

Lora Ademaj

Takeaway #1

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1. List and Concepts Unfamiliar to Me (Defined):

- Coverture: a married woman was basically under her husband's legal identity (limited control over her property, money, etc).---> Philips
- Feme sole: a woman who was legally treated as unmarried and could have more control over her own property and business.---> Philips
- Breach of promise: when someone promised to marry another person but later decided not to (the person who was left could take them to court).---> Montgomery
- Alimony: money that one spouse may have to pay to the other after a divorce.----> Montgomery
- Hardwicke's Marriage Act (1753): a law that made marriage more strictly controlled (ex: parental consent for people under the age of 21). ----> Montgomery
- Clandestine marriage: a marriage that was done secretly.---> Lord Hardwick
- Seraglio: where women were kept separate from society. ---> Wollstonecraft

2. Takeaway From Week's Readings:

One of the biggest takeaways I got from the readings is that the law as written did not always determine what happened in everyday life. What I mean by this is that coverture placed married women under their husbands legal authority, but women sometimes found ways to exercise economic independence through separate property, trusts, etc. Of course, each one of these had their limits and disadvantages and were still controlled by men at times, but it is interesting to see the timeline of how women placed themselves into these roles. For instance, the readings show how women's rights developed gradually through reforms concerning marriage, property, divorce, custody, voting, and employment. I have to say, though, as

Wollstonecraft argued, women's inequality was maintained not only by law but also through education and social expectations that encouraged women to be "beautiful" and "dependent" rather than rational and independent. Therefore, it makes me wonder, despite these laws that are made to "protect" women, are they as effective when societal norms have already painted women as less than men?

Another takeaway I got from the readings is that women's experiences depended heavily on where and when they lived. The Hardwicke Marriage Act, for example, shows how important location was because marriages had to follow rules involving churches, chapels, etc. At the same time, local customs could create different opportunities for women, such as their professions. Time was also important because women's legal rights changed through different reforms. This makes me realize that we cannot look at "women's rights" as one fixed thing because the rights available to a woman depended on the period and the place she lived. Not to forget, the class, race and age of the women also applies to this.

The readings also made me think about the difference between what the law said should happen and what actually happened to women. The laws provide evidence of the rules that were officially established, but court cases, newspapers, and personal writings show how those rules were experienced and challenged. For example, Wollstonecraft's writing gives us evidence of how she understood the social expectations placed on women, while newspaper articles show people debating and criticizing women's treatment under the law. I also learned that we have to be careful when using these sources because one person's experience does not necessarily represent every woman's experience. For example, a case that caught my eye was the case of Jane Campbell. In short, she was the first woman to receive a divorce after her husband, Edward Addison committed adultery with her sister. In light of this case, she received custody of her

children which was unusual at the time (Montgomery pg. 8). Comparing this to other cases in which women had to have direct proof of adultery to win a case, Campbell's case shows how weird it was for a woman to receive both a divorce and custody of her children. In conclusion, the readings show that legal change was not simple and that women gained more rights over time. Despite how much time passes by, as a woman in the 21st century the law sadly didn't automatically change the attitudes and social expectations surrounding women.