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Marriage in Renaissance Drama: Defiance of Patriarchal Authority and Social Conventions

Ibrahim Abushihab

English Department, Alzaytoonah University of Jordan, Amman,
Jordan

E-mail: facultyofarts2@yahoo.com

Esraa Abushihab

Yarmouk, University of Jordan, Irbid, Jordan

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the miserable position of women and marriage issues in Renaissance drama. Women were generally considered as a threat to male authority. Girls did not have the right to choose their future husbands and were mostly obliged to marry men they did not like because their choice was based on the principles of the law and norms.

Under these miserable conditions, some writers of the period strived to change the negative position of society and challenged the tyranny of male authority. In Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613) and John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612), Mariam and the Duchess reject the demands of their society to be obedient, and raise voices to assert their selfhood. Mariam decides to get rid of these restrictions by breaking the convention of the silent women and to challenge her husband's authority, and that of her patriarchal society. On a parallel line, The Duchess attempts to deny the authority of social conventions and impose her identity in a patriarchal society. They are rebellious women

who refuse to be under male authority and represent the contradictions of female identity in patriarchal cultures. They could not bear their humiliation in their society, and they want to lead a normal life without being controlled. Both die at the end and pay their lives for defying patriarchal authority and social conventions.

Keywords: Feminism, Renaissance, Drama, Rebellious women