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”La toute-puissance de la barbe” : Jenny P. d’Héricourt et les novateurs modernes

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When the French midwife, feminist activist and social philosopher Jenny P. d’Héricourt (1809-1875) criticised Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in 1856 for his theory on female inferiority, he invoked her innate lack of intellectual ability to refuse all public discussion with her. Nonetheless d’Héricourt continued to publicly criticise the misogynist elements and the theoretical defects in the work of contemporary social philosophers. This article sheds light on d’Héricourt’s self-understanding as an intellectual and on the conditions necessary for women to act as such. At the same time it points out the boundaries of this female intellectuality, impose not only by her contemporaries but also by the historiography of social thought which ignores d’Héricourt as a social philosopher who anticipated a theoretical framework later made famous by Émile Durkheim.

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