

Fatema Mernissi Postdoctoral Fellow in Social and Cultural Studies

ABOUT NAMESAKE SCHOLAR FATEMA MERNISSI



Fatema Mernissi, (1940 Fes, Morocco - 2015 Rabat), is a Moroccan sociologist and writer. She pursued her graduate education in the United States and in 1973 obtained a PhD in sociology from Brandeis University, and her thesis, which later became a book under the title *Beyond the Veil, Male-Female Dynamics in Muslim Society* (1975), won worldwide acclaim as the first book that deconstructed the patriarchal imaginary in the Muslim world. In parallel to her teaching at Mohamed V University since the 1980s, Mernissi

developed a remarkable career as a sociologist, writer, novelist, artist, and civil society-promoter.

Many of her books were translated into 28 languages. Fatema Mernissi quickly became an icon and a role model for women and men across the globe. Mernissi's work explores the relationship between sexual ideology, gender identity, sociopolitical organization, and the status of women in Islam; her special focus, however, is Moroccan society and culture. As a feminist, her work represents an attempt to undermine the ideological and political systems that silence and oppress Muslim women. A remarkable weaver of ideas and a powerful and yet elegant and exuberant voice, Fatema Mernissi leaves books that will continue to enchant us. For example, *Veil and the Male Elite - A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam* (1987) is widely hailed as a pioneer masterpiece in the deconstruction of the misogyny in males' interpretations of Islam's sacred sources: Qur'an and hadith (Prophet's sayings and deeds), a theme that is still vibrant today. She was widely honored and acknowledged as an exceptional writer, scholar, and woman.

Fatema Mernissi won many awards, prominent among which is the Prince Asturias Award for Literature in 2003, which was shared with Susan Sontag. In 2011, *The Guardian* categorized her as one of the 100 women that influenced the world. Seen as a "revolutionary princess," a "towering intellect," "a calm agitator," and a "great listener," Mernissi never failed to attract attention. She left a legacy that will continue to inspire generations of men and women the world over. Her thoughts, visionary ideas, and extraordinary power of expression and communication could reach the minds and hearts of scholars, as well as those of ordinary people. [*Sources: Middle East Studies Association; Oxford, Encyclopedia Britannica, and Oxford Islamic Studies Online.