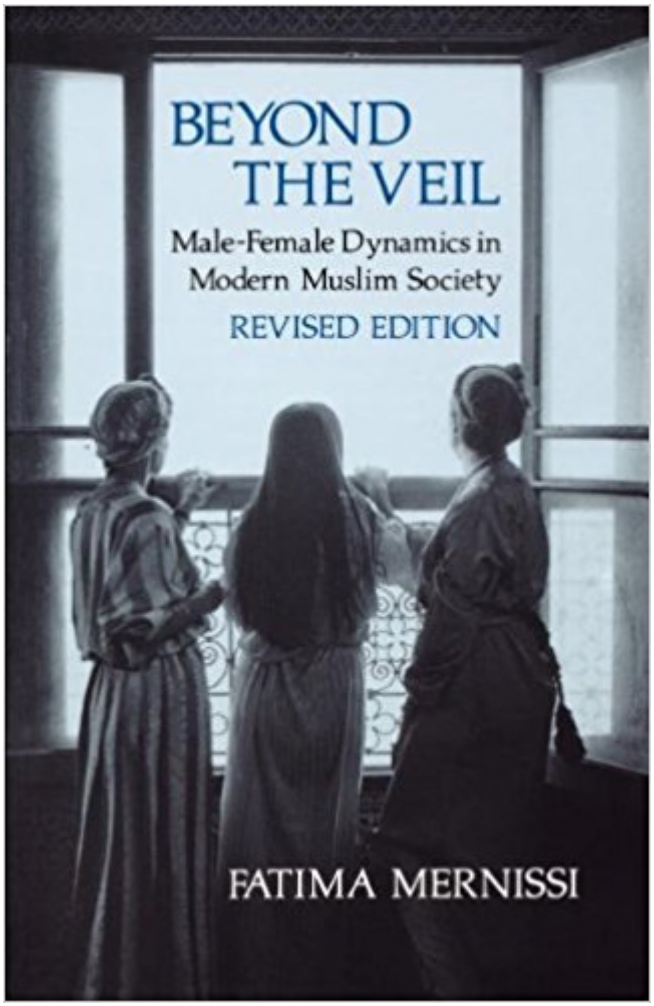
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Beyond The Veil, Revised Edition: Male-Female Dynamics In Modern Muslim Society



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Synopsis

"Required reading... " Ã¢â ¬â ¢Elizabeth Fernea, The University of Texas at Austin"If a reader were to select only one book in order to gain insight into women's status and prospects in Islamic society, this study should be the one chosen for its clarity, honesty, depth of knowledge and thought-provoking qualities." Ã¢â ¬â ¢Arab Book WorldIn this expanded and updated edition, with a new introduction on Muslim women and fundamentalism, Mernissi argues that Islamic fundamentalism is in part a defense against recent changes in sex roles and perceptions of sexual identity.

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Customer Reviews

"Required reading ... " Elizabeth Fernea, University of Texas at Austin "If a reader were to select only one book in order to gain insight into women's status and prospects in Islamic society, this study should be the one chosen for its clarity, honesty, depth of knowledge and thought-provoking qualities." Arab Book World

Fatima Mernissi was born in 1941 in Fez, Morocco, a centre of nationalist agitation at the time. She attended a school run by movement activists which accepted female students, and later studied political science in Rabat and sociology in the US. From 1973-80 she was Professor of Sociology at the University of Rabat, and has since been a member of the research centre of Mohammed V University there. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Well written.

Must read for any scholar of Islam.

Can’t wait to read all the pages.

I am grateful to Ms. Mernissi for this scholarly review. The critique that this reads like a term paper reflects the serious scholarship and the edition I read published by Indian University Press was worthy to be read. This is not a light, superficial examination. I especially appreciated the clear explanation of how the repression of the feminine has its roots in the long history of Islam but there is a countervailing trend that sought and still seeks to establish true equality for women.Education as a catalyst for the changes that are ensuing for women’s rights throughout the Muslim world was well presented. I wish Mernissi had more fully explored the theme of Freud’s passive view of the feminine as it contrasts with the propensity in Islam to deal with the more active feminine sexuality through overt repression.Mernissi notes that "While Muslim exploitation of the female [feminine principle] is cloaked under veils and hidden behind walls, Western exploitation has had the bad taste of being bare and over-exposed." Today it seems modesty has been abandoned in the West. The underpinnings of the "hijab" and veiling are presented by Mernissi with a perspective that clearly aligns with feminist tradition and the movement to fully enfranchise women in society.This is a work of true scholarship that helps frame the subject of the veil and the "hijab" (note the term "hijab" refers both to the covering of the head and the entire realm of modesty designed to avoid arousing chaos within the Muslim community by women who are not covered). The updated Introduction is very helpful but I would like to see a more recently updated Preface to the book.

Wow! This book really raises some serious, thought-provoking questions regarding female sexual status, and sexual self-determination in Arab-Muslim societies. If I had read this book in the 70s - when it was first written and published - I would have really thought of it as a classic work, but I wasn’t born then.Yet, the book is incredibly outdated. Mernissi does a good job in questioning the general notions (and misconceptions) widespread in her days about religion and the inferiority of women. However, she is out of touch with the contemporary revolutionary ideas that claimed Islam back from the selfish authority of the benighted "Mullahs," who misinterpted Islam out of ignorance, or to fulfill their own political agendas (as still happening in some Muslim countries, wherein Muslim

women are subjugated and denied basic rights, such as education.)Working at the courts in my conservative Gulf country, I witnessed cases in which women "self-determinedly" divorced their husbands, who could not satisfy them sexually. (Lol, awww! I can't believe I'm saying this!)Even with some historical and Islamic inaccuracies (for instance, many hadiths - Prophetic traditions - quoted by Mernissi have been outruled as inauthentic by contemporary Islamic scholars, thus invalidating many of her arguments and theories), I found this book to be very interesting, and it sheds light - though indirectly, and perhaps unintentionally - on Moroccan history and culture. The chapter on Mothers-in-Law was especially amusing!It is unfair to criticize the book without taking into consideration the fact that it was written decades ago, and until the latest edition (1985), it must have been current. Instead of complaining about the book and its outdated content, I think I'll just go ahead and write a well-researched book on the same topic!

Despite a fair amount of attention given to this book in the popular press a few years ago, it is not a book for a general audience. It reads like a long term paper, using terms like "symbolic capital" for "ideas", for example (although to be fair, this English version is a translation). It is also out of date, since even though the publication date is 1985, most of it was written in 1970. As for how well it covers the subject stated in the title, I was disappointed. Many times in the text, Mernissi writes "I will now examine (a topic)" yet at the end of the section, I didn't feel that she had. Especially missing in my mind was information on what the "liberated" muslim women are saying about themselves, about being educated to the same level as men, and working outside of the home for wages. Mernissi reports having had unstructured interviews with six such modern women, but except for listing their ages, marital status, and occupations in a table, never mentions them again. These are women who were breaking new ground in male-female relations in 1970 but we don't get to hear what their experience was. Instead we get a series of basically philosophical discussions on the roles of women, men, and the heterosexual relationship in Morrocan Islamic society based on Islamic texts hundreds of years old. This book is really for political science or religious studies majors only.

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