

**The Law of the Father: Patriarchal
Economy in
*A Midsummer Night's Dream***

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Near the beginning of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Egeus claims "the ancient privilege of Athens" (1.1.42)¹ to dispose of his disobedient daughter as he sees fit. Hermia must either agree to marry Demetrius or "die the death" (1.1.65). Egeus's role, which Barbara Hodgdon once described as "a tiny one,"² raises, in fact, important questions about patriarchal prerogative in early modern marriage-making. While Egeus's draconian demands seem more petulant than rational, his insistence on filial obedience to patriarchal authority likewise argues rigidity motivated less by parental privilege than concern for the patriarchal economy. To preserve the economy, Egeus must bring his recalcitrant daughter under control. Indeed, his demands, however unreasonable, arguably constitute the basis of his authority not only as father, but also as head of household. That such authority conflicts with an early modern consensual marriage model becomes one of the central problems of this Shakespearean comedy.

Much, of course, has been written about conflicting early modern laws governing parental consent in the matter of marriage-making. While my paper touches on the sometimes litigious role of parents in contract disputes, I focus less on conflicted early modern laws involving consent than on how this law of the father, that is, the parental prerogative in marriage-making, functions as part of the overall patriarchal economy. The patriarchal economy, which constituted a kind of currency within early modern England, was, I will argue, crucially dependent upon

the perception of paternal authority. The law of the father thus becomes the ideological basis upon which early modern legal and economic theories governing marriage and the household take shape. As such, Egeus's calls for justice function as more than the cantankerous demands of a self-serving father. Within the heavily patriarchal world of the play, such demands constitute an attempt to preserve an authority deemed necessary to social and political, as well as economic, survival. That the law of the father is discounted by play's end reveals less, I would argue, the failure of patriarchy than it becomes a vehicle through which such authority is re-appropriated for the perceived good of the social as well as political order.

Because parental authority factors so prominently in Egeus's legal dispute, I begin with an overview of the expected role of parents in spousal contracting. That parental consent was considered crucial to early modern marriage-making is clear from legal and religious treatises from the period. Henry Swinburne's *Treatise of Spousals* (1686) speaks of "former ages" when the "Authority of Parents [to promise marriage for their children], and such the Obedience of Children as the Parents did make Promises of their Children's Marriage, and not the Children themselves who neither could, neither would, without their Parents consent, presume to make any kind of Promise concerning Marriage."³ Swinburne contrasts this obedience to "examples of cursed Children in these days, [who in failing to get parental consent dishonor] their Parents, and [break] the Commandment of the Almighty."⁴ Early modern thinkers had long argued that biblical admonitions to "Honor thy father and thy mother" mandated obedience to parental authority in the marriage-making process.⁵ Spanish humanist, Juan Luis Vives's *Education of a Christian Woman* (1524) argues, for example, that young women should hold their parents' commands as "sacrosanct and obey them with all humility. Do not show in mind, countenance, or gesture any defiance toward them, and think of them as a true and solid image of God, creator of all things."⁶ To disobey one's parents was, in essence, to disobey God.

This sentiment is echoed by later Puritan thinkers such as William Gouge and William Perkins, both of whom strongly urge obedience to parental authority in marriage-making. Gouge

argues that “God hath expresse laws [which prohibit children] from taking wives and husbands without or against their parents consent.”⁷ Perkins similarly argues that “the authority of parents must not be resisted or violated.”⁸ Clearly, Mary Darrell was following God’s “expresse laws” when she urged Barnaby Googe to withdraw his suit of marriage after her parents objected. As she declares, “Neither presently I have nor I am well assured never shall have the good will or consent of father nor mother to whom I am both by the law of God and nature bound to give honour and obedience and in no wise willingly grieve or offend them. And do well consider that my chief obedience and duty towards them is to be bestowed in marriage by their consents.”⁹ Thomas Conge likewise appealed to God’s laws when he broke off marital plans with Elizabeth Patton. As he urged, “I pray you . . . consider every way how I am charged not only by God’s laws which ought to be born in mind but by the prince’s laws which ought to be had in reverence, to be obedient and discharge my duty unto my parents.”¹⁰ That not all early modern sons and daughters were as duly obedient to parental authority, however, seems likely given the great number of sermons and treatises admonishing such obedience. Bishop Tobias Matthew of Durham (1597) may well have argued that marriage without parental consent was “a great blemish in our reformed church to be no more deeply chastised than it is”;¹¹ yet the fact remained that no matter how much church and civil authorities condemned marriages carried out without parental consent, such marriages were, for the most part, upheld when challenged in court.

The problem lay, of course, in conflicting laws, both ecclesiastical and civil, regarding the role of parents and children in the making of marriage. Both church and civil officials, while upholding the right of parents to consent to their children’s marriages, likewise emphasized the importance of individual choice. The *Decretals* went so far as to suggest that all that was required for a valid union was consent between man and woman in the eyes of God; no priest, witnesses, nor consent of parents was required.¹² That individual choice, in fact, governed many early modern marital unions has been ably demonstrated by Loreen Giese in her work on the London Consistory Court records.¹³ That early modern officials nevertheless refused to endorse such an unrestricted

model is likewise evident in periodic attempts made to enforce parental rights in marriage-making. In their work on law and marriage, B.J. Sokol and Mary Sokol note the role of the Queen's Ecclesiastical Commission, which attempted to enforce parental rights by occasionally punishing children who refused to obtain the necessary consent.¹⁴ That such cases were relatively rare is perhaps less interesting to me than that when parental authority surfaced as a topic of discussion in early modern England, the primacy of God's law was invariably invoked. Such an appeal, I would argue, aligns parental consent to the law of the father, constituting an appeal not only to the primacy of patriarchy per se, but ultimately to the importance of the patriarchal economy. It is my contention that any discussion involving God's law, or as it were, the law of the father, in the matter of early modern marriage-making must in the end be traced back to considerations of the larger patriarchal economy itself.

The patriarchal economy may best be understood as a kind of currency that enabled necessary social, political and economic transactions between the household and the larger community. That the household was the basic economic unit in early modern England is crucial to an understanding of this economy.¹⁵ Within any economic structure, there exists a necessary circulation of goods and services that enable its functioning. This circulation, however, goes beyond considerations of material assets. Within the credit economy that characterized early modern England, household reputation constituted a crucial component of this overall cultural exchange. As Craig Muldrew has demonstrated, "The reputation of all members of households became so important because it was what determined whether a household could obtain credit."¹⁶ Thus crucial transactions which occurred within the marketplace must necessarily be understood in terms of patriarchal exchange. Moreover, while women householders certainly existed in early modern England, the concept of household itself was invariably linked to patriarchy. While recent scholars such as Corinne Abate, Wendy Wall, and Natasha Korda have argued for the household as woman's space, such space was nonetheless attached to the overall patriarchal economy.¹⁷ In practice, the early modern wife may have overseen the day-to-day operations of the household. It was the husband, however, who functioned as its titular head.

Indeed, husbands and fathers can be understood as heads of households in much the same way monarchs functioned as heads of state.¹⁸ This microcosmic/macrocosmic parallel may, in fact, be glimpsed in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where Egeus functions as head of household and Theseus as head of the Athenian state. As Richard Brathwaite (1630) concludes, "As every man's house is his Castle, so is his family a private Commonwealth, wherein if due government be not observed, nothing but confusion is to be expected."¹⁹

It is perhaps this threat of confusion that motivated so many cultural admonishments calling for obedience to patriarchal authority. Such obedience, I would argue, proved essential to household order, and thus to preservation of reputation. John Dod and Robert Clever's admonishment on good household governance is useful here. As they declare, "It is impossible for a man to understand how to govern the common-wealth that doth not know how to rule his own house, or order his own person, so that he [who] knoweth not [how] to govern, deserveth not to reign."²⁰ Indeed, prudent household management extended well beyond ensuring order within the domestic realm; it was, in fact, necessary to establishing trust within the marketplace. Muldrew has argued how critically important trust was within this credit economy. As he notes, "Trust had to be generated, communicated and negotiated by each household involved in the market."²¹ If, as Dod and Clever note, a man could not order his own household, how could he ever hope to acquire the trust he needed to function within the larger community? Control over spouses, children and servants thus proved fundamental.

Perhaps nothing had the potential to impact the patriarchal economy as significantly as marriage formation. As R. B. Outhwaite has observed, "Marriage was deemed to be far too important an event to be left entirely to the couple themselves, even though the latter had some freedom of choice."²² While, as discussed earlier, Mary Darrell and Barnaby Googe and no doubt countless other early modern sons and daughters dutifully yielded to parental authority in matrimonial matters, others just as likely defied it and in so doing disrupted the household economy. Jonathan Goldberg affirmed, "The family in the Renaissance was inevitably a public unit."²³ Not only did filial disobedience in marriage-making

signal to an ever-watching world that a father had lost control over his household, but such disobedience could well “pollute” the patriarchal line, forever altering the family’s status within the community.

While such dire consequences seem in some respects exaggerated, the fact remains that early modern parents did at times undertake extraordinary measures to bring their rebellious children under control. The infamous 1617 case involving Sir Edward Coke is perhaps illustrative. Accompanied by armed horsemen, Coke purportedly broke into a kinsman’s house where his daughter Frances was hiding with her mother, Lady Elizabeth Hatton. Frances was subsequently imprisoned where she was verbally and physically assaulted until she agreed to marry the suitor Coke had selected for her.²⁴ Coke’s abuse, while no doubt extreme, does illustrate the measures at least one early modern parent undertook to force obedience to patriarchal authority. Martin Ingram has noted that “parents who disapproved strongly of their offspring’s choice of spouse might resort to moral, physical or—most commonly—financial pressure.”²⁵ While such pressure must have done little to heal conflict within divided families, it did signal to this very public world that household order had been restored. It is the attempt to restore reputation, I would argue, that drives Egeus’s opening legal appeal.

Patriarchal authority figures early and prominently in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Egeus’s demands for filial obedience, in fact, set the stage for a discussion of patriarchy and its larger function within the social and political order of the play. What he “beg[s] [from] the ancient privilege of Athens” (1.1.41) is affirmation of the law that will not only grant his parental prerogative in the matter of Hermia’s marriage, but will also allow him to re-assert his authority as head of household. Indeed, Egeus’s appeal to “ancient privilege” is an appeal to the law of the father: to dispose of that which is his own, whether it be to place Hermia in an undesirable marriage to Demetrius, or to put her to death “for disobedience to [her] father’s will” (1.1.87). He lacks only Theseus’s civil jurisprudence to enforce his authority as father.²⁶

In many respects, Egeus’s legal appeal seems little more than self-serving petulance, his decision to marry Hermia to Demetrius

based more on his prerogative as father than on the best interests of his only child. As Egeus declares,

True, he [Demetrius] hath my love;
And what is mine my love shall render him,
And she is mine, and all my right of her
I do estate unto Demetrius. (1.1.95-98)

Egeus's love for Demetrius, in other words, trumps his responsibility to Hermia. David Schalkwyk argues that Egeus's rationale is skewed here, that this father "wants to give his daughter to Demetrius because he loves him . . . His 'judgement' that Demetrius is the 'worthier' is no more rationally founded than Hermia's view of Lysander."²⁷ What apparently motivates Egeus to disregard a daughter's wishes is neither concern for her happiness nor her future economic or social well-being; it is rather the "ancient privilege of Athens," the law of the father that forces this legal confrontation before the court of the Duke. Privilege, or perhaps, prerogative seems to govern his highly irrational and ultimately arbitrary demand.

From an early modern perspective, Egeus's legal appeal could well have been read as the well-intended effort of a father concerned about ensuring his daughter's well-being. As Eric Carlson notes, early modern "parents were concerned with protecting their children from unscrupulous or wastrel spouses. Since sons retained control of their own property and wealth, they did not face the same dangers as did daughters."²⁸ Recall the excessively calculated efforts Portia's dead father undertakes in *The Merchant of Venice* to ensure that his daughter marries one who cares about her and not simply as one who is "richly left" (1.1.161). At the same time, however, as David Cressy has observed, the early modern "father's role was to facilitate, not to impose. Though sometimes conceived as alliances between families, gentry marriages were not all heartlessly commercial or mere dynastic arrangements."²⁹ Yet, Egeus hardly seems to fit this role. His actions appear more like those of parents Vives criticizes, who "whether unknowingly or through deliberate malice, act wrongly in [the marriage-making] decision because they think that the son-in-law whom they deem desirable for themselves would also be a good husband for their daughter."³⁰

Egeus, in fact, offers only the slightest justification for his selection of Demetrius as Hermia's future husband, forcing Lysander to delineate the attributes that would or should concern an early modern parent during mate selection. As this frustrated suitor exclaims,

I am, my lord, as well derived as he,
As well possessed. My love is more than his,
My fortunes every way as fairly ranked,
If not with vantage, as Demetrius;
And—which is more than all these boasts can be—
I am beloved of beauteous Hermia.
Why should not I then prosecute my right? (1.1.99-105)

Giese discusses the many considerations involved in early modern courtship negotiations, including “character, status, estate, age, and appearance.” Love and affection were also important factors in the courtship process.³¹ Using this courtship rubric as a guide, I would have to say that Lysander presents a solid and convincing case for himself as more than qualified to court the much beloved Hermia; that he ranks at more than even par with the favored Demetrius seems clear. Even if we factor in Lysander's obvious bias—he provides his own defense—as well as the fact that he requires the assistance of his dowager aunt—surely an economic resource—to aid his clandestine scheme, it proves difficult to support a case for Egeus acting in the best interests of his daughter. Based upon Lysander's argument, this father's patriarchal claims seem highly irrational.

Yet Egeus's appeal to the law of the father, to the “ancient privilege of Athens,” is also an appeal to the primacy of the patriarchal economy. It is noteworthy that his complaint to Theseus centers around Hermia's disobedience to her father's authority. Although Egeus couches his complaint in bogus charges of witchcraft—“This [Lysander] hath bewitched the bosom of my child” (1.1.27)—it is Hermia's refusal to yield to her father's will that provokes this appeal to Theseus's civil authority. Such defiance saps Egeus's economy, signaling that he has lost control over his household. That he even requires Theseus's legal authority to force Hermia's compliance perhaps says it all.

From Egeus's perspective, a marriage between Hermia and Demetrius promises to be advantageous; this is, in fact, the reason

Demetrius “hath [his] love” (1.1.95). Bruce Bohrer has argued that “from this perspective, marriage exists primarily as a vehicle for the formulation of masculine same-sex attachments, which receive secondary figuration through the exchange of women: hence the primacy of Egeus’s love for Demetrius, and hence, too, Egeus’s insistence upon his absolute authority over Hermia and his concomitant status as part of his ‘estate.’”³² I think we must also, however, read Egeus’s love for Demetrius as representing that critical element of trust which must exist among men if any social exchange is to occur within the marketplace. Thus, while Egeus’s demand for justice may well be viewed as rigid and arbitrary, it is nevertheless the result of a trust violated by a disobedience daughter. Hermia, who should be “happy to comply with parental wishes,” instead “consents not to give sovereignty” (1.1.82).³³ She is, rather, as Christy Desmet has argued, the “counterfeit coin” whose stubborn disobedience threatens Egeus’s reputation within the marital marketplace.³⁴

Egeus’s legal appeal is, thus, as much about protecting his reputation as it is about punishing a recalcitrant daughter for filial disobedience. The rigid, almost mythical law of the father with all its attendant or perhaps illusory power ultimately functions less to underscore parental prerogative in marriage-making than it becomes a means by which to save face within an early modern community where fathers are judged on their ability or failure to preserve the patriarchal economy. Ingram has observed that in early modern England “the ideal was not parental dictation but the *multilateral* consent of the various interests involved in marriage formation, within the framework of respectful attention to parental guidance.”³⁵ Yet, there really can be no meeting of the minds, so to speak, in the case of Egeus and Hermia, for both cannot but lose in any attempt to reach “*multilateral* consent.” Theseus’s initial ruling in support of the law of the father benefits no one. Whether she

prepare to die
 For disobedience to [her] father’s will,
 Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would,
 Or on Diana’s altar to protest
 For aye austerity and single life. (1.1.83; 86-90)

Hermia must lose her love, and Egeus, his daughter's obedience. The law of the father ultimately becomes one of retribution: rendering punishment but no justice.

That Theseus overrules the law of the father in favor of individual choice seems in some respect a challenge to the play's patriarchal underpinnings. Hermia wins; Egeus loses. Desmet argues, in fact, that the play comes to "offer a unified defense of female sexual sovereignty, the woman's rights over her own body and soul."³⁶ While Hermia certainly gets her man by play's end, I'm not certain that she truly gains control over her body. It may well be argued that none of the female characters assumes sexual sovereignty. The defeated Hippolyta is claimed in marriage by her conqueror. Oberon subdues the willful Titania to his authority. Helena is restored to Demetrius. Yet it is Oberon's potion that restores his displaced love to her. Lastly, it is Theseus who orders that all "these couples shall eternally be knit" (4.1.178). Patriarchy, in fact, seems alive and well by play's end. Only Egeus loses. To this father's final request for "the law" (4.1.152), Theseus abruptly declares, "Egeus, I will overbear your will" (4.1.176). Boeher notes that "in general, Egeus's paternal severity forces him to the margins of the contented heteroerotic community established by the play's end."³⁷ This father's tyrannical authority does seem to isolate him from the rest of the Athenian community. Yet, in many respects, Egeus's severity goes beyond the individual case, gesturing, in fact, to a larger problem of the law. As Leonard Tennenhouse has observed, "The problem which authority has to master is a problem with authority itself, authority grown archaic. At the outset, the law seems to serve only the will of the father. A comedic resolution obviously requires either the independence of the law or the generosity of the father."³⁸ The law of the father, I would argue, offers neither. David Lowenthal observes that "the rule of fathers has obvious defects. It gives authority to fathers as such rather than to wise fathers, thus deriving it from the loins rather than the mind."³⁹ This derivation would indeed seem to be the source of Egeus's downfall. While Theseus arguably comes to recognize the need for balance in marital negotiations between parents and children, Egeus rigidly holds to an ancient authority that dismisses the importance of social harmony.

Ann Jennalie Cook has observed that "without diminishing the strength of patriarchal authority, Shakespeare nevertheless

challenges it in a variety of ways. Not only do some fathers willingly accede to their offspring's wishes, but some find their power effectively challenged.²⁴⁰ In many respects *A Midsummer Night's Dream* comes to embrace the early modern concern for individual as well as parental involvement in marriage-making. That Egeus's draconian appeal fails becomes less a criticism of patriarchy itself than of patriarchal demands that undermine the communal well-being. That this father is marginalized by play's end, his voice drowned out by the wedding celebrations says much, in fact, about the need for give and take in marriage formation. In the end, the Athenian community punishes Egeus not because he fails to control a disobedient daughter, but because his rigid adherence to an ancient and ultimately archaic authority proves detrimental to the social and political harmony achieved at the end of the play.

Notes

1. All Shakespeare citations are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. (New York: Norton, 1997).

2. Barbara Hodgdon, "Gaining a Father: The Role of Egeus in the Quarto and the Folio," *Review of English Studies* 37 (1986): 534-42, esp. 534.

3. Henry Swinburne, *A Treatise of Spousals, or Matrimonial Contracts* (London, 1686), Facsimile Edition (Union, NJ: Lawbook Exchange, 2002), 3.

4. Swinburne, *Treatise of Spousals*, 3.

5. See, for example, Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Leviticus 19:3; Ephesians 6:1-4, and Colossians 3:20-21. All passages admonish children to obey their parents as though the latter were God.

6. Juan Luis Vives, *Education of a Christian Woman* (1524), ed. and trans. Charles Fantazzi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 153. This behavioral manual is also known as *Instruction of a Christian Woman*.

7. William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622), quoted in B. J. Sokol and Mary Sokol, *Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 32.

8. William Perkins, *Christian Economy* (London, 1609), in Joan Larsen Klein, *Daughters, Wives and Widows: Writings by Men about Women and Marriage, 1500-1640* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 166.

9. The case of Barnaby Googe and Mary Darrell is cited in Eric Josef Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 99.

10. The case of Thomas Conge and Elizabeth Patton is cited in Carlson, *Marriage*, 98-99.

11. Bishop Tobias Matthew of Durham (1597) is quoted in Carlson, *Marriage*, 96.

12. See Carlson, *Marriage*, especially chapter 2.

13. Loreen L. Giese, *Courtships, Marriage Customs, and Shakespeare's Comedies* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 46-47.

14. Sokol and Sokol, *Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage*, 33-34. See also Carlson, *Marriage*, chapter 5.

15. See Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

16. Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1998), 149.

17. See Corinne S. Abate, ed., *Privacy, Domesticity, and Women in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2003); Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and the English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Natasha Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

18. This, of course, creates an interesting situation in the case of Elizabeth I and other female monarchs. In the case of Elizabeth, although clearly functioning as a "weak woman," she likewise represented herself as prince, as one who possessed "the heart and stomach of a king." See Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

19. Richard Brathwaite, *The English Gentleman; Containing Sundry Excellent Rules, or Exquisite Observations* (London, 1630), quoted in Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 37.

20. John Dod and Robert Clever, *A Godly Forme of Household Government: For the Ordering of Private Families, According to the Direction of God's Word* (London, 1612), quoted in Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 37-38.

21. Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, 151.

22. R. B. Outhwaite, *Clandestine Marriage in England, 1500-1850* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1995), xvi.

23. Jonathan Goldberg, "Fatherly Authority: The Politics of Stuart Family Images," in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 7.

24. The case involving Sir Edward Coke is discussed in Sokol and Sokol, *Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage*, 32.

25. Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 139.

26. We can, in fact, locate parallels to this legal dichotomy in Shakespeare's early modern England. While the Church's Consistory Courts could exact excommunication, penance and fines for disputes involving matrimony, the legal system required the disciplinary arm of a harsher civil judicial authority to imprison those guilty of matrimonial crimes. See Sokol and Sokol, *Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage*, for a discussion of the Queen's Ecclesiastical Commission of York, which was set up in 1561. As Sokol and Sokol note, "This commission operated with delegated authority from the Queen as Supreme Governor of the Church, and did not derive its authority from the bishops as did the Consistory Courts" (33-34).

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27. David Schalkwyk, *Shakespeare, Love and Service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 71.
28. Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation*, 101.
29. David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 254.
30. Vives, *Education of a Christian Woman*, 157.
31. Giese, *Courtships, Marriage Customs*, 66. See chapter two of Giese's text for a more extensive treatment of early modern courtship.
32. Bruce Boehrer, "Economies of Desire in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Studies* 32 (2004): 99-117; esp. 105.
33. See Sokol and Sokol, *Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage*, 30. They discuss the practice of gentry and aristocratic families of arranging marriages for their children as well as the expectation that their children would willingly comply with their parents' matrimonial arrangements.
34. Christy Desmet, "Disfiguring Women with Masculine Tropes: A Rhetorical Reading of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," in *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Critical Essays*, ed. Dorothea Kehler (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 301.
35. Ingram, *Church Courts*, 136.
36. Desmet, "Disfiguring Women," 317.
37. Boehrer, "Economies of Desire," 105.
38. Leonard Tennenhouse, "Strategies of State and Political Plays: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Henry VIII*," in *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, 2nd edition. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 111.
39. David Lowenthal, "The Portrait of Athens in *A Midsummer's Night Dream*," in *Shakespeare's Political Pageant: Essays in Politics and Literature*, ed. Joseph Alulis and Vickie Sullivan (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996), 82.
40. Ann Jennalie Cook, *Making a Match: Courtship in Shakespeare and His Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 103.