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THE SPACES THEY OCCUPIED: WOMEN AS THE DETERMINERS OF SUCCESS IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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The Spaces They Occupied: Women as the Determiners of Success in the French Revolution

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ABSTRACT

This presentation examines how during the French Revolution, limited by Enlightenment ideals as to their proper place and sphere, women were forced to participate in means outside the system's framework. Vocally and purposefully excluded from the public sphere, women nevertheless found ways in which to exert influence and actively participate. I contend that the vehement cries for recognition, inclusion, and equality provided a force against which the Revolutionary leaders were critically able to sharpen and strengthen their ideals and movement. The role of counter-revolutionary women is not only important in the amount of agency women were able to obtain and exert on this alternative side, specifically in the realm of religion, but is also of significance for the position it provided in opposition to the movement of Revolutionary women. There is no single moniker or definition one can ascribe to the entirety of women during the period of the French Revolution because there is no single category or demographic, but this presentation will analyze how certain "deviant," "ugly, militant monsters," "ornamental," "helots," and "counter-revolutionaries" made certain the ultimate success of the Revolution, even in its inherent structure against the inclusion of women in the public sphere.

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