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Project Title: *Deliberating the Heroine in Early Modern French Women’s Theater*

Abstract:
*Deliberating the Heroine in Early Modern French Women’s Theater* argues that women playwrights question traditional views on women through their heroines. Denied the powers of cleverness, authority of deliberation, and the right to speak, heroines were often excluded from authorial roles in plays written by leading male playwrights from this period. Women playwrights, on the other hand, frequented the salons, where they embraced the ideals necessary to expand the boundaries of female heroism. Heroines in tragi-comedies, comedies, and tragedies from 1650–1750 reflect a shift in mentalities with regards to female rationality. The “deliberative” type, arriving at the very end of the seventeenth-century, is the most fully three-dimensional. Unlike her overly rational and overly emotional predecessors, the deliberative heroine exudes all the characteristics of the modern-day female hero. Whereas the other two act in accordance with social constructs or on impulse, the deliberative heroine achieves the ideals of seventeenth-century salons, which petitioned for women to have “greater control over their own bodies” (DeJean 21). She is active, and her determination to follow through with her own line of reasoning—that involves both mind and heart—enables her to determine the outcome of events. In the end, this new generation of heroines ushered in an era where women playwrights could make their very own contribution to dramatic works at the dawn of the age of enlightenment.