 'obedience' and 'perpetuity' and prevented women from opening the door to liberty with the key that divorce provided (Archives Privées [Gramont] 101 (II)/ 150).

Noble women's attitudes towards marriage and sex reflected the conditioning they received in line with their social trajectory. For the nobility, childbearing was essential for the survival of the class or 'race'. The quality of being 'noble' was transmitted through the male bloodline. This meant that the institution of the noble family had a vested interest in 'eternalizing' the structure and principles of sexual division on which its survival was seen to depend. Members of a noble 'house' conceived themselves not as individuals but as links in a chain. A strong collective mentality or *l'esprit de famille* compelled each member to feel responsible for, and to conform to, the common interests of noble kin (Mension-Rigau, 1994: 21–89). To reproduce itself the noble family employed a series of interconnected strategies that resemble the strategies Bourdieu observed among the Kabylis and Béarnais (Bourdieu, 1990: 147–99; 2005: 58–71). Matrimonial and inheritance strategies were designed to protect and transmit patrimony; fertility strategies were designed 'to produce as many men as possible as quickly as possible (through early marriage)'; and educative strategies were designed to inculcate 'an exalted adherence to the lineage and to the values of honour' (Bourdieu, 2005: 62).

The strategies for ensuring the survival of a noble bloodline were not compatible with the demands of feminists. Noble women such as the Comtesse Lecointre publicly opposed women's rights to divorce, contraception and abortion (Waelti-Walters and Hause, 1994: 42–57). In doing so they not only obeyed the teachings of the Catholic Church, but they also upheld the interests of the family in which they had been raised. Girls of the nobility were carefully brought up in what Queen Marie of Roumania



described as a 'dangerous and almost cruel ignorance of all realities' (Pakula, 1985: 59). First pregnancy, when the feeling of sickness was explained, often came as a shock to young noble women (so did menstruation initially), and childbirth was made more excruciating than necessary when chloroform was not administered. Emotional isolation leading to despair in the early years of marriage was common. The trauma surrounding loss of virginity coloured some women's attitude towards sex for the rest of their lives.<sup>3</sup> The Princesse Bibesco recalled of her 'honeymoon': 'the physical union of two people is like murder. All at once one is obliterated; no identity remains except pain' (Sutherland, 1996: 26).

In Bourdieu's terms, the conditioning of noble women within the family produced the 'doxic' attitude required to perpetuate a dynasty. From 1880 to 1899, the average age at marriage for a woman of High Society was 22, and for a man, 29. This seven-year age gap is more than double that found by Smith between bourgeois couples in northern France from 1889 to 1900. In Smith's sample, the average age at marriage for a bourgeois woman was 23 and for a bourgeois man, 26 – just three years' difference (Grange, 1996: 504; Smith, 1981: 223). Of noble couples in High Society married between 1900 and 1914, 57.2 percent had between two and four children while 28.5 percent had five or more children. Noble couples that had at least one child who entered the Catholic Church had a consistently higher fertility rate than the noble average. For example, 'practising' Catholic nobles married between 1900 and 1929 had a fertility rate of 4.4 children compared to the noble average of 3.2 children for the same period (Grange, 1996: 154–5, 160–1).

What these statistics show is that the stereotype of a frivolous High Society woman, who feminists accused of leading 'a life of pleasure, exempt from maternity', was false (Cova, 1997: 101). Maternity was highly valued among the aristocracy. It was just that noble family practices – including the hiring of wet-nurses, nannies and governesses, and usually Catholic baptism – did not conform to the model of republican motherhood advocated by feminists.

## EDUCATION

In the early Third Republic, feminists viewed education as a stepping-stone to women's emancipation; they sought equal educational opportunities for girls and boys. For the republican government, however, the motivation for opening girls' secondary colleges in 1880 was to reduce clerical influence on women. State schools' curricula were gendered so that girls and boys were taught different subjects. Before 1914, girls were not permitted to take Latin, which was a prerequisite to obtaining the *baccalauréat*. As a result, very few French women entered universities (Clark, 1984; Mayeur, 1977).

To some extent, girls of the nobility escaped gender discrimination in education because they were taught by private tutors and governesses, and often in convent schools. These girls received lessons in mathematics, geography, literature, history and ancient and modern languages. They were also instructed in the social arts, including ballroom dancing, deportment, horse riding, piano and sketching. Noble girls benefited from considerable educational advantages, including one-to-one teaching and personal study space. In adult life, noble women could pursue scholarship independently; some received public recognition for doing so.<sup>4</sup>

Class 'preferences', however, created complex barriers in a field of education dominated by two opposing camps: Catholic and republican. Within this field, nobles 'shape[d] their aspirations according to concrete indices of the accessible and the inaccessible, of what is and is not "for us"' (Bourdieu, 1990: 64; 1996: 45, 75, 161–80, 282). For example, as a 16-year-old in 1898, the Princesse Marie Bonaparte was bitterly disappointed not to be allowed to sit public examinations to measure her intellectual abilities against girls of her own age. The reason, she was told, was that republican examiners were likely to fail her because of her surname. Her father and grandmother wanted to spare the child 'needless humiliation and disappointment' (Bertin, 1982: 60). France's military defeat at Sedan in 1870 had solidified republicans' particular aversion to the name 'Bonaparte'. Yet Marie's experience points to a political context that had implications for other noble women too.

In the intense struggle between Catholics and republicans for the control of education in France, nobles tended to side with the Church for personal as well as religious or political reasons. The *précepteurs* and *institutrices* employed to educate noble children were typically regarded as members of family. Nobles also received their local *abbé* in the home, and gave financial support to religious congregations, including teaching orders, through wills and bequests. Clerics who published tracts defending the Church's role in education had noble patrons from whom they heard confession (Biquard, 1993; Mension-Rigau, 1994: 29–33, 37–9).

Such an environment would have made it difficult indeed for the female nobility to empathize with secular-educated women. This included many feminists for the republicans' *pacte laïque* served as 'ideological cement' within the French feminist movement (Rochefort, 2004: 85). When Marie Bonaparte, in her seventies, reflected on female oppression in 'the culture created by men', she blamed members of her own sex who were merely 'simple-minded' servants, 'flirts' depicted in theatre, or 'stupidly virtuous, like my austere grandmother' (Bertin, 1982: 55). For the Princesse to refer disrespectfully to a senior relative (an extraordinary act in her milieu) is revealing of her personal ambivalence towards Catholic piety. More striking, however, is her circumscribed categorization of women. Marie failed to mention bourgeois of her generation

who received compulsory state schooling. At a critical age she had not been allowed to compare her capacities, or opportunities, to theirs.

## WORK

Work was an area of feminist campaigning where conflict arose out of the gap between bourgeois and socialist ways of thinking. One example of this was the refusal of bourgeois feminists to countenance improvements to the working conditions of their own maids (Sowerwine, 1982: 67–80, 88–9, 130–41). In Bourdieu's terms, socialists represented the interests of the 'dominated classes' and were intent upon 'pushing back the limits of doxa and exposing the arbitrariness of the taken for granted'. Bourgeois feminists, on the other hand, belonged to the 'dominant classes' whose interest lay 'in defending the integrity of doxa' (Bourdieu, 2005: 169).

For Parisian noble women, who also belonged to the dominant classes, the low wages, poor accommodation and taxing physical duties of female servants formed part of a 'natural' social order. Raised in households with up to 30 servants, these noble women constructed their social and sexual identities at the same time that they adopted 'a socially defined vision of the sexual division of labor' (Bourdieu, 1990: 78). In 19th-century French aristocratic households, domestic service was structured hierarchically. The top position was occupied by the *maître d'hôtel*, who was the only member of staff to be referred to by his title ('Monsieur') as well as his first name. He sat at the head of the staff dining table, transmitted orders and administered servants' wages. Most of the better-paid servants in aristocratic households, such as the cook, gardener and mechanic, were also men (Chabot, 1988: 27, 33–4; Macknight, forthcoming).

Noble women, of course, were not in the position of relying on a wage for survival, and they came under attack from feminists for ignoring or abusing the rights of female workers to a fair salary. Marguerite Durand, editor of the first daily feminist newspaper in France, *La Fronde*, denounced the charitable intentions of the upper class in creating workrooms where the provision of miserable pay allowed for competition with normal businesses. To counter gross malpractices within the fashion trade, she established unions for those employed in the making of rich ladies' exquisite feathered hats (Bard, 1995: 35–6). In 1904, at the Joan of Arc Congress in Paris, Catholic bourgeois feminists proposed 'that society women will not encourage "starvation pay" by buying below the going rate' (Waelti-Walters and Hause, 1994: 49). There seems to have been no great progress in noble women's consciousness of the rights of female wage earners over the next decade. In August 1914, Edith Wharton complained about 'the silly idiot women who have turned their drawing-rooms into hospitals (at great expense), & are now making shirts for the wounded'. This typically upper-class

charitable endeavour, she recognized, was 'robbing the poor stranded *ouvrières* of their only means of living' (Dwight, 1994: 183).

Parisian noble women were preoccupied by the morality of female workers, for the 'moralization of the masses' was a long-standing goal of their charitable endeavours (Macknight, in press; McPhee, 2004: Ch. 12). In 1904, the pope admonished Catholic women to shift their focus away from charity work, which reinforced class differences, towards social action and the reconciliation of upper and lower classes. This message was relayed to the leaders of the LPF in France where Catholic male conservatives had pioneered new approaches to social justice issues following the lead of the Comte Albert de Mun. For female aristocrats, however, it was difficult to get beyond moralization and really engage with unfamiliar problems that affected workers. In 1907, the Baronne Reille declared: 'We must help resolve the Social Question with the New Testament in hand' (Sarti, 1984: 274, 278).

The LPF concentrated its efforts on providing services for working mothers, a group whose protection had already been the subject of intervention by the French state and medical establishment. These two institutions were closely linked in France of the early Third Republic, for 'intellectual continuities between positivist medicine and republican anticlericalism . . . resulted in record numbers of left-leaning doctors in the senate and chamber of deputies' (Pedersen, 1996: 675; see also Ellis, 1990). Legislation introduced in 1892 and 1900 regulated female employment in French industry so that women's maternal responsibilities would be minimally compromised (Cova, 1997: 49–71). By limiting the number of daily working hours, and preventing women from working at night when pay was better, the French state and the medical establishment 'eternalized' the structure and principles of sexual division that underpinned masculine domination (Bourdieu, 2001: viii).

The leaders of the LPF recognized that economic necessity required working-class women to 'abandon' familial duties each day. They poured contempt, however, on feminists' claim that bourgeois women had the right to do the same by seeking professional employment. A 1906 publication from the LPF broadcast the message: 'Women doctors and lawyers are mediocre because a female intelligence only with extreme rarity measures up to a man's.' In 1910, the LPF sponsored an International Federation of Catholic Women's Leagues to oppose feminist and Protestant international associations (Sarti, 1984: 236–7).

## CONCLUSION

For the period 1880 to 1914, the privileges of aristocratic birth created a paradoxical effect for Parisian noble women. On the one hand, these

female aristocrats possessed the social capital that made them guardians of the 'ideal' bodily practices known as distinction. Parisian noble women before the First World War were powerful social agents with immense material resources at their disposal for showing prestige. On the other hand, however, these women were caught up in a regime of social rules, traditions and class-based customs concerning their bodies that continually worked to reinscribe gender inequality. In what Bourdieu termed 'the paradox of doxa', Parisian noble women submitted to 'symbolic violence' that characterized social relations based on masculine domination (Bourdieu, 2001: 34). Their complicity derived from 'misrecognition' of their role within a social order governed by institutions such as the state, the scientific and medical establishments, the expectations of family and the Catholic Church (Bourdieu, 2001: vii–viii, 84–8). The extensive resources and influence that noble women wielded in High Society made them all the more likely to accept or overlook the nature of their submission.

Bourdieu insisted upon close attention to the historical mechanisms through which the gendered social order is reproduced. Despite 'far-reaching transformations of the feminine condition', the feminist revolution, in the 21st century, is not a 'fait accompli' (Bourdieu, 2003: 26).

## NOTES

1. See Paletschek and Pietrow-Ennker (2004: 41, 58, 68, 96, 112, 131, 135–8, 152, 178, 193–4, 202–3, 217–18, 220, 230–1, 237, 267).
2. French nobles fall into three categories: those of 'extraction' (whose ancestry dates from 'time immemorial'); those who were ennobled under the Ancien Régime; and those who were ennobled during the 19th century. The *Bottin mondain*, first published in 1903, contains the names of some 800 authentic noble families. The capacity to purchase fake titles, and insert the particle *de* in a surname, meant that some wealthy commoners in France adopted the appearance of being noble (Brelot, 1992: 10; Grange, 1996: 16; Higgs, 1987: 222; Valette, 1977: 4–6).
3. See Bertin (1982: 94–5, 111–12), de Cossé Brissac (1991: 51–7), Francis and Gontier (2000: 109, 171–6), Pakula (1985: 68–9, 73–4, 86–93, 96–7) and Sutherland (1996: 26–7, 30–4).
4. See Bertin (1982: 29, 32, 38, 44, 51, 57, 59), de Clermont-Tonnerre (1928: 108–9), Francis and Gontier (2000: 58–9), de Pange (1962: 64), Sutherland (1996: 13–14) and d'Uzès (1939: 4–5).

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Elizabeth C. Macknight is lecturer in European history at the University of Aberdeen. She is currently completing a book on gender roles among the Parisian aristocracy in France of the Third Republic. Address: Department of History, University of Aberdeen, King's College, Aberdeen AB24 3FX, Scotland, UK. [email: e.macknight@abdn.ac.uk]

