

Quote/Unquote

"Women must begin to write more truthfully about the profound mystery of sex. I think that race is also a mystery. Which is to say that neither can be fully comprehended except as deeply mysterious expressions through which we can learn profound lessons about life. It is almost impossible not to learn something about yourself in the sexual act. So it's important for women to be alert to the spiritual growth and self-discovery they can attain by paying close attention to their sexuality." (Alice Walker, *By the Light of my Father's Smile*, "A Conversation with Alice Walker", Interview by Evelyn C. White).

"On my wedding night I did not bleed. My husband cut his finger so there would be blood to show on the sheet. The next morning he took me straight to the doctor to have my hymen examined. Although my hymen was intact, he still sometimes treat me in a condescending manner. Until today, I still had no idea that it is natural for some women not to bleed." (Pinar Ilkcaracan, (Ed.), *Women and Sexuality in Muslim Societies*, p. 194)

"The most common referral for virginity surgery by physicians is the term "repair" which has different connotations. 'Repair' simply refers to a thing or a product which is broken and not functioning properly. In order to be able to use this thing a specialist needs to repair it. If a woman's virginity is 'broken,' it is assumed that she won't function properly in patriarchal society where virginity is an asset, if not a prerequisite, for marriage. It can be asserted that a woman's body in the physicians' psyche is a thing, repairable by medicine - and not human. For a woman with sexual experience prior to marriage, repair by a physician through reconstructive virginity surgery is needed if she is to exist properly in patriarchal society." (Pinar Ilkcaracan, (Ed.), *Women and Sexuality in Muslim Societies*, p.222).

"The tension between pleasure and danger is a powerful one in women's lives. The exercise of our sexuality can be pleasurable, a joyous exploration; it can also be fraught with guilt, repression and sanction. The negative side of our sexuality is that which victimizes

us, which makes us vulnerable to all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, such as rape and incest and bondage against our will. This vulnerability makes us aware, sometimes too aware, of the potential dangers of exercising our sexuality. The threat of sexual attack is one of the most powerful tools of control of women in contemporary society." (*Women in Action*, No. 1, 1999).

"I began having sex in 1974, right after I turned 16. Part of my conscious feminist ethic then was to sleep with whomever I was attracted to and not allow the world to impose a double standard on my desires. Of course, up until I was 23, much of my sexual freedom was assisted by drugs or alcohol. I would meet a man, usually in a bar or at a party, and be able to have sex with him mainly because I was high. I never learned how to wait - I learned how to wake up with strangers. According to the world then, I was sexually liberated. But my liberation forced me to deny my disappointment when I ended up alone. I couldn't create a balance between my sexual desire and my emotional needs. I just know I needed to be free, and somehow in the process I confused my rebelliousness with desire." (*Ms. Magazine*, March/April 1996, p. 94).

"I seem to refuse to stick to rigid gender identities. I do not refuse being a woman, and do not want to adopt being a man. I am not a very masculine woman, and do not want to be a feminine man, well maybe I would not mind the last one for a short while! I might not be able to express it literally at this stage in my life, but the closest I could express is the following. Not only individuals who believe they are born in the wrong body are transgendered, not only individuals who have physical characteristics of the opposite gender (feminine men, masculine women) may be transgendered, people can be transgendered in their minds. I could be one, I accept my feminine, masculine, and androgynous genderhood, womanhood and transgenderhood. When I want to play and be a man, or someone other than a woman, in my mind I feel a certain transcendence, I feel a bit more free. So I do that from time to time, to get away from the suffocation that was imposed on me by pinning me down to a certain diameter on the basis of my physical sex. (<http://www.bintelnas.org/03desire/sexcult.html>).