



# Deviant Women of the French Revolution and the Rise of Feminism

*Lisa Beckstrand*

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Despite critical interest in the role of women in the French Revolution, there is no single, comprehensive study of the works of the two most prolific women writers of the period—Olympe de Gouges and Manon Roland. At a time when politicians were molding public policy concerning life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and constituting criteria for citizenship, increasing numbers of women in Paris were clamoring for rights. New medical and philosophical theories redefining female nature were trotted out to justify women's continued exclusion from full political participation. Such theories focused on the female body as the locus of women's intellectual inadequacies and promulgated the idea that women who acted outside of the confines of their physiological nature were considered desensitized and unfeminine. *Deviant Women of the French Revolution and the Rise of Feminism* aims to uncover the work of those women who challenged prevailing views of female nature, sought social reforms, and were deemed "deviant" for their writing and/or activism during the French Revolution.

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