

# Quote/Unquote

As soon as soft hair began to thicken above my lips, whenever I looked in a mirror I began to imagine myself with a complete and perfect moustache. What I envisaged was a model moustache of the kind that I would have liked to have had, not as it would actually have been. I was handsome in that moustache which I added to my face like one adds a pair of sun-glasses, though I didn't acquire a pair of those until I was past forty. Nevertheless, a moustache and sun glasses, together with a pipe: the image was never far from my mind, though when I did adopt the pipe I only used it for about ten days. Pipe, moustache, sun glasses, and also the overcoat which we used to imagine as the dress of secret policemen, all this combined to make up the complete man who lacked nothing. (Hassan Daoud, *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East*, p. 273).

It would help to sort out from the usual clichés about "men-and-sex vs. women-and-love" the genuine intuition about what makes male sexuality distinctly male. Everyone has heard the clichés that say, when it comes to sexual relationships, women focus on the intimacy part and men focus on the physical part. But what really makes male sexuality distinctly male? Maybe it can be stated like this. Female sexuality is specific. Women rarely want sex-in-general: their passion is focused on one with whom the sex is desired. Commitment is inherent in female sexuality, no doubt in large part for biological reasons. The question for women is who the lucky winner will be. And the problem is avoiding bad or too early or serial commitments. But male sexuality isn't like that, perhaps again for biological reasons. It is naturally unfocused and amorphous. It is a challenge for men to focus desire onto one person, one woman, one life partner. Herein the culmination of sexual adulthood for men is found. If men engage in too-early-sex or pre-wife promiscuity, not only is true sexual adulthood subverted, but a crucial challenge to the man — an essential test of his masculinity — is lost or failed, all too often in the supposed pursuit of masculinity itself. Promiscuity undermines masculinity. Fatherhood perfects it. (Sarah E. Hinlicky, *Subversive Masculinity* <<http://www.boundless.org/2000/features/a0000195.html>>

Arab masculinity (rujulah) is acquired, verified and played out in the brave deed, in risk-taking, and in expressions of fearlessness and assertiveness. It is attained by constant vigilance and willingness to defend honour

(*sharaf*), face (*wajh*), kin and community from external aggression and to uphold and protect cultural definitions of gender-specific propriety. .... In the Palestinian context, the occupation has seriously diminished those realms of practice that allow men to engage in, display and affirm masculinity by means of autonomous actions. Frequent witnesses to their father's beatings by soldiers or settlers, children are acutely aware of their fathers' inability to protect themselves and their children." (Julie Peteet, *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East*, p.107).

Men's clothing has been repeatedly restyled in the past, and contemporary trends suggest that it is still undergoing transformation. Some, for instance, have observed a 'feminization' and 'emasculinization' of men's fashion, particularly in the realm of haute couture. Recent designer fashions play on gender reversal in male fashion ... Apart from this gender swapping, there is also an air of androgyny surrounding modern fashion in general. 'On Catwalks and even in showrooms,' it appears, 'gender has become blurred beyond all recognition..' (Alejandro Diaz, *Fashioning Masculinity: Change and Paradox in Men's Fashion*, p.3. <<http://www.stanford.edu/~amd/download/masculinity.pdf>>

Although patriarchy has certainly changed in form over the last century or more, especially through the growth of the state, men's power still resides at least in part in the family and the institution of fatherhood. Historically, fatherhood is both a means of possession of and care for young people, and an arrangement between men. It has also been and still is a way for some men of living with, being with, being violent to, sexually abusing, caring for and loving particular young people (those that called 'your own'), and a way of avoiding connection, care and contact with other young people more generally. Even nice fathers can switch to become nasty ones. Fatherhood has often involved getting something for nothing, an assumption of rights and authority over others, principally women and children, rather than responsibilities for them. The problems of both father absence and father distance are now recognised more than ever (Williams, 1998). For some men, becoming fathers can and obviously does involve major changes in responsibilities and more work.

(Jeff Hearn, *A Crisis in Masculinity or New Agendas for Men*, p.7). <[http://www.europrofem.org/02.info/22contri/2.04.en/2en.masc/01en\\_mas.htm](http://www.europrofem.org/02.info/22contri/2.04.en/2en.masc/01en_mas.htm)>