

Paradoxy

“Miss Jelkes, we live on two levels.”

“Just two?”

“The fantastic, and the realistic are the two levels upon which we live.

But which is the real one, really?”

“I would say - both, Mr. Shannon.”

from The Night of the Iguana, the movie



From a play program of
Tea and Sympathy

She's often evoked through opposites.

The story of her “being discovered” is of a Gabriel* whose annunciation came in these words:

“Sweet virgin, are you an actress?”

When she managed to answer that she was, he said “Take down your hair; you look like a tart!”

Ancient dichotomy, the virgin and the whore.

The spiritual and the sexual, which our culture held so separate; yet, from the beginning, it seems, she was vividly both.

People note how she combines great strength with vulnerability.

And because of her I've never thought there need be a conflict between feminine and feminist.

One more:

With the very same words, the same gestures that proved to young Tom forever that he was not a fairy, she showed me, past all question, that I was.