

of both sexes." "If we are to achieve a richer culture," she wrote in *Sex and Temperament*, "rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place." As she wrote, spoke, and lived for that goal, Margaret Mead exemplified the role of humanitarian. Her named will continue to stand for much more than that of a mere "anthropologist," as we as a society struggle to achieve her dreams.

—Naomi M. Barry

MERNISSI, Fatima

Nationality: Moroccan. **Born:** Fez, 1940. **Education:** Studied at the Sorbone, Paris; Brandeis University, Ph.D. in sociology. **Career:** Currently professor of sociology, University Mohammed V, Rabat, Morocco. Contributor to numerous women's conferences worldwide; member of editorial board of several publications.

PUBLICATIONS

Political/Social Theory

Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Schenkman, 1975; revised, London, Al Saqi, 1985; Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1987.

Sexe Idéologie Islam. N.p., 1983; revised edition, Rabat, Éditions Maghrebines, 2 vols., 1985.

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al-Mar'ah wa-al-sulat / silsilah bi-ishr-af F-atimah al-Mern-iss-i. Al-Dar al-Bayda', Nashr al-Fannak, 1990.

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Fatima Mernissi is a Moroccan woman sociologist who has made her mark in the second half of the twentieth century as a Moslem feminist. Her reputation is largely due to her numerous works, which have been translated into several languages, and to her unmovable stance, in these works, as a champion of women's rights in the Moslem Arab world. It is not possible to place Mernissi's work solely in sociology, women's studies, or religion, for it crosscuts all three, gaining importance precisely from this multidimensionality. All contemporary woman scholars writing on the relationship between Islam and woman tread on the path she first opened.

Mernissi made her name heard for the first time in the 1970s with *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society* (1975). She has since published a number of other essays or reminiscences, which includes the critically acclaimed *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood* (1994) and which center around women, Islam, and Moslem Arab society. She is a frequent participant in international conferences and seminars, during which she does not refrain from pronouncing her feminism. A professor of sociology at Muhammed V University in Rabat for several years, Mernissi has also been visiting professor at the University of California at Berkeley and Harvard University.

Mernissi studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and later received her Ph.D. from Brandeis University. Thus familiar with both French and American cultures, Mernissi writes in French as well as in English. Her Western academic discourse and perspective, coupled

with her access to Arab sources, put her in a unique position. She is heard in the West because she provides scholarship about and insight into an unknown area using Western tools, while the methodology she has acquired and her seriousness of intent enable her to study Islam, its history, and catechism in a new light. Her writings call into question some of the basic premises of traditional Islam as it has been lived; what Mernissi envisages for the Moslem Arab woman is nothing less than a total conceptual revolution.

Her main message is that Islam should not be written off as merely an unenlightened system of belief that imprisons women behind the veil and fixates societies in a backward state. Rather, it is the men's attitude that is responsible for women's position in Islam, a position that is ineluctably being altered with the forceful modernity of our time.

In *Beyond the Veil* Mernissi points to the difference between the Judeo-Christian tradition of Western societies and the Moslem Arab tradition concerning women. While Westerners consider women as inferior and refuse to see in them anything but passive sexual partners, Islam acknowledges the powerful sexuality of women and as such is afraid of it; that is why women are barred, made to remain within boundaries, outside of the male "space," or hidden, covered by the veil. The goal is to protect men. In the introduction to the 1987 revised edition of the book, she discusses the issue of present-day Islamic fundamentalism and asserts that if there is such a cry today in Moslem societies for women to be veiled, it must be because women are *not*, because they must have been shedding it. She believes that a return *en masse* to the veil is unlikely and doomed to remain a dream of Moslem men. But she indicates that the call to the veil has an unspoken dimension that should not be neglected, since "far from being a regressive trend," it is, "on the contrary a defense mechanism against profound changes in ... sex roles." She explains that what is at stake are male concerns about power. Knowledge, for one, leads to power, and women, at least in her native Morocco, are fast getting it and all that it provides, disrupting and disturbing the traditional Arab society, in a manner in which there is no going back.

An unquestioning believer in God, and very much admirative of the Prophet Muhammed, Mernissi decides in *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam* (1987, English translation 1991) to go to the roots of Moslem ideology to see why it is misogynist. Analyzing the first years of Islam, as it was in the making, she finds a situation that is not at all unfavorable to women. She encounters a democratic Muhammed, who envisions an egalitarian society, with women enjoying equal status with men. As Mernissi points out, his wives had "extraordinary freedom in the public sphere," and were "directly involved in the affairs of the Muslim state."

It is only later, while in Medina, as he was aging and had suffered military defeats, which made him vulnerable, that the Prophet had to bow in to his conservative Companions, such as Umar (later the second Caliph), who wished to see pre-Islamic tribal male prerogatives retained. He thus instituted the *hijab* (literally "curtain" in Arabic) that segregated the sexes and forced women to conceal themselves from the public gaze, thus forbidding them public life and aspirations. Mernissi considers that this was a compromise the Prophet felt he had to make if he did not want to see everything he had achieved so far founder in the hands of his opponents.

Nothing prevents the Moslem Arab woman from reverting to the Prophet's initial dream and fulfilling it, of course, except 15

centuries of social conventions, which, Mernissi believes, are no longer insurmountable.

—Gönül Pultar

MILL, Harriet Taylor, and John Stuart Mill

Nationality: British.

MILL, Harriet (Hardy) Taylor. **Born:** 1807. **Family:** Married 1) the merchant John Taylor (died 1849), three children; 2) John Stuart Mill in 1851. **Career:** Member of London intellectual community; since 1838, aided Mill in drafting several of his works, including *On Liberty*, 1859. **Died:** Avignon, 3 November 1858.

MILL, John Stuart. **Born:** 20 May 1806; son of the economist James Mill. **Education:** Educated at home; studied in France c. 1820. **Family:** Married Harriet Taylor in 1851 (died 1858). **Career:** Clerk in examiner's office, India House, 1823-56; founded the Utilitarians, 1823; co-owner and editor, *London Review*, 1835-40; elected to Parliament, 1865-68; rector of St. Andrew University, 1866. **Died:** 8 May 1873.

PUBLICATIONS

By Harriet Taylor Mill

The Enfranchisement of Women (originally published in *Westminster Review*, July 1851, and *New York Tribune for Europe*, 4 October 1850). Rochester, New York, n.p., 1851.

By John Stuart Mill

A System of Logic. London, J. W. Parker, 1843; New York, Harper Bros., 1848; 8th edition, London and New York, Harper Bros., 1900.

Essays on Some Unsettled Questions of Political Economy. London, J. W. Parker, 1844.

Principles of Political Economy. London, J. W. Parker, and Boston, Little Brown, 1848.

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Dissertations and Discussions (originally published in *Edinburgh Review* and *Westminster Review*). London, n.p., 1859; Boston, Spencer, 4 vols., 1865-68.

Considerations on Representative Government. London, Parker, 1861; New York, Harper Bros., 1867.

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An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy. London, Longmans Green, 1865; Boston, Spencer, 1866.

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