

The Portrayal of Women in the Renaissance Theatre in the Late Fifteenth Century (1580-1600)

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This research paper explores the various ways in which the female is represented in the Renaissance theatre in the late fifteenth century (1580-1600), contesting the dominant view of female victimhood and patriarchal norms. Despite the dominant view being the lack of freedom and identity of the Renaissance women, the era can also be called a time period in which women such as Portia and Lady Lucre, women who fought for their needs and wants for whatever the means, also existed in the Renaissance theatre. The theatre being an actual demonstration of life in England in contemporary times, these dramatists delineate the contemporary issues that these females went through in marriage and relationships as well as their means of contesting them. In order to explore the portrayal of the female beyond the victimhood and patriarchal norms, an in-depth textual analysis would be conducted on the selected texts, *The Merchant of Venice* (1600) by William Shakespeare and *The Three Ladies of London* (1584) by Robert Wilson. Therefore, the objective of this study is to find out the dichotomous representation of the female in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and Robert Wilson's *The Three Ladies of London* as well as to portray how these portrayals showcase women with beauty as well as wit to validate financial gain, and political dominance. Tactically, these dramatists signify the idea that females are not always the victim of patriarchy and that there are females who wittily manipulated the patriarchal norms to gain their means.

Keywords: Drama, Female Representation, Feminism, Gender Politics