

FORUM

Feminist Journalism on Work, War, and Women's Rights in the Third Republic

Kaethe Schirmacher, Investigative Reporter & Activist Journalist: The Paris Writings, 1895-1910

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In July 1899, at the height of the revision of the Dreyfus Affair, a certain Mlle de Sainte-Croix (pen-name Savioz, later Mme Avril de Sainte-Croix) reported to the London congress of the International Council of Women (ICW) concerning the economic situation of women in French journalism. In her view, the launching of the all-woman daily newspaper *La Fronde* by Marguerite Durand in late 1897 had made a huge difference for women in journalism. Before *La Fronde*, Savioz claimed that besides herself and Durand, there were only some ten women journalists at work in Third Republic France – namely Séverine, Marny, Mme (Juliette) Adam, “Gyp,” Mme Bentzon, Georges de Peyrebrune (Matilda Georgina Elisabeth de Peyrebrune), (Olympe) Gévin-Cassal, Mary Summer, (Marguerite) Poradowska, and Arvède de Barine.¹ For most of these women, journalism was but one facet of performing as a Parisian “*femme de lettres*.”

Missing from this list of journalists, however, were several other significant names: Hubertine Auclert, founder and chief reporter for *La Citoyenne* and editorialist for *Le Radical*; Maria Martin, who had published *La Citoyenne* in Auclert's absence and in 1891 founded the *Journal des femmes*; Aline Valette, who had launched *L'Harmonie Sociale* in the early 1890s and continued to publish in *La Fronde* until her death in spring 1899; and, not least, the border-crossing German investigative reporter, born and raised in Danzig, but

¹ Mlle de Sainte-Croix, “La situation économique de la Femme dans le journalisme,” session “The Economic Position of Women as Journalists” in *Women in Professions, being the Professional Section of the International Congress of Women, London, July 1899*, Transactions of the ICW Congress vol. 4 (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1900), 67-70.

resident in France for several decades – Kaethe Schirmacher (1865-1930). The multilingual and well-traveled Schirmacher's personal and intellectual itinerary had taken her to Paris in the late 1880s, to England 1888-1889, to the United States in 1893, to Zurich 1893-1895, to Egypt, and then to France again from 1895 to 1910. With a French *agrégation* and a Ph.D. from Zurich, Schirmacher was a cultivated feminist *femme de lettres* and journalist; she epitomized the thoroughly cosmopolitan *Européenne* – the *femme moderne*.

In German historiography, Schirmacher is remembered primarily as a radical women's rights advocate (*Frauenrechtlerin*) who became an ardent (and, to most feminists of a later generation, highly embarrassing) German nationalist. Since she came from Danzig, this should not be so surprising, particularly after the World War I settlements, which were so punitive to Germany. But the studies I have consulted say virtually nothing about Schirmacher's Paris years, except to acknowledge her particular concern about women's employment and prostitution.² They say nothing whatsoever about her career as a respected investigative reporter and journalist. French historiography has ignored her altogether.

Schirmacher published under her own by-line in the mainstream French daily and periodical press. In September 1896, in the *Journal des Débats*, she issued a four-part report on the International Women's Congress in Berlin, and in the same month published an essay on "Le féminisme à l'université de Zurich," in the *Revue Bleue* (Paris).³ She probably published in other French newspapers and periodicals as well.

At *La Fronde*, Marguerite Durand had insisted on applying the principle of equal pay for equal work; its all-women staff received the same pay as men. Savioz, who published in *La Fronde*, reported in 1899 that henceforth the

² Liliane Crips, "Comment passer du libéralisme au nationalisme völkisch, tout en restant féministe? Le cas exemplaire de Käthe Schirmacher (1865-1931)," in *Femmes-Nations-Europe*, ed. Marie-Claire Hooock-Demarle (Paris: CEDREF, 1995), 62-77, and Johanna Gehmacher's discussion of Schirmacher's autobiographical work, *Flammen*, "Der andere Ort der Welt. Käthe Schirmachers Auto/Biographie der Nation," *Geschlecht und Nationalismus in Mittel- und Osteuropa, 1848-1919*, ed. Sophia Kemlein (Osnabrück: Fibre Verlag, 2000), 99-124. The earlier biography by Anka Walzer, *Käthe Schirmacher: Eine deutsche Frauenrechtlerin auf dem Wege vom Liberalismus zum konservativen Nationalismus* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1991) does not include any of Schirmacher's French publications in the bibliography. The first biography on Schirmacher by Hanna Krüger, *Die unbequeme Frau: Käthe Schirmacher im Kampf für die Freiheit der Frau und die Freiheit der Nation, 1865-1930* (Berlin: Hans Bött, 1936), only mentions the French years in passing.

³ Kaethe Schirmacher, "Le féminisme à l'université de Zurich," *La Revue Bleue* 5 (September 1896); reprinted in Schirmacher, *Sociales Leben. Zür Frauenfrage* (Paris & Leipzig: H. Welter, 1897), 147-57.

economic situation of women in journalism “is making satisfactory progress.” With talent and energetic activity, “it will be easy for a woman to create an honorable and independent position... to create a situation equal to that of men.” French journalism, she insisted was more literary than journalism elsewhere, and she hoped that women journalists would uphold that tradition.⁴

Schirmacher was both literary and interested in professional treatment. Like Savioz, Durand, and other progressive feminists, she promoted women’s work and equal pay for equal work. Her overarching concern was the plight of the “modern woman” – well-educated, the equal of man, self-supporting (or potentially so), independent, and a fully-developed personality. She clearly identified herself as such. Attending the World’s Congress of Representative Women in Chicago in 1893, when she was 28, she analyzed the limited prospects such a woman would have in contemporary Germany.⁵ She often addressed – and was well received at – the yearly meetings of the Conférence de Versailles, where leading French women philanthropists gathered.⁶ She also attended and spoke at the April 1896 feminist congress in Paris. She spoke at the International Feminist Congress held in Berlin in mid-September of that same year, and reported its proceedings in the *Journal des Débats*.⁷ In contrast to other German women writers in the 1890s, Schirmacher adopted the French neologisms “*féminisme*” and “*féministe*,” rather than falling back on the English and German terms, “women’s movement” and “*Frauenbewegung*.” The issues dear to French feminists clearly played a central role in Schirmacher’s thought during her Paris years and found reflection in her publications.

Schirmacher’s publications in and about France appeared in a variety of forms and addressed many topics. They concerned women’s higher education, employment prospects, wages, working conditions, and government-regulated prostitution. Her 1896 publications also make it clear that she was particularly concerned about the developing split between “bourgeois” and “socialist”

⁴ Savioz counseled the use of reader leverage, urging women readers to let the directors of newspapers and the periodical press know that they read and subscribe to these publications because they enjoy reading contributions by women writers!

⁵ 1893 Chicago speech in *Sociales Leben*, 49-55.

⁶ A number of her speeches in the 1890s were reported and/or reprinted in *La Femme*, the publication of the Conférence de Versailles.

⁷ Her series of articles, “Congrès international féministe de Berlin,” appeared in the *Journal des Débats*, part 1 (4 September 1896): 2, part 2 (22 September 1896): 3, part 3 (23 September 1896): 3, and part 4 (28 September 1896): 2-3. The entire sequence was republished in *La Revue féministe* in 1896 and can be accessed by library subscription through the Gerritsen collection on-line: <http://gerritsen/chadwyck.com>. The official name of the 1896 Berlin congress was the Internationale Kongress für Frauenwerke und Frauenbestrebungen.

feminists in the German context, and she clearly intended to re-appropriate the issue of women's employment for the non-socialist side. This is already manifested in her speech given at the 1896 Paris congress, where she discussed the German feminist movement, and in her reporting on the 1896 Berlin congress. In both she exhibited her frank enthusiasm for the more "advanced" and "liberal" feminists in Germany led by Minna Cauer (and the publication *Frauenwohl*), who foregrounded issues regarding German women's employment in commerce and in the trades.⁸

On the Fourth of July 1899, at the ICW conference, Minna Cauer, Schirmacher, and a few others, including Susan B. Anthony, the aging but still dynamic American suffragist, founded a small international coalition of like-minded progressive women, to fight for equal rights "in the domains of economics, law, and politics." These goals expressly exceeded what the ICW council representatives deemed possible at that time. Schirmacher, who became the "honorary secretary" of this "Union Internationale des Femmes Progressistes," viewed this group's concerns as complementing those of the ICW, which she characterized in the recently-founded *Revue de Morale Sociale* as "*philanthropique, moralisatrice et organisatrice*."⁹ Soon ICW leaders would push the organization's agenda much further, endorsing the women's suffrage goal in 1904 (following the founding of the separate International Woman Suffrage Alliance in 1902), but in the meantime this Cauer-led cross-national group of women would consult together about strategies and tactics as they independently addressed issues that were specifically national and required targeted forms of action that the ICW could not yet undertake.¹⁰

The previous year, 1898, Schirmacher had published a comparative study of feminisms in the USA, France, Great Britain, Sweden, and Russia.¹¹ Although she attributed feminism's birth to the American war of independence (though evidence for this remains dubious even today), she demonstrated in-depth knowledge about its origins in France in the French Revolution. Theodore Stanton's ambitious book *The Woman Question in Europe* (1884) appeared in her bibliography, and she clearly made good use of his long chapter on France as

⁸ See Schirmacher's article, recapitulating her Paris congress speech, in *La Revue féministe* 2 (1896): 308-11.

⁹ Kaethe Schirmacher, "Union internationale des femmes progressistes," *Revue de Morale Sociale* 1, no. 3 (July-September 1899): 297-9.

¹⁰ On the radical, non-socialist German feminists, see the contributions of Ute Gerhard. For the split among the socialist feminist women, see Jean H. Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1885-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). Anne-Laure Briatte-Peters, *Citoyennes sous tutelle: Le Mouvement féministe 'radical' dans l'Allemagne wilhelmiennne* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013).

¹¹ Kaethe Schirmacher, *Le Féminisme aux Etats-Unis, en France, dans la Grande-Bretagne, en Suède et en Russie* (Paris: A. Colin, 1898).

well as of Léopold Lacour's lectures (which would appear in book form in 1900).¹² She also drew on two of the series of lengthy articles on feminisms in various countries that had appeared in *La Revue politique et parlementaire* in 1896-1897 as well as a wide range of conference proceedings and women's periodicals. She made her "equality-in-difference" views clear, interleaved in the text: "There is, in my view, an equivalence between the sexes, and in this sense, equality in diversity."¹³ Her chronology for French feminism lays out a time-line, linked closely to political developments that we still observe today, and she makes clear that in 1848 feminism and socialism were inextricably interwoven. She also underscored a point that remains pertinent today: "It is in France that men of letters have shown the most interest in feminism."¹⁴ Later she would also comment on the amazing political support being given by French men to "women's issues."

It was, however, the question of women's work that occupied the center of Schirmacher's attention as an investigative reporter. In Chicago in 1893, she had given a speech, "The Marriage Prospects of the Modern Woman," in which she laid out the issues facing young women in Imperial Germany. Observing the important "surplus" of women (some 1.5 million) and changing ideas among women about what they expected from the marriage institution and from prospective husbands, it was clear to her that many of them would never marry and, therefore, educated and increasingly independent, these "modern women" would support themselves through employment. Here she was speaking principally about the women of the middle classes. But her attention quickly turned to less fortunate women.

Schirmacher had undoubtedly viewed (and had been impressed by) the pathbreaking exhibition on the statistics of French women's work organized by the "Comité de femmes françaises à l'Exposition de Chicago," displayed in the Woman's Pavilion at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893.¹⁵ By 1896 she was

¹² See Theodore Stanton, "France," in *The Woman Question in Europe* (New York, London, Paris: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1884), 234-309; Léopold Lacour, *Trois femmes de la Révolution: Olympe de Gouges, Théroigne de Méricourt, Rose Lacombe. Les Origines du Féminisme contemporaine* (Paris: Plon, 1900). Subsequently, in *The Modern Women's Rights Movement* (the 1912 English translation of her earlier German work), she acknowledged France as the initiator of the European women's rights movement: "The European women's rights movement was born in France; it is a child of the Revolution of 1789," 175.

¹³ Schirmacher, *Le Féminisme*, 30.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁵ The innovative French contribution of statistics about women in the social economy is discussed in Jeanne Madeline Weimann, *The Fair Women: The Story of the Woman's Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893* (Chicago: Academy, 1981), 376-7,

reporting on a comparable assessment of women's employment in 25 occupations in Vienna. Austrian feminists had promoted this investigation of salaries, workplace hygiene, working conditions, mode of life, and its findings scandalized Schirmacher, who declared that even to survive in such awful conditions, these women workers must be acclaimed as the "strong sex," not the "weaker sex," a point that she would repeatedly make in print.¹⁶ It had become clear to most feminists by the late 1890s that the issues of prostitution and women's degraded economic status were inextricably linked, and that poor wages paid to women workers in turn fueled endemic prostitution in the cities and seaports, as well as a growing traffic in women and children (i.e., underage girls), across borders as well as internally within countries. Schirmacher followed these developments closely, and her publications attest that well before 1900 so-called "bourgeois" feminists [such as herself] had fully engaged with the broad range of issues surrounding the paid labor of poor women.

Reporting on the 1899 London congress of the ICW in *La Revue de Morale Sociale*, Schirmacher compared the data on women's economic situation across three groups of countries: 1) the USA and England; 2) Austria and Italy; and 3) Germany and France. Even in the US she noted that women only earned half to 2/3 of what men earned for the same work, and in the cotton industry women's wages might be only 1/3 of men's. She claimed that the situation was no better in England. In Austria and Italy, women's work was very poorly paid, and the cost of living very high – the same in Germany and France. In short, across Europe women's wages were insufficient for them to survive. In France in particular, with few exceptions, "the wages of women in most industries were less than half of those of men," according to figures gathered by the Office du Travail.¹⁷ As concerns "average" income, Schirmacher credited the figures provided by the Comte d'Haussonville in his 1886 book *Misères et remèdes*, which she thought more exact than those of the Office du Travail, citing other recent studies to confirm her point.¹⁸ To fill the wage gap and survive, a woman without means either had to link up with one man – or many! "The woman who

389. Mme Léon Pégard spearheaded the effort to prepare these materials and her *Statistique Générale de la Femme* was honored in 1896 by the French Institute.

¹⁶ See Schirmacher, "L'enquête sur le travail des femmes à Vienne," *La Revue féministe* (1896), 454-60. See also her remarks in Part IV of the *Journal des Débats/Revue féministe* articles on the Berlin congress of 1896, cited above.

¹⁷ Kaethe Schirmacher, "Salaires de femmes," *La Revue de Morale Sociale* 1 (1899): 447.

¹⁸ Schirmacher mentions the following works: Dr. Oscar Commenge, *Hygiène sociale: La Prostitution clandestine à Paris* (Paris: Schleicher frères, 1897); Othénin de Cléron, comte d'Haussonville, *Socialisme et charité* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1895); Dr. Delesalle (Paul Delesalle, editor of the anarchist weekly *Temps Nouveaux*) and Charles Benoist, *Les Ouvrières de l'aiguille à Paris; notes pour l'étude de la question sociale* (Paris: L. Chailley, 1895).

sells herself in the street is not mysterious, not inexplicable, not monstrous. Far from being 'unnatural,' she is only too human, and sorrowfully human."¹⁹

Thus Schirmacher joined the growing group of advanced European feminists who had begun to speak far more openly about the plague of prostitution – and to examine its economic causes.²⁰ Prostitutes were not immoral beings, women of no virtue, or “born criminals” (as the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso and others had been insisting), their misery and dissolute lives were due to being underpaid and underfed. “Modesty is the luxury of the well-off,” insisted Schirmacher in her 1899 article. Such women were the “victim[s] of a deplorably, sorrowfully defective social order.”²¹ “Viewed as an economic problem prostitution becomes a subject that everyone can discuss anywhere with decency.” Every woman should know that she can never be completely protected from crying need, and also know that “in every time and every place women’s work has been disorganized and deprecated.” Moral condemnation and silence was no solution – women must speak out on behalf of their poorer sisters. The solution, she claimed, was to treat prostitution as an economic problem and to end the material misery that surrounds poor women. One must change the surrounding circumstances. Schirmacher advocated a three-pronged approach of unionization, professional education, and, not least, legislation. “Messieurs! Appeal to women as organizers, as educators, and especially as voters.”

In later 1900, Schirmacher expanded her critique. In a review of the Comte d’Haussonville’s study *Salaires et misères de femmes* (1900), which she also published in the *Revue de morale sociale*, she critiqued the count’s suggestion that the sole means of ameliorating the situation of young working women was by lowering their expenses, through providing group restaurants and residences, subsidized by charities.²² Schirmacher bristled when she criticized Haussonville’s dismissal of unionization as a solution for these women, pointing to the efficacy of such unions in the US and England, and she took offense at his critique of women’s lack of initiative, particularly his seeming ignorance of the efforts of French feminists to address the problems of working women. She prescribed a good stiff dose of Protestant initiative, rather than resignation and palliative measures; “Working women need some feminism in their lives... Working women conscious of their own rights are essential to the liberation of

¹⁹ Schirmacher, “Salaires de femmes,” 449.

²⁰ Josephine Butler and her associates in the international abolitionist movement had emphasized this point for decades. On Butler’s international networks, see the theme issue edited by Anne Summers in *Women’s History Review* 17, no. 2 (April 2008).

²¹ Schirmacher, “Salaires de femmes,” 450-452. All quotations in this paragraph appear on these pages.

²² Kaethe Schirmacher, review of *Salaires et Misères de femmes* by le Comte d’Haussonville, *Revue de Morale Sociale* 2 (1900): 409-14.

the working classes.”²³ In a polite yet sharp tongue-lashing, she advised M. le comte to study what the feminists have said, have done, have acted upon, to read *La Fronde*, to attend meetings of the various feminist organizations, to check into the efforts of the women’s unions associated with the Bourse de Travail, and to contact Marie Bonneviel, the working-class feminist teacher recently appointed by the government to the *Conseil Supérieur du Travail*. If he did, she alleged, he would be able to report happier news rather than declaring the misery of the *ouvrière* as “irremediable.”

In 1902, Schirmacher published her own study of women’s work in France, *Le Travail des femmes en France*, which appeared in the *Mémoires et documents (supplément aux Annales)* of the Musée Social in Paris.²⁴ A synopsis of her findings appeared in *La Revue (Ancienne Revue des revues)* in mid-February.²⁵ After noting a surplus of 434,000 women over men, Schirmacher immediately critiqued the French census authorities for not counting homemakers (*ménagères*) among the “active” population. “Women’s domestic occupations constitute the professional work by which homemakers earn their living,” and keeping house accounted for some 7.7 million married women. Additionally, she noted, some 2.6 million of these 7.7 married women also work outside the home. If one counts them all, she insisted, the number of employed women is equal to or even outnumbers the population of working men. Moreover, women who work outside the home can be found in virtually every economic sector. Significantly, Schirmacher lists as the first category to be discussed “the work of wife and mother.” She thus offered a frontal and fundamental critique of the notion of the male breadwinner as provider – a notion that, for most male political economists, undergirded the prevailing view of the sexual division of labor. And she points to the difficulty of marrying for girls without a dowry and a growing reluctance, due to “modern individualism,”

²³ *Ibid.*, 412.

²⁴ Kaethe Schirmacher, *Le Travail des femmes en France (Mémoires & Documents)*, supplément aux *Annales*, Musée Social, no. 6, May 1902 (Paris : Rousseau, 1902), 321-72. Schirmacher published excerpts from her work in (at least) two French journals: “Le Travail des femmes en France,” *La Revue (ancienne revue des revues)* 15 (February 1902): 395-412, and “Le travail des femmes et la protection ouvrière,” *La Revue de Morale Sociale* 4 (1902-1903): 160-81. On the *Revue de Morale Sociale*, see Anne R. Epstein, “Gender and the Creation of the French Intellectual: The Case of the *Revue de Morale Sociale* 1899-1903,” in *Views from the Margins: Creating Identities in Modern France*, ed. and intro. Kevin J. Callahan and Sarah A. Curtis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 218-50.

²⁵ All quotations in this paragraph from Schirmacher’s synopsis : “Le Travail des femmes en France,” 395-6.

of young women “to embark on a career founded on the legal subjection of the wife.” Reforms in the laws of marriage (Code Civil) were absolutely necessary.

Schirmacher’s entire study is replete with facts and figures that bolstered her feminist criticism of prevailing masculinist views. When it came to the category “industry,” Schirmacher remarked that “the number of women occupied in industry is less than the number in agriculture.” She demonstrated that women work in virtually every sector, including the quarries, mines, metallurgy, etc. Looking at pay scales, Schirmacher reminded her readers that most of the women who work in manufacturing or production are paid a good deal less than men, and after doing the calculations, shows that “the majority of the 829,057 *ouvrières industrielles* work 9 to 11 hours per day but cannot without difficulty balance income and expenses.”²⁶ She asserts that women’s work is worth more than that, and is in fact often of superior quality to men’s work: “Why,” she asks, “is the woman always paid less?” She reaches the conclusion that there is no good reason for this, and that the woman is paid less strictly “because she is a woman... in an inferior social (i.e., civil and political) condition.”²⁷ And she characterizes this situation as a great social danger. A working woman has to resort to “finding someone” (i.e., a man), which in fact increases her workload by another five to six hours per day at home. This “*surmenage*” or overwork can quickly compromise her health and welfare.

Turning to the issue of protective legislation for women workers, in force since 1892 in France, Schirmacher remarks on the opposition of feminists to this legislation that applies only to women, and their support for unionization instead. But Schirmacher doesn’t think that unionization, in the short term, is the answer, and she thinks that “only the legal protection of *ouvrières* will [for the time being] permit the development, among them, of syndical organizations – but this will not provide a noticeable rise in wages until they encompass the mass of women workers.”²⁸ She enumerates the various professions, and the situation of women in them (relative to men), from domestic servants to providers of personal care services, commerce and banking, shipping and transportation, liberal professions (including law and medicine, the theatre, music, painting, sculpture, and literature), religiously-dedicated women, state and local governmental service (including women teachers), noting that most women workers have no “right” to paid retirement, yet they earn too little to save much. “What will become of them, when they cannot find work or when their strength gives out?”²⁹ She notes that some are working toward a law providing retirement benefits for women workers, and that some feminists call for such a law to apply

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 398.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 400.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 402.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 411.

also to homemakers. If married, a woman worker often faces a “double burden” of work in the workplace and in the household. Schirmacher concludes that “women who in such conditions, obstinately continue to live, really do merit the label ‘the strong sex.’”³⁰

As Schirmacher’s investigations proceeded, her indignation and exasperation with the plight of women workers increased. In a 1902 article on women’s work and protective labor legislation, she elaborated on the plight of woman, carrying a double burden since the time of Eve. “How can it be,” she asked, that the work which gives liberty to the man has augmented, if not indeed directly caused, the servitude of the woman?”³¹ In fact, for a very long time, work also made slaves of men. But it is also men who have come to make the laws, conferring on themselves the privilege of being masters, and reserving political rights for themselves. Women, in the meantime, have not had the possibility of emancipating themselves through their work and the conditions of their labor have not improved. “In a world based on force, whosoever does not win, loses. This is the case for the majority of women.” Because women are physically weaker, all sorts of work, including maternity, can be forced on them. “*Women’s work is thus born from servitude*,” Schirmacher insisted, and this has had “disastrous consequences.” And she goes on to describe the first division of labor between women and men, and the development of a hierarchy of labor. Her earlier publications (1896) suggest that she had been reading August Bebel’s *La Femme et le socialisme* but she may also have been perusing Friedrich Engels on the origins of the family, private property, and the state, which supported many of Bebel’s arguments.³²

In a 1904 article on women’s domestic labor, Schirmacher takes issue with more conventional economic theorists, who have judged this work as “unproductive.” Why, she asks, has the contribution of women’s work in the household been so ignored?³³ Long before feminist economists in the 1970s began (again) evaluating the worth of housework, or Nel Noddings began writing on the importance of caring work, or Riane Eisler published *The Real Wealth of Nations* (2007), but well after Jeanne Deroin’s complaints in 1848-49 about the derogation of women’s household labor, Schirmacher attacks this issue anew, within the context of the debates over protective labor legislation, depopulation, and the continuing resistance of the economic establishment to acknowledging

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 412.

³¹ All quotations in this paragraph from Schirmacher, *Le Travail des femmes et la protection ouvrière*, cited above (note 24).

³² See her articles in the *Journal des Débats* (September 1896), where she refers to Bebel’s book, *La Femme*.

³³ Kaethe Schirmacher, “Le travail domestique des femmes, son évaluation économique et sociale,” *La Revue d’économie politique* 18 (May 1904): 353-379.

the monetary value of domestic labor.³⁴ She makes it clear that she is not talking about women of the privileged classes, but of the other 90 per cent. She maintains that, irrespective of her marital status, any woman who manages a household is a *ménagère*, and that any woman who has a child is a mother. The official statistics do not reveal any such thing, she points out, but if they did encompass all these women, the number of women keeping house and mothering would go up by a third. She argues that maternity is the equivalent of men's military service.³⁵ She argues also (and I absolutely agree) that most men have absolutely no idea of the all-consuming nature of these activities. In fact she went so far as to claim outright that "our civilization today rests on the domestic servitude of women."³⁶ Encompassing production, conservation, and distribution, she asserts, it constitutes a real profession. That is how many women make their living! – whatever the political economists may say, this constitutes an exchange of services for support. Like German feminists who were demanding that in the next professional census, coming up in 1905, married women count in the "active population, the French should do the same; in fact, she even appealed to Émile Levasseur, who sat on the Conseil supérieur de statistique, to get this approved. Further, she claims that married women have a right to recompense half of what the husband earns outside. "[Women] must insist on the [economic] value of [their] activities as a homemaker and mother."³⁷

What Schirmacher's published works in French – to 1904 at least – indicate is that she exhibits a knowledgeable, fully developed, and ultimately very radical feminist perspective on women's work. She insisted on the necessity of higher education, professional and vocational education, and legal reform, including the vote. In none of the French publications surveyed here did I find any trace of the fervent nationalist she, by all accounts, later became. It remains to be seen, though, how her thinking developed in her later French publications from 1904 until her departure for Germany in 1910. Perhaps in the Schirmacher *Nachlass* (Legacy) papers in Rostock, in her extensive private correspondence,

³⁴ Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986); Riane Eisler, *The Real Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2007); Jeanne Deroin, "Le Travail des femmes," *Almanach des Femmes* (1852), reprinted in Adrien Ranvier, "Une Féministe de 1848, Jeanne Deroin," *La Révolution de 1848*, 5 no. 26 (May-June 1908): 489-91 and translated by Karen Offen in *Victorian Women* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981), 304-305.

³⁵ Schirmacher, "Le travail domestique des femmes," 357. This argument goes back to the 1880s in the French context.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 360.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 373.

one might glean further insights.³⁸ As for her French publications in the press and periodical literature, they reveal the thinking of a well-educated and progressive feminist who did her homework and was unafraid to speak her mind in public and in print. Her contributions to the French debates on the woman question deserve to be better known.

³⁸ The Kaethe-Schirmacher-Legacy, or *Nachlass*, at the University of Rostock, is available for purchase on microfiche (126,000 pages) through the Harald Fischer Verlag. For further information see http://www.haraldfischerverlag.de/hfv/HQ/hq30_engl.php. I have not worked in or with this archive, but have independently collected Schirmacher's French (and English) publications during my years of work on the history of feminism in France. Anka Walzer (see note 1), who has worked in the *Nachlass*, attributes Schirmacher's rabid nationalism to a friendship with a certain Frenchman whom she met in the mid 1890s (according to e-mail correspondence from Angelica Schaser), but it is clear from Crips' analysis (see note 2) that Schirmacher's 1906 publication in German, *Deutschland und Frankreich seit 35 Jahren: Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte* (Berlin: Bard Marquardt & Co., 1906) marked the turning point in her thinking.

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