

Handout # 1: Historical Background of Marriage Customs

Age of Consent

“At the seventh year of her age, her father shall have aid of his tenants to marry her. At nine years of age, she is able to deserve and have dower. At twelve years to consent to marriage. At fourteen to be *hors du guard* [outside wardship]. At sixteen to be past the Lord’s tender of a husband. At twenty one to be able to make a feoffment [land grant]. And *per Ingelton* therein the end of the case. A woman married at twelve cannot disagree afterward. But if she be married younger, she may dissent till she be fourteen.” (*Law’s* 33)

Dating

“ . . . it becometh not a maid to talk where her father and mother be in communication about her marriage, but leave all that care and charge wholly unto them which love her as well as her self doth. And let her think that her father and mother will provide no less diligently for her than she wolde for herself, but much better, by the season they have more experience and wisdom.” (*Vives* XVI)

Dowry

“Though matrimony do always proceed dower, yet doth not dower always follow matrimony. For first, where the husband has no land, the wife can have no dower by the common law.” (*Law’s* 43)

Engagement

“The first promising and inception of marriage is in two parts. . . . The first is when a man and a woman bind themselves simply by their word only to contract matrimony hereafter. The second, when there is an oath made or somewhat taken as an earnest of pledge betwixt them on both parts or on one part to be married hereafter.” (*Law’s* 34)

“Those spousals which are made when a man is without witness, *solus com sola* [he alone with her], are called secret promising or desponsation, which though it be tolerated when by liquid and plain probation it may appear to a judge, and there is not any lawful impediment to hinder the contract, yet it is so little esteemed of (unless it be very manifest) that another promise public made after it shall be preferred and prevail against it.” (*Law’s* 35)

Marriage Ceremony

“Marriage is defined to be a conjunction of man and woman, containing an inseparable connection and union of life.” (*Law’s* 34)

Worthiness

“ . . . first let her understand the chastity is the principal virtue of a woman, and couterpeiseth with all the rest. If she have that, no man will look for any other; and if she lack that, no man will regard other.” (*Vives* XI)

“Hippomenes, a great man of Athens, when he knew his daughter desoiled of one, he shut her up in a stable with a wild horse, kept meatless. For the horse, when he had suffered great hunger long and because he was of nature fierce, we waxed mad and all to-tare the young woman to feed himself with . . .” (*Vives* VII)

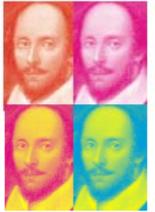


“In Spain by our father’s days in Tarraco, two brethren that thought their sister had been a maid, when they saw her great with child, they dissembled their anger so long as she was with child. But as soon as she was delivered of her child, they thrust swords into her belly and slew her, the midwife looking on.” (Vives VII)

Works Cited

The Law’s Resolution of Women’s Rights. London, 1632. In *Daughters, Wives, and Widows: Writings by Men About Women and marriage in England, 1500-1640*. Ed. Joan Larsen Klein. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1992.

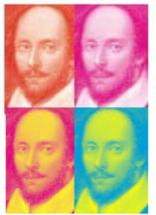
Vives, Juan Luis. *A Very Fruitfull and Pleasant Booke called Instruction of a Christian Woman*. London, 1523.



Handout #2: Courtship and Marriage in the Renaissance

Find evidence in the play *Much Ado About Nothing* that supports the quotation at the left. Some examples have been given. Write your evidence in the space provided; also write down your understanding of the customs in modern times.

Marriage Customs	Shakespeare	Modern Times
Age of Consent		
<p>“At the seventh year of her age, her father shall have aid of his tenants to marry her. At nine years of age, she is able to deserve and have dower. At twelve years to consent to marriage. At fourteen to be <i>hors du guard</i> [outside wardship]. At sixteen to be past the Lord’s tender of a husband. At twenty one to be able to make a feoffment [land grant]. And <i>per Ingelton</i> therein the end of the case. A woman married at twelve cannot disagree afterward. But if she be married younger, she may dissent till she be fourteen.” (<i>Law’s</i> 33)</p>		
Dating		
<p>“ . . . it becometh not a maid to talk where her father and mother be in communication about her marriage, but leave all that care and charge wholly unto them which love her as well as her self doth. And let her think that her father and mother will provide no less diligently for her than she wolde for herself, but much better, by the season they have more experience and wisdom.” (<i>Vives</i> XVI)</p>	<p>Prince: [to Claudio] If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it, and I will break with her and with her father, and thou shalt have her. (1.1.303-305)</p> <p>Leonato’s Brother: [to Hero] Well, niece, I trust you will be ruled by your father? (2.1.50-51)</p>	



Marriage Customs	Shakespeare	Modern Times
Dowry		
<p>“Though matrimony do always proceed dower, yet doth not dower always follow matrimony. For first, where the husband has no land, the wife can have no dower by the common law.” (<i>Law’s</i> 43)</p>	<p>Claudio: Hath Leonato any son, my lord? Prince: No child but Hero, she’s his only heir. (1.1.288-289)</p>	
Engagement		
<p><i>Engagement</i> “The first promising and inception of marriage is in two parts. . . . The first is when a man and a woman bind themselves simply by their word only to contract matrimony hereafter. The second, when there is an oath made or somewhat taken as an earnest of pledge betwixt them on both parts or on one part to be married hereafter.” (<i>Law’s</i> 34)</p> <p>“Those spousals which are made when a man is without witness, <i>solus com sola</i> [he alone with her], are called secret promising or desponsation, which though it be tolerated when by liquid and plain probation it may appear to a judge, and there is not any lawful impediment to hinder the contract, yet it is so little esteemed of (unless it be very manifest) that another promise public made after it shall be preferred and prevail against it.” (<i>Law’s</i> 35)</p>		



Marriage Ceremony		
<p>“Marriage is defined to be a conjunction of man and woman, containing an inseparable connection and union of life.” (<i>Law’s</i> 34)</p>		
Worthiness		
<p>“ . . . first let her understand the chastity is the principal virtue of a woman, and couterpeiseth with all the rest. If she have that, no man will look for any other; and if she lack that, no man will regard other.” (<i>Vives</i> XI)</p> <p>“Hippomenes, a great man of Athens, when he knew his daughter desoiled of one, he shut her up in a stable with a wild horse, kept meatless. For the horse, when he had suffered great hunger long and because he was of nature fierce, we waxed mad and all to-tare the young woman to feed himself with . . .” (<i>Vives</i> VII)</p> <p>“In Spain by our father’s days in Tarraco, two brethren that thought their sister had been a maid, when they saw her great with child, they dissembled their anger so long as she was with child. But as soon as she was delivered of her child, they thrust swords into her belly and slew her, the midwife looking on.” (<i>Vives</i> VII)</p>	<p>Leonato: By my troth, niece, thou wilt never get thee a husband if thou be so shrew of thy tongue. (2.1.18-19)</p> <p>Claudio: [to Leonato] There, Leonato, take her back again. Give not this rotten orange to your friend. (4.1.31-32)</p>	