THE BAWDY POLITIC:

STRIPS OF CULTURE AND THE CULTURE OF STRIP

Michael Bloom

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ABSTRACT

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Michael Bloom

This work develops a new approach to female strip dancing as cultural practice by using methods of cultural history, ethnographic field work and theoretical critique in order to reconstruct the historical setting in which strip dancing emerged, the varied sites where it continues to evolve, and the diverse interpretations of strip by its different practitioners.

Toward this end, the dissertation is divided into five major sections which link such forms of body movement and display to wider socio-historical movements of theory and practice; sexuality; commerce; pleasure and power; and culture.

It is then concluded that such small-scale or " stripped-down " studies following this model may advance critical understanding of human bodies and subjects in cultural theory and practice, by situating non-mechanistic notions of communication, culture and dance within detailed investigations that emphasize the complexity and specificity of the practices of everyday life.

SOMMAIRE

Ce travail aborde les spectacles de strip-tease féminin en tant que moeurs. A l'aide de méthodes de l'histoire de la culture, de recherches ethnographiques sur le terrain et d'une critique théorique, il reconstruit le contexte historique qui en a vu l'émergence, les divers endroits où ils continuent à évoluer ainsi que les différentes interprétations qu'en donnent ses diverses exécutantes.

C'est dans ce but que la dissertation se divise en cinq grandes sections, reliant de telles manifestations de mouvements corporels à de plus vastes courants historiques de théorie et pratique, sexualité, commerce, plaisir et pouvoir, culture.

Nous concluons ensuite que des études de cette sorte, à petite échelle ou " effeuillées, " peuvent augmenter une compréhension critique des corps et sujets humains, en situant des notions non mécaniques de communication, culture et danse dans des enquêtes détaillées qui font ressortir la complexité et la spécificité des moeurs quotidiennes.

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of

Billy Bloom (1963-1987)

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I wish everyone in the world was a stripper.
Except me, of course.

John Waters

SECTION ONE: MOVEMENTS OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

> Not so long ago it seemed that every third person you bumped into in Greek Street was a feminist researching for her Ph.D. into prostitution or stripping. She would be middle-class, the writer; you, working-class, a stripper were the research, your life the object of study.
>
> Nickie Roberts [1]

1. Not So Comic Strips

The action of stripping implies the exposure of the character and nature of a person or thing, through a reduction to essentials without excess detail.[2] A stripped-down dissertation that investigates a subject to the bone with a minimum of extraneous argumentation and illustration would then be a very admirable accomplishment (not to mention a more pleasurable reading experience). What naked truths should be revealed in this manner? Perhaps as Erving Goffman suggests, we look at our objects of study in terms of strips; that is, " any arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity ... any raw batch of experiences. "[3] But what random slice of life is a cut above the rest and deserves critical attention? And what theories do we use to understand such cultural strips in a wider context, especially when these theories themselves are in dire need of some stripping?

The verb " strip " also denotes actions of robbing, plundering, despoiling and depriving people of honours, property and rank.[4] Such symbolic violence is predominant in many cultural theories that are based on classical epistemologies, where human subjects are stripped of their humanity through mechanistic metaphors and models of embodiment.

The human body is generalized in Cartesian mechanics as " res extensa, " part of the external world, a machine devoid of cognitive function.[5] Similarly, the body of Hobbes Leviathan is an actual machine, and the commonwealth is a political machine identical with the individual human body.[6] Such mechanistic images of the human body were central to medical, philosophical, political and scientific bodies of knowledge from the sixteenth century until the present.[7] Their presence is also found in alternative theories of embodiment, as in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, where the " lived body " actually holds a cardinal epistemological and existential position; even here, the individual subject is viewed as a " self-centered and self-sustaining system of communication, " that is divorced from social and historical realms.[8]

Critical analyses of non-verbal modes of culture which are based on the varied theories of linguistics and/or literary criticism are often fraught with vague and unsupported assumptions on the communicational dimensions of social action. The reduction of the totality of cultural production to that

which is textual or printed material is an elitist and unworkable proposition; and is as untenable as textualizing all of society and making the whole world into a text.[9]

Unfortunately, such over-textualization has been extended to notions of embodiment and subjectivity, where the human body is indeed stripped and reduced to a textual corpus, inscribed as machine, medium and territory, and read according to essentialist and nominalist grammars. Technical metaphors of the body as machine abound in major critical projects, including Michel Foucault's analyses of " political technologies of the body, " and Deleuze and Guattari's attempts to locate a materialist psychiatry in the space of a host of " desiring machines. "[10]

In other works of Mikhail Bakhtin, or Marcel Mauss for example, the human body serves as medium for external social processes of communication and representation.[11] Moreover, the notion of medium is usually linked to the geographic metaphor of the body as empty space, site or territory where it is " traversed by regulative forces " and " territorialized in accordance with hierarchies and topographical rules. "[12] The stripped body as tabula rasa is " inscribed " and " mapped " as zone or field which political and psychological forces mark and invest in.[13] Umberto Eco has attacked this notion of bodily inscription, stating:

> To put it simply, I'm not quite clear as to what inscribing means. It seems to me one of those

> expressions that resolve in an authoritative manner problems that nobody knows how to define otherwise. 14

The ontological status of the body as machine, medium and territory is guaranteed by either an essentialist or a nominalist definition. The essentialist body is a single, pregiven biological entity endowed with a set of transhistorical needs and desires that may be positively described (in Darwinian, Freudian, Marxian or Natural Scientific terms, for example).[15] The nominalist body is rather a plurality of bodies whose precise attributes and meanings are culturally constructed through processes of social consensus and control (following Bakhtinian, Durkheimian, or Foucauldean models, for example).[16]

Both essentialist and nominalist ontologies posit an ahistorical, classless and degendered subject by hypostatizing either biology or culture as first cause in ambiguous processes of embodiment. The stripped human body then becomes a disposable term of practice, a fixed and passive object of external control. In essentialism, the active subject in culture and history disappears through the " natural " similarity and uniformity of biological structures and functions; in nominalism, the biological, material, physical body disappears through unspecified processes of cultural construction.

Even some feminist theorists who introduce problems of

gender within diverse models of embodiment and subjectivity strip the female body through the same ontological and rhetorical strategies. Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and Michele Montrelay, among others, constitute the female body as a pre-given reality with a special relation to " Being " and " jouissance; "[17] whereas scholars such as those working in the M/F Collective, treat the female body as a free-floating signifier lacking consistent being, constantly constructed and " charted, zoned, made to bear meaning, " inscribed as a map, and subordinated to " fields of cultural desire. "[18] Women are then stripped as signs produced via exchange, signifying nothing but sexual difference -- figuratively and literally absented as subjects.[19]

Cultural theory is not that far off from cultural practice, where the mechanistic objectifications of workers in factories, of subjects in totalitarian societies, of women as sex objects in our own society -- are all imbricated in socio-historical relations of epistemology, ideology and practice.[20] Mechanistic models abound in essentialist theories of culture which attempt " to reveal a simplicity lying at its core, " thus effacing and eliding the myriad complexities of cultural phenomena; and in nominalist analyses that seem to erase these phenomena altogether by giving more ontological credence to their theoretical concepts than to the very modes of culture under study.[21]

To some degree, both types of cultural theory may arise from an implicit quest for a comprehensive and final scientific account, logic of culture, semantics of history, or supersemiotics of communication and representation. But such a global orientation may not be appropriate for the analysis of the diversity of cultural practices across varied times and spaces.

2. Some Stripped Premises

Perhaps critical theorists should begin to narrow their cultural horizons and develop non-mechanistic views of embodiment and subjectivity by examining the socio-historical complexities and specificities of cultural practice. As Clifford Geertz argues:

> One cannot write a " General Theory of Cultural Interpretation. " Or, rather, one can, but there appears to be little profit in it, because the essential task of theory building here is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them. 22

Our understanding of embodiment, subjectivity and culture may be built up through these " thick descriptions " or reconstructions of cultural practice in small-scale studies. 23 Of course this perspective already implies certain major assumptions on human bodies, subjects and practices that may be articulated before such work can begin in earnest.

For example, in this dissertation I utilize a dialectical

model of subjectivity, where people are neither totally passive nor totally powerful; neither totally centered and transcendent, nor totally decentered and deconstructed.[24] These paramount identifying characteristics should not be decided a priori through ambiguous, generalized and mechanistic theories or Spinozean machines of " Desire, " " Discourse, " " the Gaze, " " Ideology " and " Representation, " (although particular desires, discourses, gazes, ideologies and representations may or may not have important ramifications in specific analyses) because the formation of human subjectivity and embodiment does not obviously occur through such unitary mechanisms which " subject " empty bodies and psyches to the dictates of deterministic definition and regulation.

Rather, I assume that active subjects live simultaneously within biological, psychological and social worlds and are embodied in their labour of economic production.[25] This perspective recognizes the essentialist conception of the human body as possessing a transhistorical set of physical needs and structures while affirming the nominalist attention to the culturally constructive practices which make these very needs and structures meaningful in specific socio-historical contexts.[26] For example, particular behaviours that are labeled as " masculine " or " feminine " need not be treated as timeless universals but studied as symbolic correlates resulting as a consequence of biology or learning (or of both).[27] While human bodies, genders and sexualities indeed possess bio-

logical foundations, they also emerge from varied forms of practice within historically changing economic, political and social contexts.[28]

In fact, the rethinking of the " cultural " as " a set of practices " characterizes much critical theory on culture for the past two decades such as found in the work of Stuart Hall and other scholars within the British tradition of " Cultural Studies; "[29] in Henri Lefebvre's analyses of " everyday life in the modern world; "[30] and in Michel de Certeau's examinations of " everyday practices " where " ways of operating or doing things no longer appear as merely the obscure background of social activity. "[31] Such relatively recent critical theory extends earlier Marxian formulations on the basis of human nature in labour and praxis to the historical analysis of social practices which are produced on the superstructural level via economic determinations in the first or the last instance.[32]

Scholars within the British Cultural Studies paradigm who have conducted ethnographies of boy-scout, housewife and youth subcultures, emphasize the importance of the historical analysis of practice.[33] This is in marked contrast to the ethnographies of Erving Goffman, where, as Anthony Giddens points out, we find little account " of institutions, or history or structural transformation. "[34] Instead, in such works as Forms of Talk (1981) Goffman offers highly detailed micro-

studies of everyday practices that are based on a dramaturgical approach which treats the ways in which the actors within social situations construct their understandings or interpretations of these practices.

The methods of the critical-historical and dramaturgical approaches need not necessarily remain separated -- because if we are to offer truly thick descriptions or well-informed reconstructions of cultural practice, then analysis of both the historical development of these practices and of the contemporary interpretations of the social actors who produce them may be integrated in the same study.

3. Dancing in the Dark

That Goffmanesque strip of reality or cultural practice that will be examined through such an integrated perspective in this dissertation is **female strip dancing**. Admittedly, such a choice may ruffle the feathers of some scholars (my apologies to fan dancers). But the rationale for this selection transcends some surface motive for offering an intellectually stimulating or even titillating work. That is, I hope to demonstrate how work on such a marginalized topic may further critical understanding of human bodies and subjects in cultural theory and practice; and situate notions of cultural production, commodification, domination, embodiment and spectatorship within detailed analyses.

There is precious little critical study of dance as non-verbal cultural form which does not fall into the trap of over-textualization that also characterizes work on embodiment.[36] Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, in his Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines (1746) follows an accepted eighteenth-century argument that dance was the original form of language.[37] According to Condillac, " gesture " was the mode of speech used by the ancients in governmental and religious settings; with the advent of civilization, gesture developed into two subordinate arts of the " dance of steps " and the " dance of gesture " for the pantomimic communication of ideas.[38]

In one of the earliest theoretical works on dance, we thus find a pattern of argumentation which characterises most contemporary approaches. First, there is a reduction of dance to language. Second, dance is defined as a mode of communication which is used in important social contexts. Third, it is described as a fundamental art which stretches back in time to prehistory. Fourth, dance assumes an essential epistemological dimension because according to Condillac, language is the only means of connected thought -- and dance is supposedly the original form of language.[39]

Diverse studies of dance as language, ritual, art, artifact and philosophy comprise a single theoretical regime in which unitary functionalist conceptions of history, society

and subject form the concrete ontological base of dance. In this regime, dance is situated in a homogeneous and universal " society-without-history " rather than contextualized in heterogeneous and distinct historical societies.[40] Dance is then empowered to act on the " abstract human body " that serves as medium and passive agent-without-agency for external processes of communication and culture.[41]

In many anthropological studies of dance such as Roderyk Lange's The Nature of Dance: An Anthropological Perspective (1976),[42] and Anya Peterson Royce's The Anthropology of Dance (1977),[43] scholars look for universal mechanisms of dance ritual that contribute to the creation and maintenance of social control and order, as part of the prevailing functionalist approach in dance research. In such work there is no account of historical change and no method offered for interpreting such change, since one cannot reach a " correct " functionalist description of a social system that is constantly in motion, independent of the interpretations of members of those systems.[44]

Many different cultural practices of body movement and display are socially and historically defined as " dance. "[45] Even the term " strip dancing " may refer to a broad range of practices of erotic performance designed to sexually stimulate -- such as belly dancing, salome-dancing, hootchie-kootchie, shimmy-shaking, tassel-twirling, striptease, exotic dancing,

all-nude dancing, fan dancing, lap dancing, couch dancing, etc.. Of course the identification of female dancing as a stimulating simulation of erotic behaviour is much older than strip dancing.

The Roman satirist Juvenal wrote about dancing girls who engaged in " a contest of bumps and grinds, " while showing off a " gymnastics of lust; " [46] and the poet Martial complained about women who " with endless prurience swing lascivious loins in practiced writhings. " [47] According to Procopius, the Empress Theodora began her public career as a dancer in the theatres of Constantinople: she appeared:

> altogether naked on the stage, without at least this much of a fig-leaf ... she would sink down to the stage floor and recline on her back. Slaves ... would then scatter grains of barley from above into the calyx of this passion flower, whence Geese, trained for this purpose, would next pick grains one by one with their bills and eat. 48

In fact, the popularity of female erotic dancing in a wide variety of historical and contemporary cultures is quite evident to dance scholars such as Judith Lynne Hanna, who in Sex and Gender: Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance and Desire (1988), examines the many variations of erotic dance as found in the:

> institutions of the Chinese chin-nu, Japanese geisha, Indian devidasi and nautch, Arabic guina, Korean kisaeng, Persian motreb, Turkish cengi, Egyptian ghawazee, Greek hertaere, and Moroccan shikhat. 49

It may also be argued that many different styles and types of dance are erotic in nature -- that in fact dancing allows for

the public and sometimes socially sanctioned display of private desires; whether one is discussing the not-so-sublimated flirtation and courtship rituals of European court dancing in the late Middle Ages, or whether one is cynically commenting on the open " mating season " of late middle-aged singles at modern suburban discos.

4. Strips of Strip

What is so unique and specific to practices of strip dancing, then? These very popular, prevalent and profitable forms of theatrical performance and adult entertainment in North America are often socially stigmatized as immoral, improper, transgressive and downright dangerous for both male and female performers and spectators. While these very charges may have partially contributed in fact to the historical development and widespread geographical distribution of these practices, such stigma may have also prevented more serious academic attention. There is little critical discussion on erotic dancing, except perhaps for a short section on " Striptease " in Roland Barthes' Mythologies (1957).[50]

Serious feminist work on strip dancing has been hindered by its inclusion within a general critique of pornography, by such writers as Susan Griffin, in Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature (1981),[51] Susan Kappeler, in The Pornography of Representation (1986),[52] and Laura Mulvey,

in " Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema " (1975).[53] One of their major arguments against such supposedly pornographic practices as strip dancing rests on the claim that they constitute women as sex objects, but are all forms of sexual objectification to be viewed negatively, then, as examples of sexual/commodity fetishism or patriarchal domination?[54] If so, this would imply a mechanistic model of perception and representation as static processes that preclude the polysemic generation of alternative imagery and interpretations: we cannot simply assume that representations are " read " by subjects according to the cognitive models offered by feminist, Freudian, Lacanian and other theorists.[55] In fact, it may prove fruitful to look at the social and historical relations governing the production and reception of particular images, messages, representations and texts under study, by looking beyond the level of the generalized human psyche-subject and by asking actual social actors about their definitions of their everyday practices.[56]

Susan Griffin, Susan Kappeler and Laura Mulvey portray contemporary strip dancing as a one-sided institutional exploitation of women as the manipulated and passive subjects of patriarchal practices. These writers do not consider the possibility that strip dancing may describe a mutually exploitative relationship between female workers and male consumers; a theatre of negotiated gender use-value where strippers don a conventionalized costume of nudity and receptivity, and dance

mimetic movements of sex for cash that is exchanged and stripped from the pockets of male consumers. These audiences are sold to the look, the image, the ephemeral phantasmic constructions of " real " femininity, while actively asserting their own roles as the willing consumers of ever distant and obscure objects of desire.

There are a limited number of sociological studies (dissertations, journal articles and theses) on facets of recruitment and socialization which attend the " deviant occupational subculture " of stripping, including: A. T. D'Andrea's " An Occupational Study of the Strip-dancer Career " (1965)[57]; Charles H. McCaghy and James K. Skipper Jr.'s " Lesbian Behavior as an Adaptation to the Occupation of Stripping " (1969), " The Anatomy and Career Contingencies of a Deviant Occupation " (1970), and " Stripping: Anatomy of a Deviant Life Style " (1972)[58]; Marilyn Salutin's " Stripper Morality " (1971)[59]; Jacqueline Boles and Albeno P. Garbin's " The Strip Club and Stripper-Customer Patterns of Interaction " (1974), and " The Choice of Stripping For a Living: An Empirical and Theoretical Explanation " (1974)[60]; Sandra Harley Carey, Robert A. Peterson and Louis K. Sharpe's " A Study of Recruitment and Socialization into Two Deviant Female Occupations " (1974)[61]; Paula L. Dressel and David M. Petersen's " Gender Roles, Sexuality and the Male Strip Show: The Structuring of Sexual Opportunity " (1982), " Equal Time For Women: Social Notes on the Male Strip Show " (1982), and " Becoming a

Male Stripper: Recruitment, Socialization, and Ideological Development " (1982);[62] and John Prehn's " Invasion of the Male Strippers: Role Alignment in a Small-Town Strip Club "[63] (1983).

This literature consists mainly of field studies of nightclub and theatrical strippers conducted in a wide range of geographic locales in equally varying timespans.[64] Since the mid-1960s, these sociologists have attempted to obtain quantitative estimates and demographic samples in order to answer the basic question of: " how did nice girls (or boys) like you end up in places like these? " Their studies are narrowly focused on a limited number of variables affecting the specialized deviant profession of stripping, and neglect the socio-historical specificities and complexities of stripping as a cultural practice. Economic, political and social processes as well as the very institutions of the strip bar/club, theatre and adult entertainment industry appear as generalized and unexplicated parameters structuring action.[65] Moreover, the constant usage of the term " deviant " is never theoretically justified or explained.

There are also " popular histories " of burlesque and striptease such as: Bernard Sobel's Burleycue: An Underground History of Burlesque Days (1931) and A Pictorial History of Burlesque (1956);[66] H. M. Alexander's Strip Tease: The Vanished Art of Burlesque (1938);[67] Irving Zeidman's

The American Burlesque Show (1967);[68] and Richard Wortley's A Pictorial History of Striptease: 100 Years of Undressing to Music (1976).[69] They are not wholly accurate guidebooks to the cultural history of strip dancing, since the authors do not list their sources of information and seem to be more concerned with providing intimate and revealing peeks at intimate and revealing " peaks " through text and photograph.[70]

What is strip dancing? How, when and why did it develop? What meanings does strip dancing hold for its performers and audiences? These basic questions may not be easily answered through sociological suppositions of deviance or journalistic revelations of " naughty " and secret lives. This face-value acceptance of strip dancers as " exotic " seems to prevent further inquiry into the social and historical processes which facilitate the production of this out-of-the-ordinary aura of strip dancing for both audiences and academics.

Scholars may tell us everything we want to know about select occupational facets of the strip dance profession in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s, and the purveyors of popular histories may surprise us with scintillating stories about strip through the ages, but their work may also promote the assumption that there is nothing more interesting about strip dancing than what already meets us at first glance.

5. Purpose of Dissertation & Research Design - Uncovered!

I attempt a " layered " or " thick " reconstruction of the historical setting in which female strip dancing emerged; of the varied sites where it continues to develop; and of the differing interpretations of such practice by performers and audiences.[71] Towards this end, I assume that ethnographic research, historical analysis and theoretical critique should inform each other. That is to say, a materialist study of a " strip " of reality can only benefit from the constant intermingling and testing of theory and observable practice; where analysis is located simultaneously in the realms of social theory, history and everyday life.

I thus tease out the beginnings of a new approach to female strip dancing through a research design that integrates methods of cultural history, ethnographic field work and theoretical critique in order to examine those cultural practices through which subjects are more than metaphorically defined and dis-embodied as machines,[72] and by which women are constituted as a set of physical attributes and objectified as exotic, evil and forbidden sexual models for display to male consumers.[73]

I endeavour to correct some of the blindspots of previous work on dance in general, and on strip dance in particular, by linking such practices of body display and movement to wider

socio-historical movements of **sexuality, commerce, pleasure and power**. Until now, strip dancing has never been examined as a cultural practice that may exhibit sexual, commercial, pleasurable and powerful facets to all social actors involved in its production. These basic categories were suggested by a thorough examination of the collected data, and they also reflect a heuristic and rhetorical strategy for interpreting a variety of cultural phenomena through common focal points of analysis.[74] Of course such a framework does not exhaust all the possible ways in which the practices of strip dancing may be analysed, but I will demonstrate the fundamental relevance of these categories throughout the body of the dissertation.

Each section of the dissertation is devoted to the close examination of ethnographic " strips " and historical " moments, " but they do not add up to a comprehensive cultural history or ethnography. This idea of comprehensiveness clearly runs counter to my stated aim of producing a stripped-down dissertation. Even if this were not the case, such comprehensive studies may not be theoretically or practically possible at present, due to the paucity of documentary materials on such a stigmatized non-verbal practice as strip dancing, and because of the many difficulties of pursuing ethnographic research in this area, such as securing personal interviews with performers and audience members who are willing to speak openly about their activities. Despite such problems, detailed ethnographic and historical work on strip dancing may still

be pursued on the level of small-scale studies; hopefully such research may eventually lead to a more comprehensive and filled-out body of knowledge.

Primary and secondary historical materials for this dissertation were gathered through archival research in Canada, England and the United States. Historical discussion focuses on the development of modern practices of female strip dancing in North America from the 1840s until the present, as I trace the emergence of these practices to the proliferation of " tableaux-vivants " and " leg shows " in the United States during the middle of the nineteenth-century.[75] This particular concentration on an almost one-hundred and fifty year period of modern strip dancing in one continent is clearly within the scope of an exploratory dissertation; future work may epand the chronological and geographical horizons of such historical analyses of strip.

Ethnographic data on strip dancing was mainly culled from personal observations and interviews with strip club audience members, managers, owners and performers. Whereas the sociologists of strip mainly interviewed performers and then noted their responses in aggregate statistics, I have made a serious attempt at letting the different social actors involved in the production and consumption of strip who were ignored in the previous field studies -- such as audience members and club managers -- " speak " for themselves about their own prac-

tices throughout the dissertation. I am not interested in generating scientifically reliable and valid quantitative information on strip dance behaviours. Rather, the inclusion of information gathered from personal interviews and from stripper memoirs and articles is aimed at providing preliminary answers to the question of what strip dancing means to its practitioners. Indeed, such material forms the very foundation of this layered reconstruction or thick description of strip.

During 1988, I thus spent six months observing strip dance performances and conducting informal interviews with present-day and former dancers, audience members and managers in one strip club in a major Midwstern metropolis of the United States. This locale is referred to as " Club X " within the dissertations, as I have respected the anonymity of all interviewees and subjects of observation by using fabricated names to designate the participants and settings of the still stigmatized activities of strip. I centered informal interviews on questions relating to what the particular social actor felt and thought about his or her own practices and about strip dancing in general. Selected observations gathered at a variety of clubs in the same city and at other locations in North America which pertain to particular sexual, economic, pleasurable and powerful dimensions of strip are also included in the dissertation in order to extend discussion beyond the limited thcugh more than comfortable confines of " Club X. "

In this dissertation I hope to demonstrate how such critical consideration of everyday cultural practices can lead to important questions on fundamental economic, political and social issues; and to show how research on erotic dancing may help analytically strip away socio-historical relations while also indicating some useful theoretical and methodological strategies for the study of communication, culture and dance.

6. Anatomy of Dissertation: Section Outline

" The Bawdy Politic: Strips of Culture and the Culture of Strip " is divided into five major sections that situate strip dancing within movements of theory and practice, sexuality, commerce, pleasure and power, and culture.

In " Section Two: Movements of **Sex**. " I identify the actual physical movements (and non-movements) of strip dancing in order to arrive at a general description and definition of the object of study. Such a definition is directly connected with the cultural production of feminine nudity and sexuality as " artistic " and " sleazy " practice through nineteenth and twentieth-century class-familial ideologies and objectifications of women as evil, exotic and forbidden; as evidenced in the changing conventions and styles of erotic dance.

In " Section Three: Movements of **Commerce**, " I discuss the importance of economic factors for the development of these cultural practices as forms of industry and work.

In " Section Four: Movements of **Pleasure** and **Power**, " I explore the bawdy politics of pleasure which govern strip clubs; a politics infinitely more complex and dialectical than mechanical models of embodiment and subjectivity would suggest. I contend that strip dancers, audience members and managers exploit, manipulate and objectify each other in certain ways -- and that this process of objectification probably represents the greatest actual pleasure and power that is produced in the bawdy politics of strip.

In " Section Five: Conclusion - Movements of **Culture**, " I argue that future reconstructions of cultural practices such as strip following my approach may contribute to the critical understanding of culture by emphasizing the socio-historical complexities, specificities and implications of everyday practices that are right in front of our naked eyes.

NOTES: SECTION ONE

1 Steve Roberts and Nickie Roberts, " Stripping Illusions, " New Statesman, 17 January 1986, p. 28.

2 See The Oxford Universal Dictionary on Historical Principles, 3rd ed., ed. C. T. Onions (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 2044; and The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, ed. William Morris (Boston: American Heritage Publishing Co., and Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1973), p. 1277.

3 Erving Goffman, Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 10.

4 See note #2; Georges Bataille even states that: " stripping naked is seen in civilizations where the act has full significance if not as a simulacrum of the act of killing at least as an equivalent shorn of gravity; " Georges Bataille, Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo (New York: Walker and Company, 1962), p. 18.

5 See René Descartes, " Meditations on the First Philosophy in Which the Existence of God and the Distinction Between Mind and Body are Demonstrated, " in Descartes: Selections, ed. Ralph M. Eaton (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), pp. 88-165; John Cottingham, Descartes (London: Basil Blackwell, 1986); and Calvin O. Schrag, Communicative Praxis and the Space of Subjectivity (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 150-151.

6 See Leonard Barkan, Nature's Work of Art: The Human Body as Image of the World (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), pp. 114-115; and Thomas Hobbes, " Both Man and the State as Kinds of Machine, " in Body, Mind, and Death, ed. Anthony Flew (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1977) pp. 115-116.

7 See, for example: Peter Gorsen, " The Humiliating Machine: Escalade of a New Myth, " in Le Macchine Celibi/The Bachelor Machines, eds. Jean Clair and Harald Szeeman (New York: Rizzoli, 1975), pp. 130-143; Günter Metken, " From Man/Machine to Machine/Man: Machine Anthropomorphisms in the Nineteenth Century, " in Le Macchine Celibi, pp. 50-63;

Jonathan Miller, The Body in Question (New York: Vintage Books, 1982); and Stanley Joel Reiser, Medicine and the Reign of Technology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978). Claude Lefort asserts that in capitalist and totalitarian societies: " the image of the body is combined with that of the machine. The scientifico-technical model and the model of the production enterprise, governed by the rational division of labor ... have in a sense taken hold of the whole society; " Claude Lefort, " The Image of the Body and Totalitarianism, " in The Poltical Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism, ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987), pp. 292-306.

8

See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, " The Body as Expression and Speech, " in The Essential Writings of Merleau-Ponty, ed. Alden L. Fisher (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1969), pp. 195-213; Randy Martin, " Seeds of Desire: The Common Ground of Performance and Politics, " Diss. City University of New York, 1984, pp. 248-249; and Bryan S. Turner, The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory (London: Basil Blackwell, 1984). Turner argues that " much of the phenomenology of embodiment is highly individualistic and fails to recognize fully that personal experience of embodiment is highly mediated by social training, language and context; " Turner, p. 246.

9

For an excellent polemical study of the influence of linguistic and literary paradigms on social analyses, see: John Fekete, " Descent into the New Maelstrom, " in The Structural Allegory: Reconstructive Encounters with the New French Thought (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. xi-xxxiv.

10

Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977) -- see especially pp. 25-28; Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (New York: Richard Seaver/The Viking Press, 1977). Jeffrey Weeks has commented on Anti-Oedipus along similar lines, arguing that: " its main axis of speculation is the body and its apparently unbounded possibilities and pleasures ... while its relationship to the real world of exploitation and material hardship remain unspecified. It never becomes clear why desire is productive in the sense employed by Deleuze and Guattari; " Jeffrey Weeks, Sexuality and Its Discontents: Meanings, Myths and Modern Sexualities (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985).

11

I am referring here to Bakhtin's canons of grotesque and modern bodies in Rabelais and His World, trans. Helene

Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). Bakhtin posits a simple dualistic model of embodiment based on generalized notions of the " popular folk " and he also fails to incorporate social relations of gender in his model; see Mary Russo, " Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory, " in Feminist Studies/Critical Studies, ed. Teresa de Lauretis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 213-229. Marcel Mauss follows a Durkheimian model of society in his work on " Techniques of the Body " in Economy and Society, 2, (Feb. 1973). Mary Douglas, in turn, follows Mauss in her Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).

12

See Bakhtin, p. 369; and Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 90.

13

For a recent study of bodily inscription, see Michel Feher, " Of Bodies and Technologies, " in Discussions in Contemporary Culture, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987), pp. 159-165.

14

Umberto Eco, Travels in Hyperreality: Essays, trans. William Weaver (Suffolk: Picador, 1987), p. 245.

15

Bryan S. Turner explains that: " In Social Darwinism and the functionalism of Talcott Parsons, the body enters social theory as the ' functional organism; ' in Marxism the presence of the body is signified by need and nature; in Symbolic Interactionism the body appears as the presentational self; in Freudianism, human embodiment is rendered as a field of energy in the form of desire; " Turner, p. 2.

16

Of course the varied social theories of Bakhtin, Durkheim and Foucault are very different -- based respectively on dialectical, functionalist and discursive models. Annette Michaelson, Rosalind Krauss, Douglas Crimp and Joan Copjec discuss the " heterogeneous configurations of the body as resistant to or as escaping discourse, " in their introduction to October: The First Decade, 1976-1986 (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1987), pp. ix-xii. See also: John O'Neill, Five Bodies: The Human Shape of Modern Society (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

17

For a review of these feminist theories of embodiment, see: Rachel Bowlby, " The Feminine Female, " Social Text, III, No. 1 (Spring-Summer 1983), pp. 54-68; Mary Ann Doane, " Womens Stake: Filming the Female Body, " in October: The

First Decade, pp. 327-340; Ann Rosalind Jones, " Writing the Body: Towards an Understanding of l'Écriture Feminine, " in The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), pp. 361-377; and Kaja Silverman, " Histoire d'O: The Construction of a Female Subject, " in Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality, ed. Carol Vance (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 320-349.

18

Silverman, " Histoire d'O, " pp. 323-325; and Helen Michie, The Flesh Made Word: Female Figures and Women's Bodies (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 149.

19

Alice A. Jardine, Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 37; and Judith Williamson, " Woman is an Island: Femininity and Colonization, " in Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture, ed. Tania Modleski (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 118.

20

See, for example, Karl Marx's extensive analysis of the role of machinery and modern industry in the production of relative surplus-value, in Capital: Volume 1: The Process of Capitalist Production, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (New York: International Publishers, 1967), pp. 371-507. Marx argues that " the machine accommodates itself to the weakness of the human being in order to make the weak human being into a machine; " and that " machinery, by annexing the labor of women and children, augments the number of human beings who form the material for capitalist exploitation; " Karl Marx Dictionary, ed, Morris Stockhammer (New York: Philosophical Library, 1965), pp. 144-145. Herbert Marcuse has delineated the capitalistic constraints which " enforced by the need for sustaining a large quantum of energy and time for non-gratifying labor, perpetuates the desexualization of the body in order to make the organism into the subject-object of socially useful performances; " Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 199.

21

See Stephen Resnick and Richard D. Wolff, Knowledge and Class: A Marxian Critique of Political Economy (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 2-3.

22

Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1973), p. 26.

23

Geertz explains that the process of writing a ' thick description ' involves uncovering " the conceptual structures that inform our subjects' acts, the ' said ' of social discourse; " constructing " a system of analysis in whose terms what is generic to these structures, what belongs to them because they are what they are, will stand out against other determinants: " and providing " a vocabulary in which what symbolic action has to say about itself - that is, about the role of culture in human life - can be expressed; " Geertz, p. 27.

24

Elin Diamond suggests the possibilities of such a theory of gender in her: " Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory: Towards a Gestic Feminist Criticism. " The Drama Review, 32, No. 1 (Spring 1988), pp. 82-94.

25

See Shirley Weitz, Sex Roles: Biological, Psychological and Social Foundations (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); and Terry Eagleton, " Brecht and Rhetoric, " in Against the Grain: Essays 1975-1985 (London: Verso, 1986), where Eagleton describes Brechtian theatre as deconstructing " social processes into rhetoric, which is to say reveals them as social practices; " Eagleton, p. 168.

26

" Gender concepts and notions of sexuality and reproduction are seen as emerging from varying forms of action and practice, within varying forms of organization of economic and political life; " Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, " Introduction: Accounting for Sexual Meanings, " in Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 5.

27

This is precisely the approach that Erving Goffman takes in his Gender Advertisements (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

28

See Goffman, Gender Advertisments, pp. 1-3.

29

See Stuart Hall, " Cultural Studies at the Center: Some problematics and problems, " in Culture, Media, Language, ed. Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis (London: Hutchinson, 1981), p. 31.

30

Henri Lefebvre, Everyday Life in the Modern World, trans. Sacha Rabinovitch (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1971).

31

Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1984), p. xi.

32

See Paul Heyer, Nature, Human Nature and Society: Marx, Darwin, Biology and the Human Sciences (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982).

33

Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds., Resistance Through Rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain (London: Hutchinson, 1980); and Dick Hebdige, Subculture: The Meaning of Style (London: Methuen, 1979).

34

Anthony Giddens, Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1979), p. 81.

35

Erving Goffman, Forms of Talk (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

36

I criticized the theoretical positions of a wide range of studies of dance in my second doctoral project; see Michael Paul Bloom, " The Medium is the Mambo? Cultural Studies and the Question of Dance, " TS, Graduate Program in Communications, McGill University, 1987.

37

Francis Sparshott, " The Missing Art of Dance, " Dance Chronicle, 6, No. 2 (1983), 165-166.

38

Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, An Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge, trans. Thomas Nugent (Gainesville: Scholars Facsimiles and Reprints, 1971), pp. 176-178.

39

Sparshott, p. 166.

40

I am following Claude Lefort's definition of ideology as: " the sequence of representations which have the function of re-establishing the dimension of society 'without history' at the very heart of historical society; " Claude Lefort, " Outline of the Genesis of Ideology in Modern Societies, " in The Political Forms of Modern Society, pp. 181-236.

41

See pp. 2-5 in text of dissertation.

42

Roderyk Lange, The Nature of Dance: An Anthropological Perspective (New York: International Publications Service, 1976).

43

Anya Peterson Royce, The Anthropology of Dance (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977).

44

See Thomas McCarthy, " Translator's Introduction, " in Jurgen Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), pp. xv-xvi.

45

" Western notions tend to classify all movement dimensions as ' dance, ' but it would seem appropriate to analyse them more objectively as movement dimensions of separate activities; " Adrienne L. Kaeppler, " Structured movement systems in Tonga, " in Society and the Dance: the social anthropology of process and performance, ed. Paul Spencer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 50.

46

See Peter Green's translation of Juvenal, The Sixteen Satires (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 139 - for the phrase " a contest of bumps and grinds, " and Rolf Humphries' translation of Juvenal, The Satires of Juvenal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), p. 75 - for the phrase " gymnastics of lust. "

47

The quotation from Martial is found in: M. V. Martialis, Martial Epigrams, trans. Walter C. A. Ker (Cambridge and London: The Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press and William Heinemann, 1968), p. 351. See also: Dahlena with Dona Z. Meilach, The Art of Belly Dancing (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), p. 3.

48

See Procopius, Secret History, trans. Richard Atwater (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1961), p. 47; and Peter Brown, " Late Antiquity, " in A History of Private Life, Volume One: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium, ed, Paul Veyne, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 245.

49

Judith Lynne Hanna, Dance, Sex, and Gender: Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance and Desire (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 56.

50

Roland Barthes, Mythologies, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), pp. 84-87. Critical analysis of strip dancing can also be found in: Denys Chevalier, Métaphysique Du Strip-Tease (Paris: Bibliotheque Internationale D'Erotologie, J. J. Pauvert, 1960).

51

Susan Griffin, Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1981) pp. 22 & 48.

52

Susan Kappeler, The Pornography of Representation (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 77.

53

Laura Mulvey, " Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, " Screen, 16, No. 3 (Autumn 1975) 6-18.

54

For example, E. Ann Kaplan claims that: " The cinematic gaze is largely a male gaze, relying on Freud's twin mechanisms of voyeurism and fetishism as devices for the male spectator to avoid the threat that woman offers ... woman is degraded by a voyeuristic gaze, her body set up as a mere object of sexual desire, having no intrinsic meaning; " E. Ann Kaplan, Rocking Around the Clock: Music Television, Post-Modernism, and Consumer Culture (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), p. 91. Kathy Myers writes that in such feminist theories of commodity and sexual fetishism, " objectification has become a much abused term; " Kathy Myers, " Towards a feminist erotica, " in Looking On: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media, ed. Rosemary Betterton (London and New York: Pandora Press, 1987), pp. 189-202.

55

Kim Sawchuck extends a similar critique to those feminist writings on fashion which " tend to fall into the trap of decoding all social relations within patriarchy and capitalism as essentially repressive and homogeneous in effects ... It is assumed that images are literally observed by the viewer, that each image is immediately readable and meaningful in and of itself; " moreover, she argues against simply assuming that " all looking and aestheticization of the body is an objectifying form of commodification; " Kim Sawchuck, " A Tale of Inscription: Fashion Statements, " in Body Invaders: Panic Sex in America, ed. Arthur and Marilouise Kroker (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), pp. 61-77. For a recent example of a feminist approach to objectification which attempts to meet some of these objections, see: Wendy Chapkis, Beauty Secrets: Women and the Politics of Appearance (London: The Women's Press Limited, 1988).

56

See Colin Mercer, " A Poverty of Desire: Pleasure and Popular Politics, " in Formations of Pleasure (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1983). pp. 84-100.

57

A. T. D'Andre, " An Occupational Study of the Stripdancer Career, " Paper read at the Pacific Sociological Association Meetings, Salt Lake City, Utah, April 1965.

58

Charles H. McCaghy and James K. Skipper Jr., " Lesbian Behavior as an Adaptation to the Occupation of Stripping, " Social Problems, 17, (Fall 1969), 262-270, and " Stripping: Anatomy of a Deviant Lifestyle, " in Lifestyles: Diversity in American Society, ed. Saul P. Feldman and Gerald W. Thielbar (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1972): and James K. Skipper Jr. and Charles H. McCaghy, " The Anatomy and Career Contingencies of a Deviant Occupation, " Social Problems, 17, (Winter 1970), 391-404.

59

Marilyn Salutin, " Stripper Morality, " Transaction, 8, (June 1971), 13-22.

60

Jacqueline Boles and Albeno P. Garbin, " The Strip Club and Stripper-Customer Patterns of Interaction, " Sociology and Social Research, 58, No. 2 (January 1974), 136-144, and " The Choice of Stripping for a Living: An Empirical and Theoretical Explanation, " Sociology of Work and Occupations 1, No. 1 (February 1974), 110-123.

61

Sandra Harley Carey, Robert A. Peterson and Louis K. Sharpe, " A Study of Recruitment and Socialization into Two Deviant Female Occupations, " Sociological Symposium, No. 11 (Spring 1974), 11-24.

62

Paula L. Dressel and David M. Petersen, " Gender Roles, Sexuality and the Male Strip Show: The Structuring of Sexual Opportunity, " Sociological Focus, 15, No. 2 (April 1982), 151-162, and " Becoming a Male Stripper: Recruitment, Socialization, and Ideological Development. " Sociology of Work and Occupations, 9, No. 3 (August 1982), 387-406; and David M. Petersen and Paula L. Dressel, " Equal Time For Women: Social Notes on the Male Strip Show, " Urban Life, 11, No. 2 (July 1982), 185-208.

63

John Prehn, " Invasion of the Male Strippers: Role Alignment in a Small-Town Strip Club, " Journal of Popular Culture, 17, No. 2 (Fall 1983), 182-186.

64

Skipper and McCaghy interviewed thirty-five strippers in one theatre in the United States during the spring and summer of 1968; Salutin interviewed twenty Toronto strippers for her M. A. thesis at York University; Boles and Garbin interviewed fifty-one dancers and conducted field studies in nine strip clubs over a three-year period in the Southwestern United States; Carey Peterson and Sharpe interviewed thirty-five strippers in ten clubs over an eight month period; Dressel and Petersen interviewed fourteen male strippers and observed the activities at one club in an eight month period; and Prehn informally observed occurences at a small-town strip club for four years.

65

See Giddens, p. 81.

66

Bernard Sobel, Burleycue: An Underground History of Burlesque Days (New York: Farrar & Rinehart Inc., 1931) and A Pictorial History of Burlesque (New York: Bonanza Books, 1956).

67

H. M. Alexander, Strip Tease: The Vanished Art of Burlesque (New York: Knight Publishers, 1938).

68

Irving Zeidman, The American Burlesque Show (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1967).

69

Richard Wortley, A Pictorial History of Striptease: 100 Years of Undressing to Music (London: Octopus Books, 1976).

70

See Don B. Wilmeth, " American Popular Entertainment: A Historical Perspective - Bibliography, " in American Popular Entertainment, ed. Myron Matlaw (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979), p. 310.

71

Although this dissertation centers mainly on the production of female strip dancing, I do in fact comment on the relatively new phenomenon of male strip dancing as it affects practices of female strip dancing. There are many institutional differences between male and female stripping, including variations of audience-participation in performance, style of dance, wages and admission policy; while women are allowed entrance in most venues of female erotic dance, men are rarely admitted to male strip clubs for women. My access to such clubs was thus limited and so any observations on male stripping included here are of a very informal and restricted

nature.

72

Cornelius Castoriadis comments on the modern industrial metaphor of the human automaton, and concludes that: " To treat a person as a thing or as a purely mechanical system is not less, but more Imaginary than claiming to see him as an owl; " and that " There is no essential difference with respect to the type of mental operations or to the deep psychic attitudes between a Taylorian engineer or an industrial psychologist ... and a fetishist who experiences pleasure at the sight of a well-heeled shoe or asks a woman to imitate a lamppost; " Cornelius Castoriadis, The Imaginary Institution of Society, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987), pp. 157-158. I discuss the influence of Taylorian models of movement on practices of strip dancing in the third section of this dissertation.

73

Annette Kuhn has written on the pornographic constructions of " femininity and female sexuality as objects of obsessively repetitive investigation by spectator/consumers, " and as " as a set of bodily attributes which puts itself on display for a masculine spectator; " Annette Kuhn, The Power of the Image: Essays on Representation and Sexuality (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 19 & 43. See also: Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 170-191; and Alan Soble, Pornography, Marxism, Feminism, and the Future of Sexuality (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 67-71.

74

Stephen Kern discusses the usefulness of such generalized categories for cultural analysis, in The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), pp. 1-9.

75

See the second section of this dissertation.

SECTION TWO: MOVEMENTS OF SEX

But regardless of what you do, a lady is a lady. And I'm a fucking lady, that's it.

Cotyn Lee, Stripper [1]

1. Art-N-Sleaze

" Deanna, " a twenty-three year old stripper who has worked in a variety of strip bars including " Club X " for the past six years, claims that:

> dancing has little to do with what we do. Many strippers don't dance. They don't even know how. But nobody cares. You're just supposed to shove your ass in the customer's face for a dollar. 2

Tempest Storm, a famous stripper whose ecdysiastic expertise (dating back to the 1950s) led her to a Carnegie Hall performance in the 1970s, suggests, however, that audiences appreciated the " art " of her dance, and that:

> they knew enough about traditional dance to recognize that my work was made up of the same elements, that what I did required the same meticulous choreography and rehearsal. My principles had been confirmed in one of the greatest centers of art. People understood that I was an artist. 3

These positions of Deanna and Tempest typify the attitudes of professional performers of strip dancing, who tend to view their work as either an " art " or as a " sleazy " activity of sexual commerce (or as both simultaneously). In many writings on and by strippers, there is a pervasive nostalgia or valorization of the past which establishes stripping as a long-lost

artistic form, as opposed to the current state of affairs, where, as John Waters suggests, " strippers don't even bother to strip anymore. They come out nude, carrying a gym mat and get quite disgusting immediately. "[4] Distinctions are then made between " artistic " and " sleazy " strip dancing, across its varied historical and institutional sites: differences between clean and dirty burlesque;[5] French and North American traditions of striptease;[6] carnival strippers and theatrical strippers;[7] burlesque dancing and burlesk dancing;[8] barely-clad strippers and all-nude strippers;[9] and " classy " strip clubs and " juice bars. "[10]

Strip dancers usually defend their stigmatized work by maintaining that their particular form of dancing represents an aesthetically and morally correct entertainment, in contrast to the sleazy practices of many dancers in other strip establishments.[11] Annie Ample, a famous Canadian stripper of of the late 1970s, complains in her autobiography that:

> Showing more and more and getting raunchier and raunchier was what stripping was now about. There was no art involved in that. The only development seemed to be lesbian acts; or inserts -- putting almost anything up the crotch. It left me with a feeling of disgust ... and here I was trying to be entertaining. [12]

For many male audience members, strip dancers signify the simultaneous attraction of the beautiful-idealized woman, and of the forbidden-sleazy whore together in one moving package. Strip dancers even serve a symbolic role in the last " evil "

temptation that must be morally (and physically) resisted by the bridegroom in the traditional ritual of the " bachelor party. "[13]

In this section, I will begin to examine such sexual objectifications of women by tracing the historical development of practices of strip dancing. Indeed, the emergence of these practices in North America and Western Europe during the nineteenth century is inextricably linked to the emergence of class-familial ideologies that defined women as art objects (a beautiful and romantic ideal) and as sleaze objects (sellers of sexual wares). Female sexuality was thus viewed as a positive moral activity when conducted under the private and domestic auspices of middle and upper-class marriage for purposes of procreation; and considered to be unacceptable, immoral and dirty when more publically visible outside such settings. As Bram Dijkstra points out, this ideology promoted the notion that the " woman who did not see her primary task as production of new life " thus cheapened the " paradise of her warm womb " by transforming it " into a cold pandora's box of economic evils. "[14]

It is this dialectic of art and sleaze characterizing nineteenth-century views of female sexuality -- that also colours the development of modern practices of strip dancing and that distinguishes them from other forms of erotic movement.

2. Veiled Threats

Medieval conceptions of the witch that defined women as dangerous and evil spirits were superceded in the ninteenth century by a pervasive misogynist iconography (especially in the decorative arts, literature and painting) which opposed the " good, decent and domesticated " middle and upper-class wife (stalwart defender and guarantor of monogamous sexual reproduction)[15], with the evil and mysterious " femme fatale. " Carol F. Karlsen suggests that this ideal of domesticity specifically answered to certain needs of the new middle-class by explicitly asserting that:

> all women share the same nature, but it implicitly excluded from " womanhood " all those who could not or would not aspire to the ideal. By the nineteenth century, black women and poor white women were viewed as embodying many of the characteristics of the witch. 16

These women were seen as seductive, sexually uncontrollable and greedy in their zeal for using their bodies to produce money instead of children. But this image of the working-class woman in control of her sexuality was both attractive and repulsive to men; the femme fatale provided a convenient male bourgeois symbol for scapegoating working-class women while also constituting these women as an exotic and novel change from the ranks of " ordinary women " to be eventually conquered and controlled.[17] Such exoticism was captured in paintings that depicted femme fatales in remote historical periods and geographic locales where they were attended by wild beasts and drenched in atmospheres of perverse cruelty.[18]

The legendary figure of the half-naked, lascivious performer of erotic dances, " Salome, " was the archetypal femme-fatale. The traditional she-demon of Christian iconography was reworked in the nineteenth century as the image of a deadly, exotic and terrible femininity for marginalized middle-class males of this period who attempted to capture feelings of eco-economic and political power through the realm of fantasy.[19] As Deborah Jowitt contends, even in ballet

> Salome was an avatar of the decadence - an image of woman-as-destroyer. Male choreographers and spectators projected their hidden desires onto a dream orient - a created world whose exotic nature transformed and sanctioned their desires. But they projected as well the anxiety and terror aroused by the power of the female. [20]

Such female erotic power was embodied in the nude figure of the exotic femme fatale. Nudity here may be theoretically understood as a visual fiction or form of costume and fashion that is culturally produced.[21] In Medieval literature and moral theology, the female sex organs were deemed private, mysterious and dangerous; to be hidden under layers of clothing and submitted to the strict control of men.[22] The naked female body was symbolic of " nuditas criminalis, " (signifying vanity, lust and the lack of all virtues) and of the " logic of absolute sovereignty; " as Danielle Regnier-Bohler contends, the Medieval woman

> stripped naked before society; deprived of her clothing ... becomes prey to every man s illicit gaze. Unlike the naked man, the naked woman is always associated with a nascent or confirmed desire. 23

But during the Renaissance, the public exhibition of female nudity was considered to be more socially acceptable. Beautiful women called " figurantes " would welcome noble visitors to town by dancing as half-dressed water nymphs around local city fountains.[24] During the sixteenth century, figurantes were supplanted by a different type of erotic entertainment when an impresario named Galosi opened a theatre in Paris which featured playlets where spectacles of nakedness ventured confidently into the domain of the " frankly obscene. "[25] While a nobleman would not necessarily want his wife or daughter to become a figurante-of-the-month nor erotic actress, male fascination with female nudity was neither totally repressed nor wholly sanctioned.

This ambivalence regarding the exhibition of female nudity was captured in the emergence of modern practices of strip dancing during the middle of the nineteenth century, where women were embodied as aesthetic objects for <u>display</u> of a forbidden sexuality and as commercial performers of <u>movements</u> of sex.

3. <u>Show Business</u>

If a man living in London, New York or Paris during the 1840s wanted to view a woman's body in a more anonymous and less participatory setting than a brothel, he probably would have walked into a music hall to witness " tableaux vivants, "

" poses plastiques, " or " living model " shows which featured either naked or scantily dressed women (in tights) who were frozen in static poses that resembled classic and pseudo-classic sculptures such as " Adam's First View of Eve, " " The Birth of Venus, " " The Greek Slave, " " Lady Godiva's Ride, " " Nymphs Bathing, " " The Peeping Tom of Coventry, " Psyche Going to the Bath, " etc..[26] As Paul Ableman explains, these poses plastiques were:

> still representations by living men and women of simulated sculptural scenes or copies of actual sculptured groups. This device enabled respectable people to enthuse about the ' artistic value ' of the spectacle while actually gratifying their voyeuristic urge. 27

Men flocked to the shows " because of deprived taste rather than purely art, " according to The New York Tribune of December 1, 1847; and The New York Herald of March 1, 1848 also depicted these audiences as " fashionable old rakes and ineffable scoundrels about town. "[28] These exhibitions of femininity stripped bare, held under the weak guise of quasi-artistic semi-respectablity, served as the forerunners of the contemporary artistic/sleazy strip dance act. Above all, the popularity of the model shows indicated a male fascination with a nude female body which is thought to possess the secret signs of an evil and forbidden world -- and of private mysteries that are made public in living revelations.[29]

Display of the female body was not just a staple of the music hall, but, in fact, formed an integral component of most types of entertainment in North America and Western Europe

during the nineteenth century, thus giving new meaning to the term " show business. "[30] Whole urban districts of major U. S. cities were dedicated to sexual commerce, and offered an environment for men of all classes to buy the services of working-class women.[31] Men could watch naked performers in dance halls or visit concert saloons such as the " Malodeon " in New York City, where " pretty waiter girls, " who wore the 1850s version of the mini-skirt, also acted as cocktail waitresses and as cock-teasing companions or dance partners for " the lonely and bleak of heart. "[32] In Billy McGlory's Armory Hall concert saloon on Hester Street, waiter-girls were supplemented by a group of " waiter boys " who were similarly dressed in high red boots and mini-skirts.[33]

New York's concert saloons in the 1840s and 1850s were more than matched by Barbary Coast saloons and honky-tonks in the Western United States; and by Parisian dance halls, where female dancers of the polka piquee, quadrille naturaliste, Robert Macaine, cahut and can-can titillated men by displaying their legs and other body parts in high kicks, leaps and splits (especially when they wore black stockings, lace petticoats and -- no underwear).[34]

Before the 1860s, scantily-clad women only provided interesting scenery in semi-respectable theatres.[35] After this time, however, the profits to be gained from the presentation of female pulchritude on the legitimate stage began to be

realized. One night in June of 1861, Adah Isaacs Menken caused a sensation by dressing up (or down) in tights and charging up a theatrical runway while strapped to a live horse, in a dramatic play based on Byron's " Mazeppa. "[36] Following Menken's celebrated ' horsing around, ' the theatrical production of " The Black Crook " at Niblo's Garden in New York City on September 12th, 1866, is generally regarded as a seminal event in the rise of the modern burlesque show; a corps of dancing girls wearing flesh-coloured tights was highlighted during the show, though their appearance was due more to a booking mistake than to any real connection with the plot of the play.[37]

Mark Twain, a critic of " Model Artist Shows " (which he described as horrid and wicked exhibitions of disgustingly naked packs of " painted old harlots, swathed in gauze "), warned that " The Black Crook " inaugurated a shrewd and tantalizing mode of entertainment by placing " beautiful clipper-built girls on the stage, " and by:

> displaying all possible compromises between nakedness and decency ... The scenery and legs are everything ... girls - nothing but girls - stacked up, pile on pile, away aloft to the dome of the theatre ... dressed with a meagerness that would make a parasol blush. 38

After the successful run of " The Black Crook, " which grossed over $650,000 dollars in profits over sixteen months, New York City theatrical stages were inundated with similar spectacles featuring troupes of foreign dancing girls such as Lydia Thompson and Her British Blondes.[39] Olive Logan, an

actress and vociferous opponent of these shows, wrote tract after tract on the

> disgraceful spectacle of padded legs, jiggling and wriggling in the insensate follies and indecencies of the hour ... I saw beautiful women ... tempted by the offers of managers to go upon the stage in the most immodest garb and engage in the all-prevaling orgies of the " leg business. " 40

Logan's diatribes had competition from critics at The New York Tribune, who ridiculed these women as a " sort of fungus upon the stage, variously ridiculous and vulgar. " [41] The popularity of the leg shows continued unabated, however, and grew into North American burlesque theatre during the 1870s; a genre which combined female minstrels, travesties of historical characters and events, and vaudeville into a single form of public entertainment. [42]

Whereas such uninhibited exhibition of female bodies had been previously covered under the pretences of " art " in the 1840s and " sleaze " in the 1850s, it was now recognized as the sine qua non of all types of entertainment, from ballet and operatic productions to carnival turkey shows. [43] But the show business display of women in these settings was soon perceived as too tame; an explicit connection had to be established between women as passive sexual objects on display and as active erotic performers of sexual movements.

4. Women On the Move

More direct representations of women as sexual objects in simulated " womanly " acts were required to motivate male audiences to attend the productions of struggling burlesque troupes and theatres during the 1880s and 1890s.[44] Truly Shattuck, a somewhat hefty burlesque queen of this period, promoted an act " in which is introduced an instantaneous change from full costume to tights. "[45] The newly opened Parisian Folies Bergère and Moulin Rouge dance-halls provided French middle-class male audiences with voyeuristic spectacles such as " Le Coucher d'Yvette, " " Liane chez le medecin, " and " La Puce, " where they were allowed to peek into a private moment of female undressing.[46] Total nudity was not allowed, explains Paul Derval of the Folies Bergère, so producers would rely on the " spectator's lubricious imagination " to see the woman as " already naked when she had not yet removed her last drapes, " by dividing the act of disrobing into specific phases.[47]

Charmion, an American vaudeville performer of this period even perfected a trapeze act that involved undressing. The Denver Post admired the " wonderful skill " in which Charmion balanced " herself on her knees, in addition to doing what she terms the tame act of disrobing while floating over the stage in mid-air in her swing. "[48]

Burlesque companies decided to out-sleaze the competition of vaudeville, dance halls, and other entertainments, by replacing the performers of private undressing acts with the solo " hootchie-kootchie " dancer, who engaged in direct, sexually provocative and seductive performances for her male audiences (instead of having to pretend that they really weren't there).[49] Cooch movements, taken almost directly from Egyptian belly dances popularized in various world expositions, were " physical gyrations and undulations frankly calculated to suggest sexual intercourse. "[50]

Cooch dancers such as Millie DeLeon, The Girl in Red, and Mlle. Poopik did not disrobe, however; at this point in time, the public display of female nudity still required the artifices of art and the fake cover of a voyeuristic vision (as found in disrobing acts) and was thus not usually coupled with the frantic and frenetic sexual dancing of the hootchie-kootchie.[51] The objectification of these dancers as dangerous but fascinating femme fatales is clearly evidenced in the fin-de-siecle vogue for " Salome " dancing, a vamped-up, specially veiled variant of the hootchie-kootchie's frankly physical gyrations and undulations.[52] Salome dancers were the rage of burlesque, vaudeville and even opera theatres in North America -- and they also earned the indignant rage of some one hundred and fifty theatre-managers in the American South and Midwest, who refused to let them perform.[53]

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Florenz Ziegfeld, Paul Derval and others attempted to change public perceptions of the display of women in leg shows and other entertainments by creating theatrical production numbers and cabaret revues that were geared for upper-class audiences of both sexes.[54] The lithe, youthful and ever-smiling chorus-girl now replaced the hefty burlesque queen and imposing Salome dancer as the model performer.[55] The chorus-girl was still seen, however, as a potent threat to the cult of domesticity, a performer capable of swaying " hard working men " from their homes and businesses -- but she was also constituted as a dumb playmate or blank (yet smiling) screen for men to project their sexual fantasies and objectifications onto.[56]

The lavish production numbers of the Folies Bergère and the Ziegfeld Follies included many tableaux that involved dancing chorus-girls, barely-clad " show girls " (who also barely moved), and rarely-clad " nudes " (wearing a cache-sexe or G-string over their pubic areas) who were on the stage ostensibly for " artistic purposes. "[57] By the early 1920s, both " clean " and " dirty " burlesque circuits (featuring either less or more nudity in their shows) could not compete with the " artistic " nude displays of the upper-class theatres and cabarets.[58] As Morton Minsky of the famous Minsky family of burlesque entrepreneurs explains:

> Our shows were getting more and more disappointing to our patrons because they were Sun-

> day school stuff compared to what was going on uptown in the respectable productions of legitimate theatres. Florenz Ziegfeld in his Follies productions was parading naked girls all over the stage, hanging them from the drapes and swinging them on chandeliers .. it was all classified as " art " and okayed by the police I suppose because the girls wore fancy, artistic headdresses. 59

Abe Minsky went to the Folies Bergère and Moulin Rouge productions in Paris to learn everything possible about their successes in the world of black leotards and garter belts; apparently, he was sufficiently " educated " to open up the National Winter Garden Theater on Houston Street in New York City, with his brother Billy.[60] They matched the Ziegfeld girl with the " Minsky girl " -- a cute and young flapper who wore a flimsy union-suit over a brassiere-less body and who knew how to cooch-dance and jiggle her breasts; and they installed the first runway in an American burlesque theatre, thereby bringing the dancers in closer communion with male audience members who, according to Morton Minsky, " would look right up their legs. "[61]

But due to the stiff competition from uptown shows and less expensive forms of entertainment such as film and radio, burlesque theatres were in danger of liquidation, so producers had to devise a new way of capitalizing on the all-too-familiar show business exploitation of female display and movement.

5. Striptease: From Cooch Dancing to Couch Dancing

There are many myths on the birth of striptease, the strip dance of all strip dances, nurtured at the bare bosoms of many mistresses of undressing in the second decade of the twentieth century, such as Anna Held, Dainty Moore, Mae Dix, Margie Bartell, Curls Mason, and others.[62] One apocryphal story dates the origin of striptease to 1928, when Carrie Finnell is said to have extended her run at a burlesque theatre in Cleveland, by promising to remove one article of clothing per week -- over the period of an entire year.[63]

But the origin of striptease cannot be traced to one person nor event. Rather, it developed in various burlesque locales in the U. S. during the 1920s from solo and group production numbers that combined acts of disrobing with cooch dancing. The quaint " private " strips were replaced by acts of undressing that were for the direct viewing pleasure of male audience members, who were no longer forced into assuming the role of peeping toms -- and who could now freely fantasize that the dancers were undressing specifically for them.

Burlesque producers copied the nude tableaux of the cabarets and revues by allowing chorus girls to parade in various degrees of undress, but they discovered a new form of uncovering that was even more risqué -- by having their cooch dancers perform topless and bottomless (except for a

G-string). The basic " striptease " (a term supposedly invented by two Minsky press agents) ritual that emerged here, consisted primarily of borrowed movements from cooch dancing, including: **bumps** - backward and forward motions of the hips and stomach that would usually be " marked " by rim-shots from the drummer of the burlesque band; **grinds** - circular motions of the hips; **quivers** - rapid shakes of the breasts; and **shimmys** - a shaking of the whole body.[64]

Stripteasers, first calling themselves " artistes, " and then " peelers " and " ecdysiasts, " established the rhythm of the basic act, which depended on the creation and cathartic release of tension, in succeeding crescendos and climaxes of decent and indecent exposure.[65] The stripper paced the act by first walking on stage while fully costumed, in order to define her character as flirtatious, sophisticated, sleazy, etc..[66] She then paraded across the stage to music, and teasingly removed her clothes while posing and singing, talking and walking, smooching and cooching -- until she was nude (except for the G-string) and then she either immediately picked up her clothes or ran backstage.[67]

Solo and chorus striptease acts literally packed burlesque theatres in the 1930s, and traditional burlesque comic sketches and dramatic routines were replaced by strip shows, such as " Anatomy and Cleopatra, " " Julius Teaser, " Panties Inferno, " and " She Stripped to Conquer. "[68] Bernard Sobel,

an early archivist of burlesque history, complained in 1931 that the entire entertainment was " merely a perfunctory filler-in for the strip act. "[69] In order to keep less nostalgic fans enthralled with the ever more familiar aura of striptease, dancers devised novel gimmicks to spruce up the basic strip movements that Roland Barthes has cynically called " a glaze of superfluous gestures, " that relegates the act of becoming bare " to the rank of parasitical operations carried out in an improbable background. "[70]

Stripteases added individual styles to the jaded movements of the dance form: Hinda Wassau would lose herself in a reverie of self-caresses; Carrie Finnell (a. k. a. " the remote-control girl "), Sally Keith and Ermaine Parker were " tassel twirlers, " or strippers who attached tassels to their nipples and then rotated them (sometimes even in opposite directions); Diana Rowland achieved a degree of success by appearing on stage dressed with cap-and-gown and diploma, and then revealing a bare back and quivering backside; Rosita Royce and Yvette Daire resorted to " fowl " language with acts involving birds that removed clothes for them; Tirza performed a clean routine involving milk and wine baths; Faith Bacon and Sally Rand, " birds of a feather, " popularized fan dances; and Gypsy Rose Lee was the talk of legitimate show business by virtue of her verbal teasing and quick wit as a striptease artist.[71]

Minsky press agents even promoted newspaper stories on striptease as a " pure American art " and industry that had to be protected from foreign competition.[72] Gypsy Rose Lee wrote in her memoirs about one publicity scheme where the Minskys presented her with the degree of " Doctor of Strip Teasing: "

> Six professors from N. Y. U. were cajoled into taking part in the ceremony, which was to be held after the show one night at the Oriental. ... Ten stripteasers, wearing transparent gowns and caps were to be awarded lesser degrees ... After ten minutes of speeches, the proceedings were interrupted by a raucous voice from the balcony, demanding that they bring on the dames. The six professors squirmed uneasily in their chairs, and Reginald Marsh, the artist, went up to the lectern. " The striptease, " he said, " is classical, it is eternal. It is ...." [73]

In 1937, the growth of ever more daring styles of striptease (the money making dream-come-true for burlesque producers) was nipped in the bud by a cartel of New York " legitimate theatre " owners, politicians, realtors and religious figures who were worried about a potential monopolization of Times Square by burlesque.[74] Municipal authorities refused to renew the operating licenses of fourteen burlesque theatres; and by 1942, city commissioners and the courts had ruled that burlesque strip shows were " offensive to public morals and decency, " and so they outlawed striptease as well as promotional use of the word " burlesque. "[75] The era of big-time theatrical striptease was all but over in New York City and in the rest of the country.

A post-war recession that had closed many jazz joints and nightclubs, provided the impetus for the creation and spread of the strip-bar business during the late 1940s and early 1950s in the United States.[76] Large-chested strippers such as Blaze Starr, Tempest Storm, Irma the Body, and Lili St. Cyr received top-billing at legitimate nightclubs, while other lesser-known dancers plied their trade at refurbished night-club-cum-strip-bars where striptease was stripped to a bare minimum; the " artistic " and theatrical rationale for the dance was now discarded like an overused G-string.[77] Four regular strippers, a " feature girl, " comic emcee, and small " bump-and-grind " band would churn out nightly shows as cheaply and quickly as possible.[78]

The strip dancer was then hired almost wholly as a sexual performer charged with stimulating audiences (now more intimately situated near the stage) into buying drinks. During the 1950s, aficionados of strip-tease could still view the classic theatrical routines -- but only via a series of low-budget and even lower quality films that were shot at major burlesque theatres during the previous two decades.[79]

6. Nudes From Nowhere

With the advent of more explicit representations of nudity and sexuality in other forms of public entertainment such as go-go dancing, film, legitimate theatre, magazines,

topless/bottomless bars and restaurants, and X-rated movies and literature during the 1960s, strip dancing seemed to lose its sleazy edge, and was in danger of becoming a quaint artistic relic and carny side-show.[80] Strip dance producers responded to the crisis by reducing the theatrical trappings of striptease even further; they replaced live bands with taped music, and eschewed " old-time stripping, " i.e. striptease, by making their dancers drop the " tease " segment of their acts in favour of staged nude display.[81]

The naked narrative of disrobing was de-emphasized in the stripper's basic act, which usually consisted of dances to the accompaniment of three or four taped songs, accomplished in progressive states of undress throughout the fifty states. The stripper would sometimes even remove her clothes before appearing on the stage, as the focus was now back on the presentation of forbidden female " no-nos " in strip bars and " burlesk " theatres.[82] The conventional slow and seductive removal of clothing alternating with fast cooch-dancing that comprised (and perhaps also compromised) classic striptease, was replaced in the 1960s and 1970s by different kinds of movement altogether, where dancers were now seen in the " all together. "

The **open-legged squat** consisted of the dancer moving to the front of the stage (very close to the first few rows of customers) and squatting down to reveal eye-opening glimpses

of her genitalia (now called " beaver, " and/or " split beaver " in professional parlance)[83] and backside. Such display was later afforded a quasi-artistic setting in a series of still poses called the **floor show** where the dancer met the competition of girlie-magazine pictures by literally becoming a live model who offered vaginal visions from different angles to her audiences; she then mimed auto-erotic sexual acts and/or acts of sex with an imaginary partner, by stretching her body and crawling on her knees, back or stomach across the stage floor.[84] **Insertion acts** were performed by more adventurous strippers who engaged in phallic frolics by introducing hot dogs, champagne bottles, carrots, ping-pong balls and a wide assortment of other objects into their not-so-private parts.[85] Although many of these strippers were involved in similar practices as pornographic models, some dancers considered their own work to be a glamorous activity, a form of " art " as opposed to the work of women in the porno film and magazine industry.[86]

During the 1970s, enterprising adult entertainment entrepreneurs such as Al Kronish, owner of the Melody Burlesque Theatre on Times Square, tried to meet the stiff competition from live sex acts, peep shows and pornographic films head-on, by booking porn stars as strippers in his theatre and by offering a sleazier setting for his customers. He observed that " People who come to Times Square, they want raunch, " as opposed to " old-time burlesque. "[87] The Mitchell Brothers fol-

lowed this logic by adding simulated lesbian sex acts and " lap dancing " to the bill of fare at their theatre in San Francisco.[88] And in some present-day Montreal strip bars, owners have even installed television monitors that show pornographic videos right next to the dance stages, thus forcing their customers to decide if the objects of their fantasies are to be " live or memorex. "[89]

The transformation of North American strippers from " artistes " to mistresses of sleaze was almost complete by the early 1970s, when a U. S. Supreme Court decision permitted states and local authorities to restrict live nude dancing in bars and clubs that sold alcohol.[90] Certain cities such as Cleveland took the opportunity to segregate strip dancing into two distinct types of establishments: the " classy " strip bar that served liquor but costumed its dancers in G-strings and " pasties " (nipple coverings); and the " juice bar " that tried to get their customers' juices to start flowing by providing totally nude dancers as well as such libations as apple juice, grape juice, orange juice, etc..[91]

Ironically, such arrangements actually encouraged the continued growth of sleazier forms of strip dancing, as juice bar owners, safely ensconced in their gynecological ghettoes, could take more and more risks in delivering explicit adult entertainments to a willing and possibly never truly satisfied clientele.[92] Strip dancers were now treated as sexual per-

formers engaged in private services for individual customers, rather than as dancers/entertainers on a public stage in front of the " respectable " audiences that Tempest Storm so admired at Carnegie Hall.

This was readily evident in the rise of **table dancing** during the late 1970s, where men could select individual women as their own private dancers, for usually five dollars per song.[93] A decade later, clubs in the Southwestern United States were devoted to devotees of **couch dancing**; rather than bothering with stage and table dancing, owners simply eliminated the stage, and had all the dancers perform for small groups of men seated on couches throughout the club.[94]

Strip dancing of this period lacked the familiar ritualized gestures and steps of previous styles such as striptease, leaving dancers to devise sexually provocative choreographies on their own. " Kevin, " a management-consultant for a group of strip bars in the U. S., explains his corporate policy of permitting dancers to perform any way they feel like on any part of the stage:

> Every girl has a different way of earning her money. Some do slow, sensuous dances, while others do acrobatics with a pole. What the audience wants most is personal contact. Dancers should work around the perimeter of the stage. 95

Indeed, contemporary strip dance movements can be very individualistic and unique, while also showing influences from ballet, jazz dancing, pornographic films and magazines, rock-

disco dancing and even glamour photographs.[96] Some dancers improvise their routines, while others plan out intricate choreographies -- and some dancers do not consider their own work to be a form of " dance. "[97]

Two strip dancers in " Club X " differ in the basic approach to their art and craft. " Terry, " is committed to creating a " classy, " Las Vegas type of strip dance. She regularly attends jazz dance classes, so it is no wonder that a certain discipline and technique shows in her work on stage. But surprisingly, her dancing is also improvisational; she explains that:

> I let my muscles talk. Being on stage gives me the chance to create. I have to shut my brain off and I don't really think about the music. [98]

" Randy, " however, is not a trained dancer, and she finds the work to be a boring and necessary evil for making money to eat and to pay rent. She claims that:

> Most people dance to the beat, but I really try to interpret the music and guide my steps beforehand to the background music, voices and guitar work. [99]

Dancers of all stripes of strip are united in their conformity to the basic requirement of incorporating movements that are sexually provocative and stimulating in their acts -- but what precisely is meant by these terms is usually negotiated nightly between the dancers and their audiences, and may now assume many different forms. Many strippers amplify stereotypically " feminine " gestures and images in order to

appear sexy to male audiences.[100] Seph Weene, a former stripper, contends that dancers work from a pool of four basic sexy " looks: " the hard-look, a modern (or postmodern) re-working of the image of the femme-fatale, where the dancer is depicted as sexually aggressive and physically constrained in garter belts and corsets -- implying that " the notion of the sexual woman were so overwhelming that she has to be visibly bound: " the soft-look, representing the dancer as soft, child-like and powerless: the not-a-woman look where the dancer appears in exotic outfits, male costumes and halloween gear -- in order to hide the obvious external trappings of gender: and the rich-look which " simulates formal aristocratic evening attire, upper-class costumes and Las Vegas Baroque, " and plays with conceptions of women as objects of consumption and display.[101]

Male " drag " strippers also depend on cultural definitions of gender in order to construct fallacies of femininity, as they maintain their appearances as female strippers until the final seconds of their acts.[102] Non-drag male strippers have also danced at gay bars and discos since the mid-1970s, although their dancing has tended to be mostly non-choreographed and improvised.[103] Male stripping for women (also coming to fruition during this period) is much more choreographed -- and based on heterosexual male gender stereotypes.[104] As Judith Lynne Hanna contends, " the male show, deeply embedded in the gender hierarchy reenacts and upholds

male dominance, " by recreating " the traditional aura of romance and chivalry mixed with overt sexuality and male aggressiveness. " [105]

Female strip dancers, in fact, utilize a broad range of cultural imagery in creating their acts. " Rambette, " for instance, a twenty-two year old part-time stripper and U. S. Army Reserve officer, performs a number that is loosely inspired by the film " Rambo: " garbed in army fatigues, she dances with a toy rifle as her partner and snarls menacingly at her gun-shy audiences. " Felicia " brightens the stage by attaching lighted matches to her pasties and then striking up heated conversations with cigarette smokers seated by the stage. " Michelle " dances mock-ballet routines in pointe-shoes and easily-removable tutu, while " Nancy " prefers to dress in punk fashions and to incorporate movements garnered from rock-videos and films such as " Flashdance " and " Dirty Dancing " in her choreographies. Many strippers in a variety of clubs in North America choose an Oedipal variant of Weene's " soft-look: " i.e. the " little girl " character, stripping for their new " daddys " in acts that would make even Humbert Humbert blush. [106]

What exactly accounts for these changing objectifications of women as artistic and sleazy performers on display for male spectators? Possible answers to this question cannot be laid

bare through this examination of the formalized (and often informal) movements of strip dancing, alone; rather, such analysis simply sets the stage for a broader consideration of the cultural production of gender and sexuality throughout the following sections of the dissertation.

NOTES: SECTION TWO

1 See Roswell Angier, " ... a kind of life: Conversations in the Combat Zone (Danbury: Addison-House, 1976), p. 130.

2 Personal interview with " Deanna, " 6 June 1988.

3 Tempest Storm with Bill Boyd, Tempest Storm: The Lady Is A Vamp (Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers, 1987), p. 224.

4 John Waters, Crackpot: The Obsessions of John Waters (New York: Vintage, 1987), p. 80; See also a discussion of this nostalgia for the " good old days " of artistic stripping in: Margaret Dragu and A. S. A. Harrison, Revelations: Essays on Striptease and Sexuality (London: Nightwood Editions, 1988) p. 18.

5 The assignation of the terms " clean " and " dirty " to particular burlesque companies at the turn of the century was based on the amount of cooch dancing, revealed female nudity, and bawdy sketches present in each show. The entire industry of burlesque was also described as a " dirty " entertainment: " To most Americans, it is a name for artless exhibitions of sex, held in smoldering theatres. Its scraggly audiences are drawn from society's fringes: the homeless, jaded, jobless and frustrated. Its stars are simple girls who take off their clothes. Few of them possess any more artistry than the ability to walk in time to music without chipping their ankle-bones with their spike heels; " Rowland Barber, " The Sudden Raid That Ruined Real Burlesque, " Life, 2 May 1960, p. 122. Examples of " clean " and " dirty " burlesque companies are listed in: William Green, " Strippers and Coochers - the Quintessence of American Burlesque, " in Western Popular Theatre, ed. David Mayer and Kenneth Richards (London: Methuen & Co., 1977), pp. 157-168.

6 For a comparison of these North American and Western European traditions of strip dancing, see: Wortley, especially pp. 29-59; " A Sioux in Paris, " Time, 22 January 1965, p. 56; and John Elsom, Erotic Theatre (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1974).

7 According to club and theatrical strippers, their carnival counterparts occupy the sleaziest end of an already well stigmatized subculture. See: Arthur H. Lewis, Carnival (New

York: Trident Press, 1970); and Susan Meiselas, Carnival Strippers (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976).

8

For a description of 1960s " burlesk " dancing, see: Earl Wilson, Show Business Laid Bare (New York: Signet/New American Library, 1974), pp. 110-129.

9

Strip dancing involves the removal of clothes to musical accompaniment; but what exactly is revealed through these practices depends on the particular act of strip dancing that one is describing. In some cities in the United States, strip bars are regulated by laws which limit totally nude strip dancing to establishments that do not serve alcohol, known as " juice bars. "

10

See previous note and p. 56 in text of dissertation.

11

For example, Ann Corio supposes that the stripteasers of the 1930s " were the reigning sex symbols of their time, but their acts, though sexy, were basically innocent ... how innocent they were can only be described in terms of their latter day namesakes, strippers of today, who work mostly in nightclubs ... I visited some of the clubs and I was appalled. I couldn't believe what happened; " Ann Corio with Joseph DiMona, This Was Burlesque (New York: Madison Square Press, 1968), p. 102.

12

Annie Ample, The Bare Facts: My Life as a Stripper (Toronto: Key Porter Books Limited, 1988), p. 163.

13

Peter Nelson explains that: " While the groom is allowed to enjoy the dancing skills of a stripteaser or two, when it's midnight and the dancers head upstairs ... a man who's ready for marriage is supposed to resist the urge to follow them. In my experience, it's all talk, symbolic display behavior; " Peter Nelson, Real Man Tells All: Confessions of an Eligible Bachelor (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), p. 19.

14

Bram Dijkstra, Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 366.

15

Recent literature on the history of this iconography includes: Virginia M. Allen, The Femme Fatale: Erotic Icon (Troy: The Whitson Publishing Co., 1983); Patrick Bade,

Femme Fatale: Images of Evil and Fascinating Women (New York: Mayflower Books, 1979); Susan P. Casteras, Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art (London and Toronto: Associated Universities Presses, 1987); Bram Dijkstra, Idols of Perversity (see previous note); and Ewa Kuryluk, Salome and Judas in the Cave of Sex: The Grotesque: Origins, Iconography, Techniques (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1987).

16 Carol F. Karlsen, The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1987), p. 256.

17 The femme fatale is an image of conflict, desire and fear that " both attracts and repels " men and women; see Allen, p. 191. Alan Soble similarly argues that the present day male " use of pornography is an attempt to recoup in the domain of fantasy what is denied to men in production and politics; " Soble, p. 81.

18 Bade, p. 8.

19 See: Dijkstra, pp. 358 & 371; and Kuryluk, p. 191.

20 Deborah Jowitt, Time and the Dancing Image (New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1988), p. 123.

21 Kenneth Clark studies " how the naked body has been given memorable shapes by the wish to communicate certain ideas or states of feeling; " Kenneth Clark, The Nude: A Study In Ideal Form (Princeton: Princeton/Bollingen Paperback Edition, 1984), p. 348; and Anne Hollander constructs nudity as a form of costume, stating that: " The unclothed costume, when it is intended to be looked at by an intimate, a camera, an audience, or a mirror - is subject to current standards of nude fashion; " Anne Hollander, Seeing Through Clothes (New York: The Viking Press, 1978), p. 87.

22 Georges Duby describes fourteenth-century attitudes towards female embodiment as follows: " Woman's body is a mirror image of Adam's body; in particular, the female sex organs are similar in structure to the male, but turned around, introverted, more secret and thus more private but also, like anything hidden, suspect. Woman's body is more susceptible to corruption because less sealed off from the outside world, requires more vigilant guard, and it is to the man that the task of surveillance falls ... she needs to be in man's power. Anatomically, she is destined to remain secluded in a supplemen-

tary enclosure, never to leave home without an escort, and then only bundled up in layers of garments more opaque than those of man. Before woman's body a wall is erected: the wall of private life; " Georges Duby, " Solitude: Eleventh to Thirteenth Century, " in A History of Private Life, Volume Two: Revelations of the Medieval World, ed. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 524. For a similar discussion of later Western European descriptions of female private parts as evil and dangerous, see: Edward Shorter, A History of Women's Bodies (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

23

Danielle Régnier-Bohler, " Imagining the Self: Exploring Literature, " In A History of Private Life, Volume Two: Revelations of the Medieval World, p. 371. Other works on historical constructions of female nudity in terms of " nuditas criminalis, " include: Erwin Panofsky, Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance (New York: Harper and Row, 1962); and Marina Warner, Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form (New York: Atheneum, 1985).

24

Wortley, p. 12.

25

See Paul Ableman, Anatomy of Nakedness (London: Orbis Publishing, 1982), p. 83; and Chevalier, p. 73.

26

For more colourful descriptions of the poses plastiques or tableaux vivants, see: John D' Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), pp. 130-131; Lewis A. Erenberg, Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), p. 213; Bernard Sobel, A Pictorial History of Burlesque, pp. 109-115; Christine Stansell, City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), p. 175; and Robert C. Toll, On With the Show: The First Century of Show Business in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 208-210.

27

Ableman, p. 84.

28

See Foster Rhea Dulles, A History of Recreation: America Learns to Play (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1965), p. 118.

29

Christine Stansell explains that during the nineteenth century, the " network of sexual experience for sale was certainly troubling evidence of the centrality of sex to metropolitan life; indeed its presence in the most cosmopolitan areas of the city was one indication of just how closely a particular kind of sex (bourgeois men with working-class women) was linked to a sophisticated urbanity ... Bourgeois men and women, who understood female sexuality within the cult of true womanhood, tended to see any woman who was sexually active outside of marriage as a prostitute; " Stansell, p. 175.

30

According to Robert C. Toll, " even after the burlesque show receded to its sleazy origins, the girlie show remained a central feature of most show business forms. In fact, the principal reason that burlesque stripped itself to death, was that other popular entertainment forms, forms with more respectable reputations and more diversified, more entertaining features, successfully absorbed burlesque's most sensual innovations; " Toll, p. 208.

31

D'Emilio and Freedman, pp. 130-133.

32

Michael and Ariane Batterberry, On the Town in New York From 1776 to the Present (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), pp. 102-104. In 1882, James D. McCabe Jr. offered the following description of such establishments in Manhattan: " The concert saloons are among the worst features of the social evil ... They provide a low order of music, and the service of the place is rendered by young women, many of whom are dressed in tights and all sorts of fantastic costumes, the chief object of which is to display the figure as much as possible ... The women are prostitutes of the lowest order. They encourage the visitors to drink, shamelessly violate every rule of propriety, and are always in readiness to rob a visitor who is too far gone in liquor to protect himself; " James D. McCabe Jr., New York By Gaslight: A Work Descriptive of the Great American Metropolis, Classic 1882 Edition (New York: Greenwich House, 1984), p. 489.

33

Michael and Ariane Batterberry, p. 104.

34

For more details on the Parisian dance halls, see: Derek and Julia Parker, The Natural History of the Chorus Girl (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975), p. 29. Barbary Coast saloons are discussed in the following texts: Paul G. Cressey, The Taxi-Dance Hall: A Sociological Study in Commercialized Recreation and City Life (Montclair: Patterson-

Smith, 1969); William Green, " Strippers and Coochers; " and Bernard Sobel, Burleycue.

35
Toll, p. 207.

36
Bernard Falk, The Naked Lady, or Storm Over Adah (London: Hutchinson & Company Publishers, 1934).

37
Zeidman, p. 21.

38
Mark Twain, Mark Twain's Travels With Mr. Brown, ed. Franklin Walker and G. Ezra Dane: rpt. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1971), pp. 84-86.

39
Dulles, p. 217.

40
Olive Logan, Before the Footlights and Behind the Scenes: A Book About " The Show Business In All Its Branches (Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and Middleton: Parmeless & Co., 1870), pp. 583-587.

41
See Logan, p. 589.

42
M. B. Leavitt, Fifty Years in Theatrical Managment (New York: Broadway Publishing Co., 1912), pp. 308-311.

43
Derek and Julia Parker contend that during the late eighteenth century, the ballet girl " became in the end almost indistinguisrable from the chorus girl ... while she was still extending a shapely leg and a neat ankle from the stage of the Opera ... she was in spirit and sometimes in fact much closer to her sisters performing elsewhere in the city, where regulations may have been less enforceable and the girls even less inhibited and discreet; " Derek and Julia Parker, p. 37. " Turkey shows " were burlesque productions of the 1880s that ran during the winter months as one-night stands in backwater locales -- See Green, p. 160.

44
See Soble, Burleycue, p. 60; Green, p. 160; and Zeidman, p. 52.

45
Toll, p. 231.

46

Charles Castle, The Folies Bergère (New York: Franklin Watts, 1985), pp. 96-97.

47

Paul Derval writes that: " The Folies Bergère naturally had its own versions of the disrobing routine ... little by little the formula of the all-encompassing revue began to take shape, embracing all forms of entertainment from singers to prize fighters; " Paul Derval, Folies-Bergère, trans. Lucienne Hill (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1955), p. 51.

48

Robinson Locke Collection, Series 2, New York Public Library.

49

Green, " Strippers and Coochers, " pp. 161-162.

50

Green, " Strippers and Coochers, " p. 162.

51

Robert C. Toll calls Millie De Leon " burlesque's first truly national sex symbol; " Toll, p. 226. See also Bernard Sobel's description of these cooch dancers in Burlesque, p. 223.

52

Abel Green and Joe Laurie Jr., Showbiz: From Vaude to Video (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1951), pp. 9 & 76. See also Jowitt, p. 123.

53

Green and Laurie, p. 9.

54

Erenberg, p. 214. See also: Stephen Kern, The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918, p. 200.

55

Erenberg, p. 215.

56

Erenberg, p. 82.

57

Castle, p. 108.

58

Morton Minsky and Milt Machlin, Minsky's Burlesque (New York: Arbor House, 1986), p. 37.

59
Minsky and Machlin, p. 37.

60
Minsky and Machlin, p. 32.

61
Green, " Strippers and Coochers, " p. 163.

62
Stories about the competing " mothers of striptease " can be found in Zeidman's The American Burlesque Show, and Ann Corio's This Was Burlesque.

63
Corio, pp. 73-74.

64
Alexander, pp. 31-37; and Sobel, A Pictorial History of Burlesque, p. 129.

65
In 1931, Bernard Sobel complained about the timing of strippers: " for every piece they take off or put on they must get applause, and thus the time of the performance is consumed with perpetual encores ... posing, simpering, brief moments of cooching and disrobing; " Sobel, Burleycue, p. 264.

66
Alexander, pp. 31-37; and Sobel, A Pictorial History of Burlesque, p. 129.

67
Roswell Angier comments that " there is a jarring moment at the end of each strip when the showgirl, the jungle queen, must stoop and pick up her own peelings, like a housewife policing a dirty sock; " Angier, p. 7.

68
Alexander, p. 124.

69
Sobel, Burleycue, p. 263.

70
Barthes, p. 86.

71
Corio, pp. 77-101; amd Zeidman, pp. 14 & 156.

72
Gypsy Rose Lee, Gypsy: A Memoir (New York: A Fireside Book/Simon & Schuster Inc., 1986), p. 307.

73

Lee, p. 308.

74

Alexander, pp. 51-118.

75

Alexander, p. 117.

76

There are very few sources that chronicle the development of the strip bar in the 1950s; see Albert Goldman, Ladies and Gentlemen Lenny Bruce!! (New York: Ballantine Books, 1975) and Blaze Starr and Huey Perry, Blaze Starr: My Life as Told to Huey Perry (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974).

77

Albert Goldman writes that the " elaborate production numbers with eight leopard-skinned broads hoofing around a papier-mâche jungle, the long routines played off between the top and bottom banana before the drop curtain ... the whole big deal with the feature strippers and their arty dance acts got to be too g-d-damned much for the strokers in the third row with the newspapers over their joints. So the trick became sweating burlesque down to its essentials, getting it under a cheap roof and turning the houses on a tight schedule that satisfied the customers and made the management some money; " Goldman, p. 173.

78

Goldman, pp. 171-174.

79

Kenneth Turan and Stephen F. Zito, Sinema: American Pornographic Films and the People Who Make Them (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), p. 6.

80

According to Blaze Starr, strip dancing during the 1960s was affected by the fact that a man " didn't have to go to a strip club or a burlesque theatre to see a pair of tits. He could go to one of the new restaurants opening all over the place and feast his eyes on a topless waitress while he ate his lunch or dinner. Then came the X-rated movies, and in many cities the next step was that exotic dancing turned into displays of total nudity as many once-respected strip clubs had their girls throw away their G-strings in order to keep up; " Starr and Perry, pp. 164-165. For more details on the development of go-go dancing and nude theatre during the 1960s, see: Earl Caldwell, " On San Francisco's Broadway, Accent is Now on Total Nudity, " The New York Times, 13 February 1972, n. pag.; and Howard Junker, " Theatre of the Nude, " Playboy, November 1968, pp. 99 & 104.

81

See Bob Salmoggi, " Burlesque Is Dead: Once Again, " World Journal Tribune, 4 May 1967, n. pag.; and Larry Van Gelder, " The Long Grind For Red Bloods, " World Journal Tribune, 5 October 1966, n. pag..

82

Victoria Hodgetts gives a first-hand report of the typical strip theatre as: " a sad little spot where pensioners and peers and jackers-off go trade their 5-spots for a peek at someone else's childhood no-nos; " Victoria Hodgetts, " Reporter Tries Burlesque: I 11 Cry Tomorrow But I 11 Strip Tonight, " The Village Voice, 8 March 1976, pp. 108-109.

83

Wilson, pp. 114-117.

84

See Lauri Lewin, Naked Is The Best Disguise: My Life as a Stripper (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1984), pp. 72-82.

85

Ample, p. 157.

86

Wilson, p. 118.

87

Al Kronish is quoted in: Josh Allen Friedman, Tales of Times Square (New York: Delacorte Press, 1986); see pp. 12-15.

88

Annie Ample defines the act of " lap dancing " as: " squirming around in a guy's lap for an extra $5; " Ample, p. 9.

89

The phrase " live or memorex " refers to a U. S. television commercial where recording-studio technicians must decide if a particular singer's voice (preferably that of Ella Fitzgerald) is live or recorded on the brand of " Memorex " audio-tape.

90

" California v. La Rue upheld a state regulation prohibiting ' bottomless ' dancing and ' live shows in bars and nightclubs that sell liquor ... (it) rests on the rarely invoked 21st Amendment which repealed prohibition and gave the states broad power to regulate the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages within their borders: " Alan M. Dershowitz; " The Court Says Nudes and Liquor Don't Mix, " The New York Times, 10 December 1972, n. pag..

91

Jackie Boles, whose doctoral dissertation consisted of an occupational study of strippers, describes a " pastie " as: " a little plastic cone with sequins sewn on the outside. To make it stay, you take ordinary black masking tape and twist it over to make a sticky cord. Then you weave this into a sort of web inside the pastie ... you just sort of chunk it on; " quoted in Edith Ann Coogler, " Real Strippers: How They Live, " The Atlanta Journal and Constitution Magazine, 2 May 1971, p. 42.

92

In 1971, Alan M. Dershowitz correctly predicted the eventual development of juice bars, by stating that: " The American public may not be able to have sex shows and liquor simultaneously but the entrepreneurs of epidermis will have little difficulty converting their establishments to milk or juice bars. After all, how many patrons go for the watered-down liquor anyway; " Dershowitz, n. pag.. There are major differences, however, between all-nude strip dancing in Canada and in the United States. In the intentionally sleazy atmosphere of Ohio juice-bars (some sites also serving as fronts for prostitution) all nude strip dancing is mainly confined to imitations of auto-erotic acts. In Quebec, on the other hand, where all manner of strip bar may serve alcohol, totally nude dancers perform more conventional acts involving both choreographed and " floor show " elements.

93

Strip bar customers can hire women to bring a box to their table and perform for them as private dancers at usually five dollars per musical selection. See Dragu and Harrison, p. 162; and Ample, pp. 163-164.

94

" ... women in loose-fitting clothes moved from table to table. Each would attach herself to one of the men in a group and after a whispered conversation, doff her outer garment to reveal herself clad only in the skimpiest of bikini underpants. Then she would, well, dance - to put it mildly - for her patron of the moment while his buddies around the table sat immobile, drinks in hand, glassy-eyed, grinning ... After a few minutes of this, each woman would politely disengage, collect 25 or 30 bucks and begin to scout the room briskly for the next group of clients; " Keith McWalter, " Couch Dancing, " The New York Times Magazine, 6 December 1987, p. 138.

95

Personal interview with " Kevin, " 27 August 1988.

96

In other words, there are no set patterns that characterize all contemporary practices of strip dancing. I have

personally observed dancers who interweave classical dance steps, mimetic movements of sexual intercourse, and poses from Vogue models -- all in the same short routine.

97
Refer to the discussion on the first subsection entitled: " Art-N-Sleaze. "

98
Personal interview with " Terry, " 16 October 1988.

99
Personal interview with " Randy, " 14 August 1988.

100
Seph Weene maintains that " stage sexuality is a highly technical matter, " and that " strippers exaggerate women's normal gestures; " Seph Weene, " Venus, " Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics, 3, No. 4 (Issue 12, 1981), p. 38. Dragu and Harrison explain that not only are strip dancers expected to work hard at presenting themselves according to socially acceptable and conventional external appearances of femininity, but they must also " perform with ladylike decorum. This means a sense of modesty, and their observance of certain feminine traditions such as cleanliness and hairlessness ... The demand that strippers be ladylike exists as a kind of counterpoint to an ever present expectation that they are going to do something gross; " Dragu and Harrison, p. 17.

101
Weene, p. 37.

102
Hanna. p. 238.

103
" Boys are required to dance in short segments adding up to 150 minutes per night. Someone functions as timekeeper. The dancing is not pre-choreographed; they improvise on inspiration provided by the crowd, the drugs ... the D. J. and the music; " Stephen Greco, " No Experience Necessary, " Christopher Street, August 1978, p. 58.

104
The movements of the " Chippendales " company of male strip dancers blend " martial arts with modern dance, gymnastics with jazz, ballet with breakdancing. It is ... the kind of dance that entertains a diverse crowd of women; " Kevin Grubb, " How the Chippendales Survived the Eighties, " Dance Magazine, September 1987, p. 64.

105
Hanna, p. 226.

106

Ample, p. 164.

SECTION THREE: MOVEMENTS OF COMMERCE

Does anybody know the stupid truth? She wants to be a real estate agent who drives people around in a station wagon that is painted like wood. An award-winning realtor in a fern-green suit. But she is humping a spotlight in front of a crowd, flinging sweat from her belly and thighs, and the tassels on her pasties are swinging to the beat.

Don DeLillo [1]

1. Buck Naked

You do not have to be a Marxian scholar to realize that the economic context of strip dancing is critically important. As I argued in the previous section, the ideological preconditions of strip dancing were already well established by the middle of the nineteenth century, when women were constituted as the objects of an artistic and sleazy sexuality at the sites of very profitable institutions such as concert saloons, burlesque theatres and music halls. Growth of the North American burlesque industry was spurred on by economic depressions in the 1890s and 1930s, which filled theatres with unemployed audiences in search of cheap diversions and objects of desire: that were provided by thousands of young working-class women who danced for fame, glamour and a weekly paycheck. And competition from a wide range of upper to lower-class entertainments that exploited female display actually extended the limits of what were considered as " acceptable " practices of strip dancing; dancers and producers took increasingly daring steps to attract audiences -- from disrobing acts, cooch

dancing, and striptease to table dancing.

The prime reasons that many strippers offer when justifying their participation in such a stigmatized profession, revolve around the subject of money.[2] According to " Roxanne, " for example, " nine out of ten strip dancers work so they can eat. "[3] Strip bar owners are no less in the business for the money, as strip dancing is a business, as well as a somewhat interesting dissertation topic. " Keith, " a strip bar entrepreneur, explains that he is in a " very profitable industry where we try to provide an intimate atmosphere of attractive women and entertainment, especially in clubs for businessmen. "[4]

Statistics on the strip bar industry are hard to come by since ownership information is hidden under a veil of secrecy that is part of the cultivated mysterious atmosphere of these establishments.[5] You do not have to take great leaps of the imagination to conceive of the possibility that many bars may serve as fronts for prostitution and/or the selling of illicit substances by organized crime figures.[6] Strip dancing is part of the pornography or " adult entertainment " industry, which is a very amorphous and broad label for a wide range of sexual service concerns whose finances, organizational structures and networks of production and distribution are not easily uncovered.[7]

Ron Martin, a producer of simulated sex shows, describes adult entertainment (which grosses over six billion dollars per year in the U. S. according to some conservative estimates) as:

> an infant industry. It's wide open, exciting. It's pure. I can apply economic theory and it works. Porno is the last frontier. I run a business. I collect money. I make things work. 8

Strip dancing and all other entertainment services are provided by strip bars in order to assist in the stimulation of profits through " cover charges " and the sale of drinks.[9] But liquor is not the only type of product sold in this industry.

2. Seeing is Believing

" Do Not Make Physical Contact With The Dancers! " " Keep Your Hands to Yourself! " " Look, But Don't Touch! " These golden rules decorate the walls of many strip bars, and loudly mark the personal boundaries of a peculiar mode of sexual performance. The " sex " that is bought by male audiences of strip dancing is invariably vicarious and visual in nature. Unlike a prostitute, the strip dancer does not usually engage individual men in mutually direct and participatory physical experiences or sex acts. Rather, she simultaneously displays culturally acceptable and taboo images and movements of female sexuality to many different men, who can then use these performances to feed their own private fantasies or male bonding behaviours.[10]

It may come as no surprise that men like to look at naked women; males may be biologically predisposed to react to such beatific visions.[11] But whether or not such speculations are correct, the traces of this visual imperative may be perceived in specific cultural practices such as strip dancing.[12]

Sex in strip dancing is manufactured as a form of industrial production rather than human reproduction.[13] Sex is pre-packaged as a one-sided performance offered anonymously and impersonally; significantly, the only way that strip bar patrons can safely make physical contact with the dancers is through the medium of money -- by inserting dollar " tips " into their garters.[14] During one evening of field research, I overheard a male audience member asking a dancer to change a twenty dollar bill for him right in the middle of her performance. She then stopped dancing, glared at him and remarked angrily: " What do you think I am, some kind of money machine, huh? " All joking about " assets " and " safety deposit boxes " aside, this seemingly off-hand remark raises some acute theoretical and practical problems for the cultural analysis of strip dancing.

What is the status of the dancers within the production process of strip dancing? Are they machines of profit for strip bar owners, labourers trying to achieve some degree of dignity and financial security despite often difficult and degrading working conditions, or are they, in fact, the very

commodities produced through strip dancing -- the material manifestations of ideologies of femininity and sexuality ?

3. Going to Market

Luce Irigaray, borrowing from Karl Marx's analyses of commodity fetishism, defines women as commodities; mirror products of male labour where the female body is submitted to:

> a specularization, a speculation, that transforms it into a value-bearing object, a standardized sign, an exchangeable signifier, a likeness with reference to an authoritative model. 15

Other scholars such as Christine Buci-Glucksmann also contend that women represent " mass-produced, widely available commodities with the massification of industrial labor and society " during the twentieth century. 16

Such arguments on the visual fetishization of women's bodies as commodities remain hypothetical, however, until thorough and comprehensive historical studies are undertaken to corroborate or refute them. But if it is too broad a task to demonstrate the commodification of the entire gender category of " women, " then perhaps such theories may inspire more specific studies of the experiences of certain classes of women such as strip dancers. In 1940, Ettore Rella wrote a history of burlesque theatre in which the act of watching striptease is characterized as " the inspection of a commodity in a commercial boudoir; " unfortunately, the tantalizing im-

plications of Rella's cynical comment have never been fully teased out.[17]

For as early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the term " **commerce** " denoted both the " exchange of merchandise " and " sexual intercourse. "[18] Courtesans and prostitutes first achieved real commercial success as producers of capital during this period, but with the advent of expanded industrialization and urbanization more types of women s work were concentrated in the public rather than private realm -- including urban " underworld districts " of North America and Western Europe that catered to a variety of sexual services in the nineteenth century.[19]

The emergence of practices of strip dancing occurs against this historical backdrop, when the objectification of women as artistic and sleazy objects of sexual display and performance was a male strategy for dealing with perceived threats to both gender and class that were posed by changing economic conditions, wherein undomesticated lower-class women challenged the traditional features of bourgeois economics, femininity and morality by supplying a new and strange commodity -- themselves -- to male consumers, who could then be potentially swayed from the demands of family and business.[20] Prostitutes repeatedly sold their sex to many different men, while dancing girls and tableau-vivant models resold visions of this sex to anonymous audiences who could never truly

possess these women as personal property.[21]

But commercial utilization of female display went far beyond the borders of the sexual underground, and spread throughout the emergent consumer societies of the latter half of the nineteenth century by providing exotic and dream-like marketing images for businesses (such as newly formed department stores) to motivate people into buying cheap, mass produced goods.[22] Richard Sennett explains that:

> Even as they became more uniform, physical goods were endowed in advertising with human qualities, made to seem tantalizing mysteries which had to be possessed to be understood. 23

Female strip dancers, conversely, were endowed with the qualities of commodities, objectified as mysterious images of femininity that had to be viewed to be understood.

These images, however, were not only suited for male consumption; As Rachel Bowlby suggests:

> It was above all to women that the new commerce made its appeal, urging and inviting them to procure its luxurious benefits, and purchase sexually attractive images for themselves. 24

Early strip dancing furnished the requisite professional models for this commodified self-display; women could be exotic and normal, and make themselves sexually attractive for men while not necessarily succumbing to direct male control. Such commodification also entailed the objectification of strip dancers as artistic and sleazy performers, as well as the incorporation of these women's bodies into highly commer-

cial figures. John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman suggest that during this time

> The cosmetics industry, whose sales grew from $17 million in 1914 to $141 million in 1925, depended on women choosing to make themselves attractive to men. By using veiled nudes and seductive poses, advertising also spread throughout the entire culture images designed to stimulate male erotic fantasies. More and more of life, it seemed, was intent on keeping Americans in a state of constant sexual excitement. 25

4. Damaged Merchandise

The dialectic of art and sleaze which so wholly informs the annals of strip dancing, pits Platonic idealizations of women as beautiful forms of eternal love, against more down-to-earth realizations that women have bodies that are not so perfect, permanent and changeless.[26] " Ted, " manager of ' Club X, " employs " girls who have a neat appearance and a nice figure ... they must also be good-looking and attractive. "[27] Criteria of external appearance most often take priority over those of performance skills in strip dance hiring decisions.[28] But this " beautification ' of artistic objects for display demands the safeguarding of bodily standards and practices which effectively hide the actual work that goes into the production of such commercial comeliness. For example, many strip dancers use mineral oil or mixtures of Max Factor pancake makeup, alcohol and water in order to make their bodies reflect better under the lights.[29]

Female bodily beauty is standardized in uniform packages, although the precise contents of these packages have changed over time; from the plump burlesque queens of the late 1800s to the sylph-like Minsky girl of the 1920s and the top-heavy headline strippers of the 1950s. As Wendy Chapkis maintains:

> Whatever the current borders of beauty, they will always be well-defined and exceedingly narrow, and it will be woman's task to conform to them. 30

Of course any woman in society may try to conform to the conventions of ideal body type, but strip dancers are charged with the professional task of exaggerating these most " natural " and obvious outwardly physical signs of current fashions of femininity -- in order to present unambiguous fantasies of " feminine " sexuality to a large pool of male consumers from diverse backgrounds. 31

This beautification glamourizes the external female body by removing the blemishes of biological variation and individual difference, thus remaking women as the smooth plastic models of a spectacular and superficial display. 32 The nudity that is produced in strip dancing may actually cover nakedness; as Roland Barthes suggests, the body of the strip dancer is " enclosed like a beautiful slippery object, withdrawn by its very extravagance from human use. " 33 Beauty here is truly skin-deep, as even female orifices are devoid of the traces of physiological functions, and are filled in by the penetrating glances of floor-show patrons. Certainly there is no room on the stage for such female realities as menstruation

or pregnancy; sexual reproduction is situated outside of strip dancing in more domestic settings.[34]

Women who do not conform to the current arbitrary modes of the body beautiful are also excluded from strip dancing. Thus, there are very few Asian and Black women working within the industry -- those who do dance are usually treated as exotic novelty acts outside the mainstream of the typically white world of strip dancing.[35]

In the early days of burlesque theatre, the exposure of legs held such weight that productions were called " leg shows, " while bare breasts became a top draw on the most favoured body-part list in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Charles Castle dates the first momentous appearance of bare bosoms at the Folies Bergère to a 1907 pantomime, " La Chair, " where:

> a cuckolded husband, played by George Wague, tore the clothes from his wife's body. The ensuing scandal was enormous, particularly since the breasts in question belonged to Colette. 36

From the heyday of striptease to the present, the attention of male audience and police officials has usually been directed at the question of whether or not the strip dancer is wearing a G-string to cover her pudendum (which literally means " that of which one ought to be ashamed " in Latin).[37] Contemporary floor shows, the climactic routine of all-nude strip dance performances, enshrine the vagina as the very core

and essence of female sexuality. According to Lauri Lewin, a former dancer, the floor show forced her to recognize that for strippers:

> our most valued commodities were our genitals. We had control over one part of our act if no other: the floor show. Thus we invested it with symbolic meaning. Each of us developed a private morality about it. We imposed limitations on ourselves, the transgression of which would make us plummet into " bad girl " status. 39

Indeed, constitution of the strip dancer as the exemplar of exotic and forbidden sexuality occurs at this corporeal level; dancers must always publically reveal body parts that are culturally labeled as private and taboo -- this is a most fundamental rite of strip dancing. Of course there is a finite number of body parts that can possibly be revealed, so throughout the history of strip dancing more and more flesh was displayed, and fewer and fewer forbidden body parts could then be restricted from sight. But if taking off clothing is no longer so unusual, then covering the all-nude female body with sexy costumes, lingerie and wet T-shits may have a certain flashy appeal. Strip dancing may, in fact, crucially depend on these actions of " covering . " As Mary Ann Caws argues:

> The paradox presented here of representing bodies is that something of the naked must be covered for the nakedness to appear attractive ... but precisely behind that shoe or glove or ribbon or veil or sheet or stripe, the appendage or part, or even the whole may disappear ... Seen entire. the body seems to say nothing; seen naked it speaks whole volumes; seen veiled, it leads to its own text. 40

Of course, ever newer artistic and sleazy practices of exhibiting the body (such as floor shows and table dancing) can always be devised by enterprising experts in the strip dance industry who are constantly looking to develop better and brighter products that embody female sexuality.

In essence, the female body that is produced through practices of strip dancing thus represents an incomplete and de-idealized beauty; a " de-formed " repository of interlocking physical fragments that become alluring in their movement to the limits of permissable and shameful femininity. The organic unity of the sensual female body, previously grounded in the ethereal forms of religious and secular " beauty " and " love " is then guaranteed by market demands through the imposition of the commodity form.[41] Here, as Walter Benjamin asserts, " in the inanimate body, which can however, give itself to pleasure, allegory unites with commodities. "[42]

Strip dancing may be associated with the transformation of merchandise into spectacles of consumption through the rise of modern department stores, public advertising and cinema during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[43] Not only because women (and their images and representations) were considered to be merchandise themselves, or at the very least, the models for activities of self-display and consumption; but as a direct result of the commodification of the joys of viewing for viewing sake alone -- in all these public media.[44]

In the culture of strip, men continue to pay money for the pleasures of simply looking at women, and female dancers do not hesitate to supply the pretty packages of forbidden female bodies in order to meet the " image-inary " demands of their customers.

5. All Dolled Up

If this perspective seems a bit mechanistic, perhaps one has to realize that the production of the commodity " strip dancer " banked very heavily on the image of the female body as mechanism. Strip producers held no monopoly here, as such images formed the basis of many other forms of dance and theories of movement, such as found in the work of Rudolf Laban. Labanotation, or Laban-analysis was the fruit of Laban's lifelong efforts during the first half of the twentieth century to construct a science of dance through an objective, precise and universally applicable theory, or " architectonics " of all the possibilities of dance movement.[45] His writings show the strong influence of Frederick Winslow Taylor and Frank Bunker Gilbreth's time-motion studies that were designed for the scientific management of labour.[46]

At the beginnings of this century, Frank Gilbreth investigated and then classified body motions independent of the specific forms of labour that were under scrutiny; he divided work into the " most basic elements possible " and then

studied these elements separately and in relation to each other.[47] The time-motion studies were originally applied to direct factory labour only; however, the principles underlying these studies were soon regarded as universal, and were deemed " effective wherever people and machines are employed. "[48] Such " scientific " studies represented an attempt, as Harry Braverman has argued in Labor and Monopoly Capital (1974), to forcefully rip labour from its social moorings and to abstract all of labour's " concrete qualities in order to comprehend it as universal and endlessly repeated motions. "[49]

If we substitute the term " labour " with " dance " here, then we have an accurate description of Rudolf Laban's philosophy; that is, dance is objectively and scientifically constructed as an object that is composed of universally repeated motions or of basic and similar elements that are separated and then related to each other through notational systems.[50] Laban himself acknowledged the influence of the principles of scientific management on his investigations of the movement dimensions of the human " bodily engine. "[51]

The work of modern dance pioneers Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis also suggest a kinaesthetic model of a balanced, controlled and economic spiral of movement, where the particular mass of the human body is replaced with a Taylorian series of aerodynamic, abstract and industrially-based

motions.[52] The influence of Laban's perspective on modern and post-modern choreographers such as Merce Cunningham, Erick Hawkins, Yvonne Rainer and others is quite apparent. In the dances of Rainer, for instance, movement is supposed to be stripped of psychological, social and even strictly formalist underpinnings in order to become an objective presence unto itself.[53]

Hillel Schwartz has shown how such mechanistic approaches to body movement helped lay the groundwork for the rise of the American culture of diet and slimming at the beginning of the twentieth century, by streamlining the " body shapes of workers to machines that cannot abide loose flesh or imbalanced forms. "[54] This may have even effected changes in the fashions that governed the specific physical dimensions of stereotypically " beautiful " strip dancers -- from the corpulent burlesque queens to the sleek and slim Minsky girls.

Early filmmakers such as Eadweard Muybridge and Georges Méliès also related human bodies to the mechanical nature of the medium itself, by producing displays of beautiful women as the icons of a uniform femininity; although Muybridge stripped women in order to arrive at a scientific truth of muscle and motion, while Méliès covered his women (both literally and figuratively) with mechanical contrivances in order to conjure up the more ephemeral and preternatural secrets of fin-de-siècle femininity.[55]

In The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man (1951), Marshall McLuhan examines these behaviouristic views of sex which exaggerate the female body as " a sort of love machine " by hooking it " to the mechanisms of the market and the impersonal techniques of industrial production. " [56] McLuhan selects the Ziegfeld chorus-line as his cultural evidence, because there is allegedly " nothing very human about twenty painted dolls rehearsing a series of clockwork taps, kicks and swings; " their dynamic motions of abstract power are then compared to the economic laws of finance and engineering which move the audiences of " tired businessmen idolatrously seated in front of that line. " [57]

McLuhan half-heartedly tries to emancipate these " human robots " from their chains of fantasy by forwarding the " carnal and sexy " appeal of " burlesque hoofers " as a more pleasurable style of sexuality, best represented by Marcel Duchamp's painting of " Nude Descending a Staircase, " which resembles " an artichoke doing a striptease. " [58] But McLuhan failed to realize that burlesque, salome dance, hootchie-kootchie and striptease gestures and movements of female sexuality could be just as codified and conventionalized as assembly-line and chorus-line work. Geoffrey Gorer, a British observer of American striptease during the 1930s, wrote that in fact:

> The most extraordinary part of the whole performance is the absolute uniformity of timing and gesture; undressing in public is performed with the solemnity of military drill, or reli-

gious rite; it is impersonal, insignificant, sexless. [59]

Big-time dancers tried to introduce novel gimmicks and stylistic variations to the expected patterns and rhythms of the striptease; those few stars who successfully broke the mold (such as Gypsy Rose Lee) proved to be exceptions to the rule, however.

Subsequent innovations of strip such as " floor shows " and " table dancing " can be similarly formalized in routine and mechanical performances. Moreover, these acts are produced on a continual basis in strip clubs; there is a constant output of interchangeable dancers on stage, rather than of set theatrical shows such as in classic burlesque. A brunette dancer who performs for three songs is then replaced by a blonde dancer who performs for three songs and is then replaced by another brunette dancer -- and so on, ad infinitum (or at least until the club closes for the night). " Nick, " a strip club owner, insists that he must always have " a dancer on stage and music playing without stop, because we do a volume business selling liquor and we got to keep the guys always interested. " [60]

Certainly more than a few dancers in deshabille are very committed to using strip as a vehicle for artistic self-expression and exploration; as Debi Sundahl, a stripper and

avid student of feminist and Marxist politics explains:

> It is an insulting misconception about burlesque that anyone in a drunken, uninhibited state can strip. It takes practice and talent to be able to pull off an entertaining and truly erotic performance. To create good art, an artist must have a sophisticated and sensitive knowledge of her subject. 61

But whether or not individual performers are dedicated to expanding either the artistic or sleazy dimensions of the industry, all strip dancers are united in the common pursuit of offering their bodies as the seductive and sensual signs of a highly charged and marketable female sexuality.

But this commodification inevitably requires the simultaneous humanistic devaluation of women, for commercial use-value operates here through the teasing images of strip dancers as the embodiments of a shameful, sleazy, and socially stigmatized femininity.

There is a dearth of detailed historical studies on the development of this mechanistic corporeal ideology, but the hypothetical connections between turn-of-the-century strip dancing, cinema, dieting trends and theories of movement -- may come together in visions of the stripped female body that is packaged as an industrial commodity when going through the technical motions of an external spectacular display.

6. All Worked Up

Dancers are not the only commodities in strip bars; on the contrary, men also buy a cornucopia (or pornocopia) of sexual fantasies that are manufactured (or at the very least culturally redistributed) here as lurid and alluring lures for the sale of alcohol -- which is itself, a principal product and source of gross profits in this industry of wine, women and song. But dancers are a unique type of commodity -- human beings that are made equivalent to other objects in the market (such as wine and song). We must then make clear-cut analytical distinctions between the objectified forms and the real-life human subjects of this commodification.[62]

The processes of mechanistic embodiment and commodification that have been discussed in this section should not be interpreted as autonomous and deterministic systems that impose effects on passive McLuhanesque robotic dancers; rather, they describe complex and contradictory practices of women who actively pursue or resist such objectifications to the best of their individual abilities. Strip dancers knowingly use their bodies as sexual commodities and may work very hard to produce the forced smiles and engaging come-hither looks that are necessary tools of the trade; but their work is concealed through these same heavily made-up masks that create the appearance of an apparently spontaneous, fleeting and effortless performance which is fashioned to appear as a ritual of

heterosexual courtship or as a private and secret moment of auto-eroticism.[63]

" Kristin, " a strip dancer who has worked in many U. S. strip bars over the past six years while completing her academic education, considers her time on stage as more of a commodity than her own body; she claims that " clubs like to own you, but I think of myself more as an entertainer subcontracting my work. "[64] Unfortunately, the different occupational facets of strip dancing have not been adequately researched. Sociological literature has depicted strip dancing as a deviant occupation situated in sleazy subcultural margins of society; whereas, in fact, strip dancing has always constituted traditional women's work that is characterized by the same bad working conditions, competitive entrance requirements, lack of union organization and low wages of other less stigmatized female professions.[65] Despite its hardships and pitfalls, the occupation of strip dancing may still be attractive; for a working-class girl such as Nickie Roberts, " stripping was a positive alternative to doing boring, badly paid women's jobs outside the home, or becoming a housewife. "[66]

The economic depressions of the 1930s flooded burlesque theatres across the United States with a bevy of beautiful and young working-class women who stripped for a living in front of audiences partially composed of unemployed men with

a lot of time to spend and little money in their hands.[67] Burlesque was one of the few segments of the entertainment business to show high profits and low rates of unemployment during this time.[68] Dancers made an average weekly wage of twenty dollars for working fourteen hour days when they would perform four shows and rehearsed until 2 or 3 a.m.; with time off on Fridays and Sundays after 11 p.m..[69] Basic backstage amenities were rarely provided for these dancers who had to constantly contend with crowded and unsanitary conditions.[70]

Many contemporary strip bars and theatres also do not provide dancers with essential services and facilities such as ample dressing-room space; sufficient technical equipment including sound and lighting systems; heating, toilet, and ventilation systems that are in proper working order; and adequate security and surveillance.[71] Although aggregate statistics on the North American strip dance industry are hard to come by, we can get a pretty good first impression of typical wages and working hours by examining the situation at " Club X. "

Dancers earn base salaries of seven to twelve dollars per hour (plus tips), depending on their particular experience and drawing power, for an eight-hour shift. They spend approximately two hours dancing on stage (accomplished in fifteen minute increments) with the remaining time filled by mixing with the customers and table dancing. They usually

work three to six shifts per week -- but this depends on the different schedules that each dancer negotiates separately with management. " Club X " operates on a daily timetable of two shifts: from 11 a.m. until 7 p.m., and from 7 p.m. until closing (usually around 3 a.m.).

Despite the fact that many dancers work over forty hours per week, they are not usually given health benefits, vacation or overtime pay, and leaves of absence. They have little job security and union representation in an industry which is run by men for men. It is not that surprising, then, that according to some recent studies, male strippers earn higher average hourly wages than their female counterparts.[72] Amber Cooke, a Canadian stripper for eighteen years, comments that:

> the whole situation - from the dressing rooms to the stage presentations to the sound sytem to the lighting system to the practice of paying star status to the money received - are all set up by men for profit. But what the women actually do, our work, while it is still under their jurisdication, is still up to us. [73]

However, these specific job descriptions are not always left up to the dancers, especially in difficult economic times when there is a glut of women in the market. Toronto strip dancers, for examples, reluctantly began to remove their G-strings and engage in table dancing during the early 1980s, due to head to head competition from provincial colleagues; as club managers started to fine and fire dancers who refused to change their work practices.[74]

The availability of women for recruitment into strip dancing also varies according to changing economic circumstances. In areas of Northeastern England such as Tyneside, adverse economic conditions during the late 1980s increased the number of strippers at local pubs and strip clubs, where the spouses of laid-off male workers earned up to six hundred dollars per week by stripping their clothes for other men who wanted to get laid.[75]

7. Making A Living

Of course a career in strip dancing implies much more than the artistic and/or sleazy removal of clothes. Dancers must furnish and maintain the basic tool of the trade -- their beautified bodies which have a limited timespan. Although there are published reports of elderly male and female strippers working in sleazy Tokyo strip joints, in the rest of the world strip dancing is the province of an idealized youthful beauty.[76]

During the hours when they perform on stage, many dancers receive an aerobics workout that sufficiently shapes and sculpts, tones and trims their required bodily figures. But since they are responsible for creating all the accoutrements of their own beautifully made-up self images, these same dancers may spends sizable portions of their paychecks on expensive costumes and props that they hope will give them that

extra edge over other dancers in stimulating audiences into giving them better tips.[77]

There are definite bodily hazards for strip dancers, especially from outbreaks of fungal infections and scabies acquired through working on rarely cleaned stage areas that host the successive performances of many different women.[78] More often, strip dancers are exposed to or are involved in drug use that pervades many clubs. " Rob, " assistant manager of an ostensibly " classy businessman s club " in the U. S., admits that:

> the girls have a lot of emotions to deal with. so some of them are into drugs and alcohol. Many of the girls have never made money like this before. It's three in the morning, they re finished for the evening, wound up. with no place to go. It s an escape. [79]

Some dancers use drugs like cocaine before performances in order to enliven their acts and energize their tired bodies; access to such substances is made simple through a distribution network involving deejays and other club personnel as dealers.[80]

Strippers dance for more than their hourly wages. While performing they try to extract tips from audience members through many different means. " Brandi," a featured dancer at " Club X. " theorizes that:

> what audiences want most is personal contact. They like to feel special attention given to them. I usually work my way around the perimeter of the stage and try making eye contact or talking with some of the guys so they'll

feel happy and tip me more money. 81

" Brandi " works at building a clientele - a regular group of male audience members who will come to the club as supportive fans to pay her tips and attention, buy her drinks, and watch out for her interests. Club management generally discourages dancers from dating their customers because of charges of vice that could possibly be leveled against their establishment; but they look favourably to cliques of men who are interested in paying for the friendship and attentions of their dancers (as well as for liquor). At times, dancers will provide counseling or at least willing ears and open minds to the voiced personal problems and concerns of these " regulars, " most of whom are content with maintaining a supportive platonic relationship and with being able to talk freely (minus the price of a drink) with a woman other than their spouse or girlfriend. [82]

When the dancers are off-stage, many clubs require that they " mix " or socialize with the customers in order to convince them to buy more mixed drinks. According to Lauri Lewin, this was the real focus of her work:

> We danced to lure men into the club so that we could then persuade them to buy drinks. By this reasoning, dancing became a gratuitous act that we did to puff up our egos enough to withstand the toil of mixing. 83

In the Soho district of London, England, huge posters announcing " Beautiful Exotic Dancers Inside For 2P!! " adorn the outside of bars. After the hapless customer descends grimy

stairs and arrives at a particular hall of exotica, he discovers that there are only photographic slides of strip dancers as entertainment, and he must then pay up to twenty pounds or more if he wants a living dancer to share a drink with him so that he can soon leave the place relatively unscathed (if not a bit touched in the wallet). Other clubs in Western Europe and North America may not place such a strong-armed emphasis on mixing. There are even some bars where strip dancers are hired to dance and socialize without pushing the sale of drinks. " Bill, " manager of such a U. S. club explains that it makes better sense to hire women who specialize in different tasks:

> Our dancers weren't selling booze that great while mixing, so now we have professional cocktail waitresses, and we're one of the few bars that can tell you exactly what each of them makes on the register. Our dancers know how to dance and talk with the customers. That's what they do best. We have six to eight dancers per shift. They each dance for four songs, and then are off twenty minutes. 84

8. Class Acts

She may have been raised in a lower, middle or upper-class household, but by the time a strip dancer enters the calling, she is usually a working woman who is attempting to find future fame and immediate financial success. Strip dancers often face a tremendous amount of social stigma and stereotyping by people outside of their subculture. Some women try to ignore such pressures, while others promote the idea

that stripping is a noble middle-class form of work that is worthy of respect. A Minnesota strip dancer wrote Ann Landers that:

> I hope that you will help women who have chosen this profession, as you have helped secretaries, waitresses, and teachers ... We are mothers, wives, college students, are not on welfare. We pay our taxes, go to church and give money to charity. We are not prostitutes. We are entertainers. Our line of work is legal and there is a demand for talented strippers. 85

Strip dancing is thus accorded what Barthes has called the " magic alibi of work; " or a reassuring bourgeois status of a professional and specialized career of skilled practitioners of a " normal " female craft or hobby. [86] Bars often hold weekly amateur contests where aspiring and interested novices may compete for cash and future employment as full-time strippers. Some famous dancers such as Gio, star of a 1986 semi-documentary film, " Strippers, " offer " How to Strip " and " Stripping Made Simple " classes for housewives and other interested women at colleges and community centers across North America; so that a commercial activity that was originally conceived as a poor imitation of - or threat to - activities in the married bedroom, is now recouped as a method for advancing and ensuring domestic bliss. [87]

Sights of these working women who struggle to make a living through strip dancing have attracted men of all classes who are joined in the common struggle for paying money to gain the privilege of watching them -- though not always at the

same sites. During the nineteenth century, middle and upper-class " gentlemen " comprised a large segment of the audiences for strip dancing. When such entertainments trickled down to the masses in burlesque theatres and turkey shows, the aristocrats of arousal flocked to the alternative sites of exclusive cabarets of high-priced follies and nude revues.[88]

After the demise of traditional burlesque theatre in the 1940s, strip dancing, for all practical purposes, was stripped of any remaining upper-class cover, and then relegated to the confines of bars, clubs and theatres that tended to remind its patrons that they were watching sleazy performances in even sleazier joints that were stuck in bad areas of town.[89] In the late 1970s, however, strip dance entrepreneurs attempted to make their establishments more culturally and financially respectable by targeting white-collar businessmen as the primary class that they wanted to serve. Many clubs in Montreal, for example, moved to major downtown commercial locales and offered free businessmen's luncheons to customers. Of course there is never really such a thing as a " free lunch; " the bars were able to sell more liquor together with the twist that strip dancing is a " classy " and legitimate entertainment worth a second, third, and fourth look.

In fact, for the past century and a half, strip dancing has captured these looks in highly successful commercial institutions located throughout the downtown " combat zones, "

legitimate entertainment districts, and poorer neighbourhoods of major North American cities, by capitalizing on good-looking and hard-working women.[90]

NOTES: SECTION THREE

1 Don DeLillo, Libra (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1988), p. 262.

2 As Nickie Roberts, a British stripper suggests: " You don't have to be a genius to work out the connection between women's poverty and our status as workers in the sex industry: " Steve Roberts and Nickie Roberts, " Stripping Illusions, " New Statesman, 17 January 1986, p. 28.

3 Personal interview with " Roxanne, " 10 October 1988.

4 Personal interview with " Keith, " 14 July 1988.

5 Even the real identities of the strip dancers are protected through the usage of stage names. But this is also supposed to guard them from any further invasions of personal privacy by their customers.

6 See Dragu and Harrison, p. 101.

7 Gary W. Potter states that economic analyses of the pornography industry are " plagued by imprecision, " since " there is no easily discernible hierarchy of control, no neat organization chart depicting those individuals in control; " Gary W. Potter, The Porn Merchants (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1986), pp. 15-18.

8 Rod Martin is quoted in: Henry Schipper, " Filthy Lucre: A Tour of America's Most Profitable Frontier, " Mother Jones, April 1980, p. 60. For varied estimates of the annual gross profits of the U. S. pornography industry see Potter, p. 18

9 Boles and Garbin, " The Strip Club and Stripper-Customer Patterns of Interaction. " p. 138.

10 Such behaviours include going out to a strip club with a group of friends in order to ingest huge quantities of beer while simulaneously making lewd, loud and obnoxious comments to the female dancers.

11

Weitz, pp. 26-27.

12

Weitz, pp. 26-27.

13

For more extensive theoretical discussions of sex as a form of industrial production, see: John Lippert, " Sexuality as Consumption, " in For Men Against Sexism: A Book of Readings, ed. Jon Snodgrass (Albion: Times Change Press, 1977) pp. 207-213; Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); and Douglas J. Stewart, " Pornography, Obscenity and Capitalism, " The Antioch Review, 35, No. 4 (Fall 1977), pp. 389-398.

14

Douglas J. Stewart writes that: " The matter of sexual performance has been specialized to that of a hired skill...we have tried to make sex itself efficient, due to the conditions of marketing, and that, to this observer is the essence of pornography: sex turned into a time-motion study, sex as industrial production; " Stewart, pp. 393-398.

15

Irigaray, p. 177.

16

According to Christine Buci-Glucksmann, modernity is characterized by a cult of images where: " the feminine becomes the inevitable sign of a new historic regime of seeing and ' not seeing, ' of representable and unrepresentable; " Buci-Glucksmann, p. 221.

17

Rella's cynicism is exemplified in descriptions of burlesque theatres as follows: " those former sanctums of legitimate drama, now off the beaten path with the shift of commerce to other streets ... dank, musty, red plush: here is the last stand of what is called the American burlesque ... the striptease act provides escape with a simple internationalism; and the dialogue of the comedy, so monosyllabic, the gestures so obviously vulgar that communication over language barriers is established; " Ettore Rella, A History of Burlesque, San Francisco Theatre Research Series, Vol. XIV (San Francisco: Works Project Administration, 1940), pp. 312-313.

18

The Oxford Universal Dictionary on Historical Principles, p. 349.

19

See Achillo Olivieri, " Eroticism and social groups in sixteenth-century Venice: the courtesan. " in Western Sexuality: Practice and Precept in Past and Present Times, ed. Philippe Ariès and André Béjin, trans. Anthony Forster (London: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 97. The sexual underground districts of major U. S. cities in the nineteenth century are described in: D'Emilio and Freedman, pp. 130-133; and Stansell, p. 175.

20

Lynda Nead, Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain (New York and Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp. 95-98.

21

Lynda Nead maintains that: " The prostitute is able to sell her self/sex again and again but she is never owned by being bought and is always available again to be re-sold; " Nead, p. 99.

22

Detailed historical analyses of the rise of these consumer cultures can be found in: Rachel Bowlby, Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dresier, Gissing and Zola (New York and London: Methuen, 1985); Richard Sennett, The Fall of Public Man (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977); and Rosalind H. Williams, Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1982).

23

Sennett, p. 20.

24

Bowlby, Just Looking, p. 11.

25

D'Emilio and Freedman, pp. 278-279.

26

Chapkis, p. 14.

27

Personal interview with " Ted, " 12 September 1988.

28

See Dragu and Harrison, p. 15.

29

See Friedman, p. 25. For a general introduction to the cultural construction of beauty, see: Robin Tolmach Lakoff and Raquel L. Scherr, Face Value: The Politics of Beauty

(Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).

30 Chapkis, p. 14.

31 Seph Weene insists that " strippers exaggerate women's normal gestures " as " stage sexuality is a highly technical matter " that includes " knowing just what gestures, what facial expressions, movements and postures excite men; " Weene, p. 37.

32 Such beautification of strip dancers can be compared to the depictions of women in " men's magazines " such as Playboy, where according to Peter Michaelson: " The Playmate has breasts with glamorized nipples, a groin without pubic hair, vagina, or urinary tract, and a backside without anus. She has a feminine shape without female, or for that matter even human function. She is not made for coitus or procreation or motherhood; " Peter Michaelson, " How to Make the World Safe for Pornography, " in The New Eroticism: Theories, Vogues, Canons, ed. Philip Nobile (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 153.

33 Barthes, p. 84.

34 Lewin, p. 157.

35 Strip club managers may be seriously mistaken about their customers' preferences. " Kurt, " a regular patron of many strip clubs, for example, admits that: " strip dancing is still racially polarized, but I'd really love to see more black dancers -- they're more forbidden; " Personal interview with " Kurt, " 10 November 1988.

36 Castle, p. 99.

37 The Oxford Universal Dictionary on Historical Principles, p. 1615.

38 Lewin, p. 72.

39 Lewin, p. 73.

40 Mary Ann Caws, " Gestures Toward the Self: Repre-

senting the Body in Moderinism: Cloaking, Re-membering, and the Elliptical Effect, " in Modernism: Challenges and Perspectives, ed. Monique Chefdor, Ricardo Quinones and Albert Wachtel (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), pp. 252-253.

41

Christine Buci-Glucksmann writes that the woman's body then " becomes desirable only in its passage to the limit: as death-body, fragmented-body, petrified body; " Buci-Glucksmann, p. 226.

42

Walter Benjamin, One-Way Street and Other Writings, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: New Left Books, 1979); see also Buci-Glucksmann, p. 223. Norman Bryson similarly argues that: " The body of labor...is hidden by the brilliance of the posture, the facial or bodily feature, in which the viewer discovers his or her sexual interest: it is through the mask of seduction that the scaena becomes most coherent and most opaque -- through local and libidinal fusions that the image solidifies around the ' this, ' this moment and this body of pleasure, in the here and now of its sexual engagement; the durée of labor gives way to the immediacy of appetitive time; " Norman Bryson, Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 167.

43

See Bowlby, Just Looking, p. 6. Mike Featherstone also examines how: " advertising became the guardian of the new morality enticing individuals to participate in the consumption of commodities and experiences once restricted to the upper classes...Images of youth, beauty, luxury and opulence became loosely associated with goods, awakening long-suppressed desires; " Mike Featherstone, " The Body in Consumer Culture, " Theory, Culture and Society: Explorations in Critical Social Science, 1, No. 2 (Sept. 1982), pp. 18-33.

44

Bowlby, Just Looking, p. 23.

45

Laban states that movement is, so to speak, " living architecture, " in Rudolf Laban, The Language of Movement: A Guidebook to Choreutics, ed. Lisa Ullman (Boston: Plays Inc., 1974), p. 5. According to Samuel Thornton, Laban's theories were " based upon years of observing, recording and analysing human movement used during work and leisure activities. Laban's approach to movement was based upon the discovery that there were common elements to all movement; " Samuel Thornton, Laban's Theory of Movement (Boston: Plays Inc., 1971), p. 1.

46

Compare the quotation from Samuel Thornton listed in the preceding note to the following quotation from the work of Frank Gilbreth: " Motion Study consisted of dividing work into the most fundamental elements possible; studying these elements separately and in relation to one another; and from these studied elements when timed, building methods of least waste; " Frank Gilbreth, The Writings of the Gilbreths, ed. William R. Spriegel and Clark E. Myers (Homewood: Richard D. Irwin, 1953),, p. 220.

47

Gilbreth, pp. 219-226.

48

Ralph M. Barnes, Motion and Time Study: Design and Management of Work (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980), p. 11.

49

Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital: the Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1974), p. 181.

50

See note #45.

51

Laban states that: " Taylor, the protagonist of what he called " scientific management, " first used the expression ' motion study, ' and he foresaw its application particularly in the field of industry. Since his time, education and art as well as many other pursuits have adapted the methods of effort research, which is an essential part of motion study ... The description of the bodily engine and of its function, envisages a vast field of research with which a whole series of sciences such as anatomy, physiology, biology, psychology and anthropology, including sociology, are linked; " Rudolf Laban and F. C. Lawrence, Effort (London: Macdonald & Evans, 1947), pp. xiii & 2.

52

Hillel Schwartz, Never Satisfied: A Cultural History of Diets, Fantasies and Fat (New York: The Free Press, 1986), p. 328.

53

See Sally Banes, Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1980).

54

" The coincidence of kinaesthetic values in high technology, industry and the arts of the body was critical to the American culture of slimming; " Schwartz, pp. 79-81.

55

For both Muybridge and Méliès, " the naked body of the woman, whether boldly and repeatedly figured...or briefly and coyly glimpsed ... poses a problem of sexual difference; " Linda Williams, " Film Body: An Implantation of Perversions, " in Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 509.

56

Marshall McLuhan, The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), p. 99.

57

McLuhan, The Mechanical Bride, pp. 94-96. Paul Derval of the Folies Bergère seems to agree with McLuhan, when positing that American chorus girls are " mass-produced like Chevrolets, hams or radios...In France, however, where the demand does not justify the training of girls in such vast numbers, the assembly-line system is not practicable. " Derval, p. 81.

58

McLuhan, The Mechanical Bride, p. 100.

59

Geoffrey Gorer, Hot Strip Tease And Other Notes on American Culture (London: The Cresset Press, 1937), p. 48.

60

Personal interview with " Nick, " 8 October 1988.

61

Debi Sundahl, " Stripper, " in Sex Work: Writings By Women In the Sex Industry, ed. Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander (Pittsburgh and San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1987), p. 177.

62

" The fetishism of commodities consists in the first place of emptying them of meaning, of hiding the real social relations objectified in them through human labour, to make it possible for the imaginary/real social relations to be injected into the construction of meaning at a secondary level; " Sut Jhally, The Codes of Advertising: Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in the Consumer Society (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), p. 51.

63

Richard Wortley thus proposes that one of " strip-tease's eternally popular conventions is the dancer's apparent flair for self-intoxication, abandoning herself as it seems to her beauty in a nicely calculated piece of choreography designed to reach its climax (of the simulated variety) in eight

minutes or so; " Wortley, A Pictorial History of Striptease, p. 15.

64 Personal interview with " Kristin, " 8 October 1988.

65 See Sundahl, p. 178.

66 Roberts, p. 28.

67 Zeidman, p. 135.

68 See Zeidman, p. 142.

69 See Alexander, pp. 46-51; and Gorer, pp. 46-48.

70 Alexander, p. 51.

71 Mary Johnson, " CABE and Strippers: A Delicate Union," in Good Girls/Bad Girls: Feminists and Sex Trade Workers Face to Face, ed. Laurie Bell (Seattle: The Seal Press, 1987), p. 112; Sundahl, p. 178.

72 See Dressel and Petersen's " Becoming a Male Stripper: Recruitment, Socialization, and Ideological Development; " and " Gender Roles, Sexuality and the Male Strip Show: The Structuring of Sexual Opportunity. "

73 Laurie Bell, " Sex Trade Workers and Feminists: Myths and Illusions - An Interview with Amber Cooke, " in Good Girls/Bad Girls, p. 191.

74 Amber Cooke reports that these Toronto strip club owners " started demanding that the girls circulate constantly. Fines were levied against the uncooperative...Competition for employment in Metro is high...The situation has now deteriorated to the point where some of the dancers are charging the girls for the privilege of table dancing; " Amber Cooke, " Stripping: Who Calls the Tune, " in Good Girls/Bad Girls, p. 97.

75 Timothy Harper, " Where Stripping Pays the Rent, " The New York Times, 5 March 1987, n. pag..

76

" In Shinjuku, two doors away from the aphrodisiac shop is a small theatre with brown swing doors and a stage with faded velvet curtains. Twice nightly, what must surely be the saddest strip show in the world is held here. After several girls have gone through the usual routine, an elderly gentleman, so old that he can hardly stand, staggers on to the stage and quivering, takes off his clothes to the jeers and catcalls of the audience. Strip shows involving grandmothers are also popular; " Armand Denis, Taboo (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1967), p. 164.

77

Ample, p. 11.

78

Lewin, p. 160.

79

Personal interview with " Rob, " 8 October 1988.

80

Ample, p. 172.

81

Personal interview with " Brandi, " 16 November 1988.

82

Personal interview with " Brandi, " 16 November 1988.

83

Lewin, p. 115.

84

Personal interview with " Bill, " 8 October 1988.

85

Ann Landers, " Stripper Stands Up For Her Career, " New York Daily News, 30 October 1983, n. pag..

86

Barthes, pp. 86-87.

87

Gio offers the following advice on how to strip: " You're looking for a pelvic thrust that'll arch your own back. Bump 'n' grind...Touch your hips. Men like that, No slouching; " quoted in: Linda Ygelsias, " Strip City, U. S. A. -- Gio, the human fan belt, teaches how to shake, rattle, and twirl, " New York Daily News, 17 February 1987, p. 11.

88

Gorer, p. 49.

89

See Elsom, p. 181.

90

Within the past two years, however, strip bars have been effectively zoned away from their formerly central urban locations -- in such cities as Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Louisville and San Francisco. There are few political protests by customers of such bars since, as a Lousiville bar manager sadly remarks: " half the guys are married and they're not going to stand up and say ' I go down and watch naked women when I'm supposed to be at home cutting the grass'; " quoted in: David Mills, " Seeking Redress on Antinudity Law, " Insight, 13 June 1988, p. 27. For more details on the recent U. S. crackdown on these adult entertainment centers, see: Harry F. Waters, Richard Sandza, and Tony Clifton, " The Squeeze on Sleaze: Videos, developers and the law are shrinking urban porn districts, " Newsweek, 1 February 1988, pp. 44-45.

SECTION FOUR: MOVEMENTS OF PLEASURE AND POWER

Once you get it into your head that you might strip, all the moral questions fall away. (Is this sexist? Is this exploiting women? Is this exploiting men?) Instead you worry about whether your stretch marks will show.

[1]
Victoria Hodgetts

1. Daring Exploits

Strip dancing has been studied in this dissertation as a markedly visible yet stigmatized profession which involves the spectacular commodification of female bodies as artistic and sleazy objects of sexual display and movement for male audiences. So far so good - or so bad. One cannot write about strip dancers without objectifying them and judging them according to certain moral and political criteria. Saul P. Feldman and Gerald W. Thielbar set the tone for the sociological literature by claiming that: " the occupation of stripper...is not a route to success, but one to isolation, public degradation and deviance. "[2]

This probably makes you want to rush out and save these poor, misguided and very naughty women from themselves. Actually, it makes me want to only half-jokingly suggest that Feldman and Thielbar's brand of sociology should lead to a career of isolation, public degradation and deviance, for their popularly held negative attitudes toward strip dancers are extremely offensive, patronizing and sexist to these

women. They treat all strip dancers as the same ignorant, passive and sleazy targets of external social processes of male domination that, according to such strip scholars as Skipper and McCaghy or Salutin, can leave these women highly susceptible to " dreaded " lesbian modes of behaviour.[3]

Ironically, this overall negative outlook is also shared by some feminists such as Susanne Kappeler, who views strip dancing as a blanket " endorsement of the modern colonial power of the male gender over the female gender. "[4] It is also interpreted by Susan Griffin as the epitome of the male sexual objectification of women in our culture, with strip dancers as the immediately exploited and irresponsible front-line subjects of this objectification, and their male audiences as voyeurs who complete " a sadistic act " when they watch strip dance performance.[5] Such theory here is far removed from concrete practice, as it simply advances patriarchal assumptions of the powerlessness of women with litle if any ethnographic corroboration. As an anonymous stripper attending a Canadian conference on female sex trade workers commented:

> People talk a lot about the exploitation that sex trade workers experience, and they like to portray us as victims. In my experience as a stripper ... it is a very unhappy thing for me to say that, unfortunately, I have felt far more exploited by some of my artistic colleagues and some of my so-called feminist sisters than I have ever felt as a stripper. 6

Writers have continued to propogate popular stereotypes of all strip dancers as abject, abused and abusive alcohol and drug users who walk the seamy side of society.[7] While it may be true that some dancers fit the abovementioned description and that many dancers are definitely exploited, one cannot generalize about an entire subculture in such a manner. Many strip dancers consider themselves to be very active, knowledgeable and powerful women who are very much in control of their own commodification and sexuality. Debi Sundahl explains that the most difficult part of her job when she first entered the profession, was harmonizing her dancing on stage with feminist principles.[8] However, she soon enjoyed exploring aspects of her sexuality in the relatively safe environs of the strip club, and she then embarked on the political project of advocating that women grab " the means of production of erotic entertainment, " since it " was perfectly okay for a woman to be a sex object in the appropriate context " and to distinguish " what these contexts were. "[9]

Other strippers and feminists writers such as Margaret Dragu and A. S. A. Harrison grant strip dancing a more sacred aura, by proposing that stripping

> embraces both the ritual and the creative, moving between a religious and an artistic expression of sexuality...Stripping...is one of the few shrines that exists in our culture for the representation of sexuality. 10

Of course one does not have to don and/or doff the robes of religious respectability in order to regard strip dancers as

being more active and powerful in their own practices than stray sheep in search of a good flock. But in the same vein, all strip dancers should not be valorized as the vanguard of an emancipatory and uplifting femininity, for this would amount to replacing one set of negative stereotypes with another, albeit more positive set.

2. Sins of Emission

Male audiences of strip dancing are also categorized by many researchers and writers as one undifferentiated mass of masculinity -- groups of tired old men in raincoats and horny young college students united by an overpowering and ultimately frustrating sexual need to fix their powerful " gaze " on women with whom they can never actually have " real " intimate relations.[11] Sociologists of strip neglected to interview these men, prefering to concentrate their back-stage attentions to the backsides of near-naked dancers. Researchers such as Skipper and McCaghy have confessed that: " we had difficulty in even remembering the questions we wanted to ask let alone getting them out of our mouths in an intelligible manner. "[12]

Jacqueline Boles and Albeno Garbin's 1974 study of stripper-customer patterns of interaction was based on interviews conducted only with strip dancers and not with the customers of the strip club.[13] This did not prevent the researchers,

however, from making conclusions on the " major motivations " of the men, and from suggesting that interaction is " characterized by a counterfeiting of intimacy based on inauthentic relations. "[14]

Critical scholars of culture such as Laura Mulvey have argued that the displayed object of woman, " from pin-ups to striptease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley ... holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire. "[15] Indeed, learned Lacanians could go on a theoretical rampage when visiting a strip club, as many such dens of iniquity (and equity) are decorated with wall-to-wall mirrors that reflect a choreography of gazes between dancers and their audiences. But what exactly are the biological, historical, psychological and sociological specificities of a postulated <u>male desire</u> or <u>gaze</u>, for these are rarely detailed in theoretical discourses and cultural analyses?[16]

Even in the dank, acrid and noisy atmosphere of men and mirrors, flashing lights and flashing women in blatantly sleazy strip clubs, how can we be so sure of a unitary and powerful male desire or gaze which controls these audience members, just as it supposedly exploits and objectifies the dancers as the fixed signs of a homogeneous and oppressed femininity for sale?

3. Adulterated Fun

Herbert Marcuse once wisely observed that " the airplane is a penis symbol, but it also gets you in a couple of hours from Berlin to Vienna, " thus reminding fellow critical theorists that their explanations of cultural phenomena should be grounded in a reality that is independent of ideological mystification and overly symbolic interpretation.[18] All powerful and totally powerless men and women may or may not be exploited in strip dancing; no matter what the case, many women still strip dance, and a lot of men enjoy seeing them in this work. One-dimensional theories of gender and sexuality that presume cynical models of male desire and female passivity (or a female desire and male passivity) cannot account for this basic reality. For gender and sexual relations are expressed through particular desires and pleasures that are evidenced in actual practices.

In spite of Margaret Dragu and A. S. A. Harrison s claim that " issues of power and control don t seem especially relevant to a discussion of stripping, " I will demonstrate throughout this section how relations of power are very much bound up with the varied pleasures of strip.[19] In some contexts, strip dancing may be very empowering to both men and women, and in others, strip dancing is very exploitative of either and/or both sexes. For example, nineteenth-century ideologies of female sexuality as represented in the form of

the evil, forbidden and mysterious " femme fatale " may appear at first glance to be of little or no redeeming social and political value to women. But, in fact, the " femme fatale " provided women with an alternative, exotic and non-domestic model of a kind of femininity that displayed a fascinating sexual power and independence.[20] According to Viginia M. Allen, the image of the femme fatale assailed the very core of patriarchal society by projecting a sexuality that was not aimed solely at the reproduction of males; and was thus popular for those women:

> aspiring as much to the icon's independence as to her erotic power. She offered one of the few role models for women in the nineteenth century that combined freedom with fascination and erotic intrigue. 21

While misogynist images of the erotic dancer " Salome " were embodied in new cultural practices of strip dancing at the turn of the century, it is also through these practices that working-class women were able to assert an economic and sexual freedom that had previously been unavailable to them through other more socially acceptable forms of work and models of femininity. As Deborah Jowitt suggests, the figure of Salome furnished women with " an alter-image, through which it was proper to express their erotic longings, their will to power, and their suppressed fury toward men. "[22] And by working as strip dancers these same women were able to express their will to economic power through the medium of a weekly paycheck.

Ambiguous and moralistic assumptions on cynical and perverse gratifications and exploitations do not adequately describe the successful historical development nor shed wholly accurate light on the contemporary commercial impact of strip dancing. Consequently, it seems necessary to acknowledge the possibility that strip dancing may actually be a truly pleasureable and powerful activity for strip dancers and their audiences. Some particular pleasures and powers of these participants may then be delineated and compared within the framework of a politics of pleasure, or a pleasureable politics which governs the institutions of strip dancing.

4. Dance Buffs in the Buff

Scholars of the phenomenological approach to dance rely on concepts of the " lived body " to argue that human movement implies a general awareness of bodily powers, and that such movement is " the actualization, the realization, of embodiment. "[23] The problem with this perspective is that not every movement may indicate a fundamental appreciation of subjective powers; in fact, movements may express, motivate or signify a wide range of human emotions and thoughts (including those of frustration and powerlessness) that may be opposite to this supposed self-enlightenment.[24] A tired factory worker or strip dancer may have a lot of trouble accepting that his or her movements indicate anything other than the fatigued accompaniments to tasks that must be completed according to the

dictates of the clock.

By the same token, however, there is nothing that precludes this same person from potentially deriving powerful feelings of pleasure, satisfaction and spiritual awareness from his or her various movements. People enjoy moving their bodies in certain ways, especially during activities of dance and sex, for example. In fact, strip dancing celebrates the close connections of dance and sexual practices in order to produce specific styles of dance movement.

Many present-day strip dancers enjoy the freedom of composing their own performances through planned or improvised choreographies.[25] Some women also enjoy " working out " on stage during work hours, thus receiving a salary and toning their bodies at the same time. " Maggie, " for example, claims that strip dancing gives her an empowering sense of bodily awareness:

> I simply love to dance and it doesn't matter that people are watching me, or that I'm nude. I love to dance, and this way I don't have to pay to go to a disco or a fitness center to stay in shape and enjoy my body. [26]

Many of the dancers whom I interviewed have also selected the socially stigmatized performance of strip dancing as a vehicle for personal expression and/or physical betterment. The sociological literature on strippers does not deal with such motivations when positing that " certain physical, psychological and social characteristics " and other " situational

factors " sufficiently explain why certain women embark down the dirty path to this " deviant " career.[27]

Strip dancers are more than just simply aware that their work is viewed as deviant by most segments of society in general -- and not only by learned societies of sociologists. In fact, this knowledge probably forms the daily fabric of their working lives much more than any costume, G-string or pastie. Some dancers fight against internalizing public perceptions that they are all abused, drunken, drugged, desperate and violently exhibitionistic women, by arguing that what they do is both normal and moral within a mistakenly denigrated artistic entertainment that is a legitimate part of show business; while other strip dancers consider their own activities to be temporary and unfortunate " evils " that are necessitated by personal economic circumstances.[28]

Yet other dancers delight in the " forbidden " status of their profession which allows them to supposedly transgress the limits of conventional images and social norms of proper femininity. The Janus-like constitution of strip dancers as the embodiments of an artistic and sleazy, good and bad, normal and exotic, safe and dangerous, and socially conservative and subversive femininity that made these dancers such an attractive spectacle to male audiences over the past century, also enabled women to work within a forum for exploring, extending and redefining the social and political boundaries of

sleazy, bad, exotic, dangerous and subversive womanhood.

Well-known Canadian strip dancers such as Fonda Peters and Annie Ample have used strip dancing as a powerful vehicle for radically commenting on gender relations in society.[29] Dancers of many persuasions may make political statements by the very fact that they are paid-members of the subulture of strippers; irregardless of the content and style of their particular staged routines. Amber Cooke, for example, defines stripping as a truly feminist enterprise:

> I had always believed feminism to be personal empowerment, and the choice to be a stripper - to be my own boss, to be my independent power source, to be creative, to express myself fully, without terms of bureaucracy or established norms - was in fact personally empowering. [30]

Strip dancers may luxuriate in the confident and professional flaunting of culturally acceptable images of female beauty and sexuality, while they simultaneously expand the the limits of this acceptability by achieving a certain degree of financial independence and social notoriety. During the past century and a half, these women could thus experience the pleasures and powers of making their own money through their work as strip dancers (especially during periods of national economic depression).[31]

" Kate, " a twenty-six year old woman who has already made a good deal of money by strip dancing for the past six

years, readily admits that:

> the best thing about strip dancing is the money. I mean it's better than being a secretary. Look, I'm making a clean income, and in a year or two I plan on starting a business with the money that I've saved from dancing. [32]

Her co-worker " Jamie " also confesses that she is in the business of entertaining men through strip dancing, in order to gain large amounts of money in a short time. [33] The usually limited timespan and temporary-job status of many strip dancers such as " Kate " and " Jamie " does not facilitate the establishment or organization of dancer unions, especially in the face of strong-arm club management practices that are aimed at the isolation of strip dancers as competing individuals, rather than as allied members of a cooperative labour force. [34]

Even if strip dancers are rarely organized in labour unions, they are united through their inclusion in a marginalized subculture that places a high value on keeping a sense of solidarity and separateness from the rest of society. [35] Dancers spend many hours together in the dressing rooms and other areas of clubs and theatres; consequently, strip dancing affords these women the opportunity to interact with each other on a regular and sustained basis. Some dancers even appreciate this time spent with their colleagues as the most gratifying part of their day. During periods of field observation I often noticed many a dancer paying more attention to the other dancers in the club than to male audience members

while performing -- in order to show off new movements or to communicate a sense of fun and pride in the dance to her subcultural sorority members.

Some strip dancers also truly enjoy the company of men in the strip club, and they believe in providing a legitimate and glamorous form of theatrical entertainment and/or a necessary social service of counseling and sex education for their audiences.[36] " Sherry " concedes that there is a sizable percentage of intentional " acting " involved in her relations with the male customers, but she also attempts a different kind of intimacy with some of the men:

> Of course we act friendly to the guys, but there are also some regulars that I've grown to be really good friends with. I have a genuinely good time with the regular customers here, it's not always artificial.[37]

There are also women who arouse more than suspicion in themselves by performing naked in front of men -- i.e. those dancers who are sexual exhibitionists. But this may not be so easily generalized to the whole population of strip dancers; nor, by virtue of this same argument, can all men who watch strip dancing be classified as sexual voyeurs.

5. Sensitive Members

Assertions that millions of different men have sat in the venues of strip dance performances during the past century because they are voyeurs related through a common male gaze that

is targeted at the visual fetishization of women, seem overly dogmatic, simplistic and sexist to men. Unfortunately, there is very little research on strip dance audience members, and in most academic studies and journalistic articles they are given even less of a chance to present their own views of the situation than the already quite silenced dancers.

Most male audience members whom I interviewed admit that they are physically stimulated by looking at naked strip dancers, who represent a different form of femininity than they experience in their daily lives. It is this " difference " which provides a thrill for some of these men, not simply the fact that they are seeing a naked figure. The strip dancer's nude body is not their spouses' or girlfriends' bodies -- it is an alien living body that they would not normally be able to view outside the confines of a strip club or theatre. As I argued in the second section, it is this construction of performers as ever more exotic and forbidden women which spurred on the development of practices of strip dancing, from the static female objets d'art of nineteenth-century tableaux to the nineteen year-old table dancers of the present. And what of the future?

One day during the course of writing this dissertation I decided to take a break from the wide world of strip by attending a local screening of the 1988 science-fiction film: " Alien Nation. " The basic narrative of this film concerns a

population of alien humanoid beings who are employed in a variety of service jobs in a Southern Californian city of the near future. To my surprise (and consternation) one of the major characters of the movie turned out to be a space creature-cum-strip-dancer who attracts a large following of earth men that had finally found the perfect model of an exotic femininity that was truly out of this world -- a non-human alien.

You do not have to rely on historical arguments or Hollywood scenarios alone to arrive at this conclusion. " Kurt, " a really down-to-earth regular customer at " Club X " agrees that watching strip dancers is:

> a visceral pleasure. There is something terribly exciting about seeing a naked woman...a stranger disassociated from myself, unknown. It is a forbidden pleasure. I like to see every dancer in the club. I'm always waiting to see the next unknown woman. But once I've seen all the dancers I'll leave. But it's important to stay for all of them. When I see a film I like to see the credits, it's like the same thing here. 38

" Steve, " a happily married young man who frequents strip clubs very infrequently, also states that he sometimes needs:

> to see women I don't know who are naked. It frustrates me cause I know I can't fuck them, but I like this tension and get a sexual thrill while preserving my marriage. 39

Although for some married and single men such tension can have a somewhat masochistic edge to it, strip dance audiences may know long before they enter a particular club or theatre

that the chances of ever actually having sex with any of these naked women are slim to non-existent. This is not necessarily secret information that hides a huge conspiracy or cheap scam which strip club operators are trying to pull at the expense of ignorant men who are cheated out of " real " experiences of sex. As " Timothy, " an avid strip dance afficianado asserts:

> These owners know that there's a primeval urge for men to want to pay money for watered-down drinks to watch naked women. If they want to construct a mechanism where they serve drinks on the backs of men's libidos, that's fine. [40]

In the age of A.I.D.S., strip dancing offers a readily available and safe haven for a form of sexual pleasure that does not involve physical consummation and contact between the sexes.[41] And access to such pleasures is not restricted by the conventional barriers of physical appearance and/or socio-economic status which can regulate entry to more traditional sexual relationships in society. If a man has enough cash on hand to pay for entrance fees, service tips and a drink or two -- no matter who he is, where he comes from, what he does for a living, or how much money he makes in a year, he will rarely be turned away from the halls of strip dance.[42]

Once inside a strip club, a man can do more than just take long and hard looks at the dance performances. He may immediately assuage feelings of loneliness by simply entering into the company of other like men who are being entertained by pretty women. A common stereotype of strip dance audiences portrays them as an uproarious bunch of loud, macho and ob-

noxious experts of male-bonding behavior. Strip club disc-jockeys often try to motivate such reactions from lethargic and unresponsive audiences, but in many months of observation at a variety of strip bars, I found such " typical " male behavior to be the exception and not the rule. In fact, recent studies have demonstrated that it is female audiences of male strip dancing who, ironically, tend to act according to the supposedly " male " patterns of rowdiness.[43]

Nevertheless, when a man enters a strip bar he is still engaging in what is popularly considered to be within the province of decidedly " male " cultural practices of paying for women to serve him. He may be constantly reminded of this role; he will be expected to pay for drinks, tips -- and even for the privilege of conversing with the dancers under the guise of expected gentlemanly or stud-like behavior during " normal " rituals of courtship. But this communication between dancers and strip bar customers is no mere adjunct to an all-encompassing pleasure of gazing at women; rather, this active intercourse may be the most enjoyable part of an audience member's visit to the strip club. As " Ray " asserts:

> The most fulfilling thing about it is getting physically close with the dancers after they finish dancing and wait tables. It's more intimate. It's like when she's just talking to me and no one else, whereas when she's on the stage she's performing for everybody. [44]

Such intimate conversations with these ostensibly beautiful and mysterious women in the flesh can be very sexually stimulating to men such as " Ray, " who may not have the oppor-

tunity (due to their participation in a monogamous relationship, terminal halitosis, homeliness, and shyness -- or because of any number of other possible reasons) to talk with unknown women outside the context of a strip club.

Some sensitive members possess a critical appreciation of the various styles and techniques of strip dancing, and they enjoy commenting on individual performances as connoisseurs of carnal choreographies. " Jim, " for instance, first went to strip theatres during his youth to collect masturbatory fantasies by looking at women who danced what he calls: " the old va-va-voom. " [45] Now in his early forties, " Jim " favours women who care about strip dancing as a respectable form of theatrical entertainment and who work on innovative routines. [46] It isn't that important to " Jim " whether a particular dancer is beautiful or not, but she must " know how to move in a sexy way " in order to earn his appreciation. [47] His friend " Larry, " on the other hand, disdains such aesthetic pretensions, and he is a regular patron of strip clubs strictly because of " the cheap booze and the babes. " [48] He finds that:

> Strip dancing gets to be boring to watch fairly quickly. It becomes very mechanical. I mean once they take off all their clothes the mystery and anticipation is gone. But then again, I like to drink and look at tits. [49]

6. Objects of the Game

The sense of personal empowerment that dancers can ex-

perience in their work and that customers may feel when they hire a private table dancer to strip for them does not occur in a power vacuum. The varied acts of dancing, talking and watching are not just directed towards the self but they are carried out through interaction with others in the bawdy politics of the strip club or theatre. Owners and managers provide the resources and set the prelimary ground rules for the basic operation of these establishments, but the day-to-day battles and negotiations of pleasure and power are most visibly staged between the female dancers and their male customers. And there is no clear gender winner here.

According to one perspective, strip dancers may be viewed as the wielders of power over men rather than as the victims of male power.[50] They are responsible for the sexual arousal of men while safely immune from physical assault.[51] They move energetically around the club or theatre while men sit and pay attention to their performances.[52] According to Cosey Fanni Tutti, a British avante-garde musician and part-time stripper:

> Stripping has always been against men. It's just that a certain area of women have chosen to think that it isn't, and it's always done that. " Striptease, " if you analyse the word, is a tease; and the one who's teasing is the woman. The man is the poor little thing that's watching and he can't have it, you know. It's a nasty thing, really it's a horrible thing: demeaning to men, because ultimately she's got the power, and this is it. If she goes home then there's no strip, and that's what he's come for. 53

A dancer then, owns (or subcontracts to strip club owners) the basic commodity (her body) and products that men want to buy: a peek at her artistic/sleazy body and a slight touch of thigh when they put a tip in her garter. Some dancers utilize this assumed political awareness for humiliating, teasing and tormenting their supposedly frustrated audiences. " Jamie, " for instance, likes to regularly " make fun of the guys by pouring drinks on them, insulting them and other stupid stuff. "[54] " Kate, " unlike her fellow dancer at " Club X, " will only resort to such actions when the guys don't tip her enough, because it is just in those situations when she feels really naked: " it's like they're only staring at me like a piece of meat. "[55]

There is no grand theory which strip dancers use to explain why men are interested in watching their performances.[56] Men may be called " fun friends, " " nice guys, " " lonely weirdos, " " low-down creeps, " and " piss-drunk perverts, " but most audience members are simply objectified as the generic, non-descript bearers of cash who must be persuaded into paying for stimulation by the artifices of erotic performances accomplished both on-stage and off.

Perhaps this is why many men feel that " you can't really communicate with the strip dancers, " or that " the only reason strippers talk to you is because they want you to buy drinks. "[57] In a sense this is partially accurate. Strip bars

are commercial operations in the business of selling liquor through adult entertainments. Despite the fact that many long-term relationships between dancers and audience members do indeed develop, most strip dancers will not end up dating or having sex with these customers. While their smiles may be natural or made-up, and their conversations free-flowing or forced, these dancers are still required to entertain men through a limited on-the-job intimacy no matter what. Whether or not they genuinely like a particular customer, dancers usually conform to a mandatory cordiality which facilitates the production of profits for club owners (and it also ensures healthy wages and tips for themselves).

Some men contend that because the dancers are involved in this line of work, audience members hold the true reins of power in the strip club. " Kurt, " for example insists that:

> The audience is in control, not the dancers. They're dancing for us, right? And most of us make a living in a less debasing way than dancing in dives. It's my impression that these women are unskilled. 58

There is a commonly held preconception that " there must be something wrong " with the women who strip dance, or else they would not be " stuck " in the profession. This " something wrong " has been variously defined as signs of laziness, moral terpitude, and sexual perversion -- and is crowned by an assumed general ignorance that accompanies the strip dancer's objectification as a wickedly attractive and sleazy woman.

As " Steve " holds to be true:

> I'm sure not all of the dancers are drug addicts and hookers, but they're not polymer engineers by any stretch of the imagination. These girls are never really that pretty. They tend to accentuate what I consider to be a " low-class " look. [59]

Other men are bothered less by any alleged " low-class " nudity that strip dancers expose than by the fact that strippers may work in environments where they are exposed to the " seamy underbelly " of society. It is then a man's job, as patron and protector of femininity to rescue such fallen women from their shady lifestyle: " Kurt, " for example, confesses:

> There's something in me as a male that makes me want to save the dancers' lives, pull them out of the strip club. I met one stripper in New Orleans when I was in the service, and I thought in one meeting that she was a real human being. I wanted to save her life. It was a primal gender thing in me. But now I realize that she saw me as a fool, just another puritanical shmuck. [60]

There are also those audience members who see strip dancers in a more positive and uplifting vein -- as great entertainers who provide a " valuable service " to mankind. Of course even men who subscribe to this view, such as " Jim, " the strip dance connoisseur, also believe that " while there's really nothing wrong with strip dancing, I wouldn't want my daughter, mother, sister or wife to do it. " [61] Thus even the most artistically and physically gifted strip dancer may be tainted by thinly veiled charges of an endemic sleaziness attached to her craft. [62]

And these same male critics tend to hold an elitist position on who is qualified to appreciate the arts of strip dancing; they make broad distinctions between themselves and their fellow citizens of sin, who are depicted as " lonely suckers " and as " hard-up guys who never had real relationships with women so they are forced to look at the naked bodies of strippers. "[63]

From the 1840s until the present, the cultural practices of strip dancing have been geared towards the production of working women as the objects of an artistic and sleazy sexuality that are placed on view for the service of men, who do not readily object to paying money and time in order to consume these images. However, both strip dancers and their audiences may experience a sense of personal empowerment as well as feelings of control over others in their activities at the strip bar. Dancers consider their customers to be easy marks, friends, jerks, losers, nice guys, and weirdos; audience members view these women as beauties, bimbos, cheap dolls, entertainers, glamorous models, and as prostitutes in all but name.[64]

Consequently, the ultimate commodities that circulate in strip dance circuits may not necessarily be liquor or women but, rather, they may consist of these specific mechanistic objectifications of human beings as the buyers and sellers of commercialized sexuality and gender display. Even so, audience

members and performers are not the mindless marionettes of the common markets of strip; instead of relying on unitary theories of the gaze, scholars may thus develop complex and specific interpretations which take into account the socio-historical and institutional contexts of the activities of strippers and their fans. For perhaps the greatest pleasure and power shared by all citizens of this realm of revealed flesh and fantasy may be found in their active production of -- and resistance to -- these objectifications, whereby cultural practices are formed and transformed through the bumps and grinds of everyday life.

NOTES: SECTION FOUR

1 Hodgetts, p. 109.

2 Saul P. Feldman and Gerald W. Thielbar's editors' introduction to: Charles H. McCaghy and James K. Skipper Jr., " Stripping: Anatomy of a Deviant Life Style, " in Life Styles: Diversity in American Society (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1972), p. 362.

3 See McCaghy and Skipper, " Lesbian Behavior as an Adaptation to the Occupation of Stripping; " and Salutin, " Stripper Morality, " p. 200.

4 Kappeler, p. 77.

5 See Griffin, pp. 22 & 48; and Kappeler, pp. 58-81. Strip dancers are also subjected to this sort of critique in a 1979 National Film Board of Canada documentary entitled: " Pornography: Not A Love Story. "

6 Quoted in: Bell, Good Girls/Bad Girls, p. 120.

7 The sociological literature on stripping as a deviant occupation wholly adopts and promotes such a perspective.

8 Sundahl, p. 176.

9 Sundahl, pp. 177-179.

10 Dragu and Harrison, p. 155

11 The academic treatment of strip dance customers is not that far removed from the way that some dancers perceive these same men.

12 Skipper and McCaghy, " Respondents' Intrusion Upon The Situation, " p. 239.

13

Jacqueline Boles and Albeno Garbin conducted personal interviews with fifty-one strip dancers in order to amass " strippers' comments regarding customers, " but they neglected to interview these customers -- the other major participants involved in the supposedly " inauthentic " stripper-customer interactions; Boles and Garbin, " The Strip Club and Stripper-Customer Patterns of Interaction, " pp. 137-138.

14

Boles and Garbin, " The Strip Club and Stripper-Customer Patterns of Interaction, " p. 136.

15

Mulvey, p. 11. Colin Mercer finds fault with Mulvey's lack of a historical perspective on the male " gaze, " and he argues that: " Before saying that Ziegfeld and Busby Berkeley dancers hold the look, we would need, for example, to look quite closely at the formation of vaudeville and burlesque both prior to and after its negotiation with the cinematic apparatus...(we) need to know something about the reasons for this historical acceptability and popularity of these traditions; " Mercer, p. 97.

16

Lacanian theory on the male gaze can be found in: Jacques Lacan, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1978); Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, eds., Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1983); and Rosalind Coward, Female Desire: Women's Sexuality Today (London: Paladin Books, 1984).

17

Marilyn Salutin exhibits such an attitude towards strippers as the homogeneous signs of a decadent and immoral femininity, by offering such statements as: " Because strippers manifest a certain sameness in their self presentations," they become " almost indistinguishable from one another; " Salutin, pp. 207 & 201.

18

Herbert Marcuse, Negations: Essays in Critical Theory (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 235.

19

Dragu and Harrison, p. 82. Seph Weene, on the other hand, asserts that " the thrill I got from stripping was power; " Weene, p. 36.

20

Allen, p. 190.

21 Allen, p. 190.

22 Jowitt, p. 123.

23 See, for example: Susan Horton Fraleigh, Dance and the Lived Body: A Descriptive Aesthetics (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987), p. 13.

24 The market to experiences of self-enlightenment is cornered by practices of dance according to phenomenologists such as Fraleigh, who assumes that: " Dancing is a spiritual endeavor in the sense that it is a quest for self-unification: " Fraleigh, p. 41.

25 See pp. 57-60 in text of dissertation.

26 Personal interview with " Maggie, " 30 November 1988.

27 Skipper and McCaghy, " Respondents' Intrusion Upon the Situation, " p. 238.

28 " Doreen, " for instance, thinks that her job as a strip dancer is immoral, but she continues working in order to save enough money to get married to the man who she really wants to strip for; Personal interview with " Doreen, " 23 November 1988.

29 Dragu and Harrison, p. 37. Annie Ample attempted to poke fun at adult entertainment by making her act " just tasteless enough to be funny: " Ample, p. 17.

30 Amber Cooke is quoted in: Bell, Good Girls/Bad Girls, p. 190.

31 See pp. 94-95 in text of dissertation.

32 Personal interview with " Kate, " 5 December 1988.

33 Personal interview with " Jamie, " 5 December 1988.

34 Amber Cooke explains that for many women who work on a temporary basis in the strip dance business " it is a waste of time to organize for proper legal rights; " Cooke, " Strippers: Who Calls the Tune, " p. 99.

35 See " Sex Trade Workers and Feminists: Myths and Illusions - An Interview with Amber Cooke, " in Good Girls/Bad Girls, pp. 190-203.

36 See p. 118 in text of dissertation.

37 Personal interview with " Sherry, " 6 December 1988.

38 Personal interview with " Kurt, " 30 November 1988.

39 Personal interview with " Steve, " 30 November 1988.

40 Personal interview with " Timothy, " 1 December 1988.

41 McWalter, p. 138.

42 Lewin, p. 120.

43 Dressel and Petersen, " Gender Roles, Sexuality and the Male Strip Show, " pp. 151-162.

44 Personal interview with " Ray, " 28 November 1988.

45 Personal interview with " Jim, " 9 December 1988.

46 Personal interview with " Jim, " 9 December 1988.

47 Personal interview with " Jim, " 9 December 1988.

48 Personal interview with " Larry, " 9 December 1988.

49
Personal interview with " Larry, " 9 December 1988.

50
Sally Banes. " The Pleasin' in Teasin', " The Village Voice, 22 March 1983, n. pag..

51
The threat of getting kicked out of a club -- or of having one's teeth kicked out by a heavyweight bouncer --is usually sufficient in keeping customers from breaking bar rules by molesting a dancer.

52
Seph Weene claims that the strip dancer is " the single dynamic force in a room full of passive people: " Weene, p. 36.

53
Valerie Erdile. " Personal interview with Cosey Fanni Tutti. " Montreal. 24 September 1985.

54
Personal interview with " Jamie. " 5 December 1988.

55
Personal interview with " Kate. " 5 December 1988.

56
Dragu and Harrison, p. 127.

57
This would seem to bolster Boles and Garbin s theory of the " inauthentic relations " in the strip club.

58
Personal interview with " Kurt. " 30 November 1988.

59
Personal interview with " Steve. " 30 November 1988.

60
Personal interview with " Kurt. " 30 November 1988.

61
Personal interview with " Jim. " 9 December 1988.

62
See pp. 35-37 in text of dissertation on this dialectic of art and sleaze.

63
Personal interview with " Jim. " 9 December 1988.

64

This matches Marilyn Salutin's derogatory statement that prostitution is an " almost inevitable consequence of stripping; " Salutin, p. 200.

SECTION FIVE: CONCLUSION - MOVEMENTS OF CULTURE

I once took McLuhan to a Topless Lunch in San Francisco ... When men walk into a restaurant and find a dozen girls walking around in nothing but flesh-colored cache-sexes and high heels, they just don't know what to say ... Everyone was struck dumb; everyone that is to say, except McLuhan. Inside of thirty seconds, McLuhan had simply absorbed the whole scene ... " Well! " he said. " Very interesting! " ... " They're wearing us. "

[1]

Tom Wolfe

1. Culture Shock

There are no relations between culture and strip dancing. Before you start checking the previous sections of this dissertation to make sure that you didn't miss any rambling discussion or obscure footnote that leads to the somewhat surprising conclusion, let me explain that strip dancing is already a form of culture, so there are no separate entities of " culture " and " strip dancing " that are " related " by any mediating factors. The term " strip dancing " represents a range of cultural practices of bodily movement that are produced in distinct historical societies and positioned in the space of other economic, ideological and political activities. Strip dancing incorporates cultural definitions of sex, commerce, pleasure and power every step of the way; thus, in a very real sense, strips of culture are revealed through these movements.

" Movement " is a key term here, for cultural practices are in constant movement, and we are actually looking at many different strips of activity and experience that are constantly changing over varied times and spaces. Strip dancing may describe contradictory practices which are used to empower and exploit, honour and humiliate men and women according to the particular circumstances under study.

Perhaps one reason for the stigma attached to strip dancing is that these conspicuous movements do reveal so much about our culture in such an eye-catching manner. Strip dancing blatantly blurs distinctions between what are usually considered to be private and public practices of sexuality, commerce, pleasure and power. And the movements of strip dancing are variations on a theme of the public display of ostensibly private body parts.

Strip dancing is not denigrated just because of supposed invasions of the personal privacy of the female dancers; rather, women's bodies have been objectified as the personal property of men to be safely kept and hidden in the bedroom, and thus revelations of frontal female nudity outside of these domestic settings are an affront because they place these traditional gender relations in creative flux.[2] But this tension between private and public sexual objectifications of women is precisely what has kept strip dancing a viable commercial enterprise for the past century and a half, even when other

forms of adult entertainment such as brothels and pornographic books, films, magazines and videos are widely available to men.

Strip dancing more than survived when the commercial display of female sexuality was institutionalized in the industries of advertising and show business in North America at the turn of the century.[3] Over the years, particular commercial sites such as burlesque theatres may have fallen by the wayside, but the practices of strip dancing evolved from cooch dancing to couch dancing by successfully subsuming the continually varied output of new representations of women under the well-worn framework of an artistic and sleazy female sexuality that is displayed in three-dimensional and living colour.

Strip dancers are not the only social actors who bank on external body display. On the contrary, U. S. consumers annually spend an estimated fifty billion dollars on such body beautification products and services as " diets, cosmetics, plastic surgery, health clubs and gadgets. "[4] And models and performers throughout the many industries of " show business " are no less dependent on the seductive appeal of their well-formed bodies than strip dancers. But strippers are stigmatized as artistic and sleazy objects of display because they may so obviously, openly and professionally take pleasure and power in selling images of their own sexuality (even when it

is defined in mechanistic and negative terms not of their own choosing) to a dependent male clientele.

Male sexuality is also constituted in commercial fashion as an impersonal, sleazy and ultimately harmless consumer need that may be temporarily met in the visual realm of strip. By going to a strip club, a man can fulfill liberal pronouncements of freely and publically participating in sexual activities, while also adhering to strict conservative prohibitions against consummating sexual relations outside of the home.[5] Sneaking peeks at the naked bodies of strange women is occasionally perceived to be a naughty and wicked activity, but, at the same time, this stigma is usually cancelled by the notion that the viewing of naked women is a true male behaviour -- " real men " may not eat quiche, but they're not ashamed of enjoying female strip dancers once in a blue moon, goes this logic.

As I have argued, strip dancing <u>can</u> be great fun for both its male audiences and female performers. The sultans of strip have profited on its one thousand and one joys, but there are rarely such things as " innocent pleasures. " Strip dancing can also be a very lonely and pathetic form of entertainment which perpetuates the exploitation and mechanistic objectification of men and women. I do not advocate a totally cynical model of the pleasures and powers of strip dance, but neither do I argue that it is a " shrine " to an emancipatory form of

female sexuality.[6] For practices of strip dancing may help to legitimate and/or to subvert particular social relations of sexuality, commerce, pleasure and power -- and one cannot make definitive a priori evaluations of cultural practices that may be complex, contradictory and socio-historical in nature.

2. Doing What Comes Naturally

As I have previously argued in this dissertation, the cultural practitioners of strip (including dancers and their audiences) may treat each other as sex objects and money machines. Critical theorists of dance, embodiment and subjectivity may forward mechanistic objectifications of human beings in their analyses. But these varied acts of objecitification are part of the fundamental human processes by which we produce our ever changing cultures, social relations and histories.[7] My apologies to Martin Buber and his idealist conceptions of a community engaged in " I Thou " dialogues, but in our real material world we may contest the content of specific socio-historical objectifications (such as the constitution of women as the artistic and sleazy performers on spectacular display for male consumers), but not the basic fact that human beings objectify each other.[8] As Wendy Chapkis contends:

> There is something impossibly earnest about the demand that we feel sexual attraction only in a non-objectified, ungendered fashion. It may in fact be impossible not to objectify an attractive stranger. Until one learns enough to fill

> in the blanks, the attraction can't help but be built on the image s/he chooses to project and the fantasy which the observer then creates. 9

The exact meanings of the generic term " sex object " are detailed on an everyday and historical basis through concrete cultural practices such as strip dancing. Strip dancers and their audiences may accept or reject particular mechanistic objectifications -- but they must first recognize and then act to change them according to their own particular agendas. Feminist critics of strip dancing should not seek to impose their own definitions of the situation at the expense of the participants; we have seen how patriarchal assumptions on a supposed female inferiority and passivity are inadvertantly incorporated into their analyses of strip dancing. Their desire to " save " these " unfortunate " sisters in the sex trade industry smacks of a reactionary ignorance of the varied pleasures and powers that women such as strip dancers may experience.

These feminists may help strippers by granting them the dignified possibility that they may not require any assistance from persons not belonging to their subculture; and then by joining them (if asked) to change the daily working conditions of strip, in projects such as: organizing dancers into effective trade unions to press their employment demands; making sure that bars, clubs and theatres possess proper heating, lighting and sound systems -- and that these establishments meet health codes; and even becoming the managers and owners

of strip dance in order to fully capitalize on and/or to radically alter sexual objectifications of women right at the hot spots where they are so visibly staged in our culture.

3. Sights Unseen

This particular study represents a creative attempt at teasing out and then publically displaying some personal and polemical views on the manner of critical theory and methodology that I would like to develop for the analysis of cultural practices such as dance. Thus, I make no claims of comprehensiveness here; instead, I have chosen to integrate the often separated tools of cultural history, ethnographic observation and theoretical critique in a small-scale strip-search of selected angles of the academically neglected and socially marginalized form of dance known as strip. Such a bawdy body of work may then serve as the basis for more complete and systematic cultural histories, ethnographies and critical theories in the future.

Indeed, more extensive ethnographic, historical and theoretical work is needed here for richer reconstructions of the cultural practices of strip. Future cross-cultural studies may compare the development of strip in North America with its rise in Western Europe, and then situate both traditions within the exciting history of erotic dancing throughout the rest of the world. Ethnographic research may be expanded beyond the

borders of " Club X " and conducted in a wide range of sites of strip in order to obtain more exhaustive descriptions of the similarities and variations of cultural practice.

From the Frankfurt School to the Birmingham Centre, cultural theorists have analysed forms of literature, music, film and television, but except for short descriptive passages hidden away in the recesses of larger tracts on styles of popular music, there is very little critical theory of dance as cultural practice.[10] However, there have been many non-Marxian studies of dance since the last century; but their collection and incorporation into a corpus of " classic " theoretical works on dance has only been recently accomplished.[11] In fact, the major thrust of academic work on dance since the 1960s has mainly focused on the construction and consolidation of " Dance " as a separate university discipline.[12] Critical theorists do not necessarily have to leap, skip and jump on this new academic bandwagon; nonetheless, the consideration of dance as theoretical object and cultural practice may prove to be very relevant for students of communication and culture.

The zone of conceptual confusion common to many anthropological, historical, philosophical and sociological studies of dance is their treatment of communication, language and meaning. Theories of dance are profoundly logocentric - movement in dance is reduced to a language which is either similar or identical to verbal language.[13] In the most rudimentary

version of this argument, the meaning of a dance is external to both dancer and society -- and resides solely in the generalized and independent lauguage system of dance. Scholars may assert the supposed " fact " that dance is a mode or means of communication -- but this does not mean that the terms " communication " and " dance " need no further explication. The model of communication used in most theories of dance tends to be that of the stimulus-response or direct-effects variety, wherein the language of dance or the body of the dancer serves as the medium for a meaning-message between an unidentified sender and an equally unidentified receiver.[14] This abstract model of communication -- bleached of social and historical development, determination and effectivity -- underlies many theories of dance.[15]

I have attempted to substitute such logocentic and mechanistic views with a new critical perspective that places dance within the domain of ethnography, history, and theory. If, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, the movements of strip dancing are so imbricated in socio-historical movements of sexuality, commerce, pleasure and power, then why couldn't the less socially stigmatized movements of ballet, modern dance or break-dancing for that matter, be examined through a similar approach, especially since there is a great deal of archival documentation on these other more " acceptable " non-verbal practices that could facilitate such research? Moreover, perhaps these future analyses may prove

that practices of strip dancing have much in common with these other forms of dance and with other activities of public body display and movement including those of theatrical performance and sports, for example.

'Theory' has its origins in a Greek word meaning: "a sight" or "spectacle."[16] Critical theorists of culture can begin to develop non-mechanistic views of embodiment and subjectivity by attempting reconstructions of everyday practices that are right in front of their eyes. Rather than casting these modes of popular culture in the already established molds of feminist, Marxian, phenomenological, sociological and other theory before analysis even begins, critical scholars may only be able to eventually arrive at these more general macro-theories of culture through specific micro-studies of practice.

We may never arrive at perfect descriptions of all these varied cultural practices, but we can produce customized reconstructions or objectifications which have greater or lesser explanatory value than others. Accordingly, the integrated research design of this dissertation permits the researcher to conduct exploratory reconstructions of such stigmatized non-verbal practices as strip dancing, and to situate non-mechanistic notions of communication, culture and dance within detailed investigations that emphasize the complexity and specificity of these activities of everyday life. This is made

possible because analysis is aimed at both the historical development of such practices and at the contemporary interpretations of the social actors who produce them through the bawdy politics of culture.

NOTES: SECTION FIVE

1

Tom Wolfe, The Pump House Gang (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), pp. 131-132. Marshall McLuhan also saw no future for strip in the global village: " In the age of the bikini and of skin diving, we begin to understand the ' castle of our skin ' as a space and world of its own. Gone are the thrills of strip-tease; " Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (New York: A Signet Book/The New American Library, 1964), p. 116.

2

See pp. 37-40 in text of dissertation.

3

See Toll, pp. 207-238.

4

Barry Glassner, Bodies: Why We Look The Way We Do And How We Feel About Them (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1988), p. 13; also see: Featherstone, pp. 18-35.

5

Soble, p. 77.

6

Margaret Dragu and A. S. A. Harrison hold such a position, stating that: " Striptease is our one shrine to sexual feeling and the enjoyment and celebration of sexual feeling for its own sake; " Dragu and Harrison, p. 9.

7

See Karl Marx, " Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844: Selections, " in The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972), pp. 52-103; Paul Heyer, Nature, Human Nature, and Society: Marx, Darwin, Biology and the Human Sciences (Wesport: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 76; and Sawchuck, p. 69.

8

Martin Buber, I and Thou, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).

9

Chapkis, p. 134; Sut Jhally made similar remarks in his lecture: " What's Wrong With a Little Objectification, " Graduate Program in Communications, McGill University, October 1988.

10

See Simon Frith's discussion of disco music and dance in his Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'N' Roll (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), pp. 244-247; Dick Hebdige's descriptions of the ' anti-dancing ' of Punk, in his Subculture: The Meaning of Style (London and New York: Methuen, 1979), pp. 108-109; and the limited comments about black music and rock concerts by Herbert Marcuse in his essay " Art and Revolution, " in Counter-Revolution and Revolt (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), pp. 114-115.

11

The following anthology offers a good selection of those dance texts which are considered to be " classics " in the field: Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen, eds., What is Dance: Readings in Theory and Criticism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983);.

12

See Kapila Vatsyayan, " Dance: levels and dimensions of research, " in Dance as Cultural Heritage I, ed. Betty True Jones (New York: CORD Dance Research Annual XIV, 1983), pp. 1-4.

13

See Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, " Phenomenology as a Way of Illuminating Dance, " in Illuminating Dance: Philosophical Explorations (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1984), p. 126. Susan Leigh Foster's Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1986) is a recent work which attempts to apply literary theories and models to the study of dance.

14

Anya Peterson Royce, for example, states that: " When we speak of the meaning of the dance we are implicitly comparing the communicative aspects of dance behavior. Like language, its basic instrument is the human body; " Royce, p. 197. Drid Williams, a dance semiotician, has attempted to mix Suassurean concepts with the analysis of movement. She maintains that: " the dance consists of a variety of modes of symbolic discourse " which we should mathematically study by making the body a bearer or " human action signs; " Drid Williams, " The Human Action Sign and Semasiology, " In Dance Research Collage: A Variety of Subjects Embracing the Abstract and the Practical, eds. Patricia Rowe and Ernestine Stodelle (New York: CORD Dance Research Annual IX, 1979), pp. 39-64.

15

For extensive treatment of this issue, see David Best, Philosophy and Human Movement (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978). Even Judith Lynne Hanna's analyses of dance as a type of non-

verbal communication rest on claims that dance is a " conceptual natural language " which governs " a system of physical movements and interrelated rules guiding performance in different social situations; " Judith Lynne Hanna, To Dance Is Human: A Theory of Nonverbal Communication (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), p. 5. She also argues that the meaning of a dance performance consists of: " the interplay of sender-receiver intention-perception within its context; " Judith Lynne Hanna, The Performer-Audience Connection: Emotion to Metaphor in Dance and Society (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), p. 17.

16 The Oxford Universal Dictionary on Historical Principles, p. 2167.

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APPENDIX: EXCURSUS ON ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

1. Text

According to Stephen A. Tyler, " post-modern " ethnographies are poetic and ritual performances, or:

> fragments of discourse intended to evoke in the minds of both reader and writer an emergent fantasy of a possible world of commonsense reality. 1

James Clifford also envisions ethnography in terms of a " cultural poetics " where cultures are " no longer prefigured visually as objects, theaters, texts " but are defined in discursive metaphors of " positioned utterances " and " expressive speech. " 2

The work of Clifford and Tyler on post-modern ethnography represents the emergence of a literary consciousness by North American scholars within the disciplinary domain of anthropology. 3 As I argue in the first section of this dissertation, I find the blurring of the boundaries between literary analysis and cultural criticism to be very problematic. I thus do not associate or situate my own work within the contemporary genre of post-modern ethnography in the field of anthropology.

Instead, I have chosen to develop an original theoretical and practical rationale for conducting ethnographic research

that is directly related to the subject of the dissertation. That is, following Anthony Giddens, I am concerned with the " practical consciousness " of " knowledgeable agents " who learn such knowledgeability in the " routines of day-to-day social life; " that is, the question of how actors reach interpretations of action becomes central to cultural and social analysis.[4] Such a perspective was wholly ignored in the previous sociological field studies of strip. I thus concluded that a preliminary task of ethnographic work on strip was the collection of basic information on the interpretations of strip by some of the major participants in the subculture -- dancers, audience members, managers, owners.

Consequently, I attempted such a project by informally interviewing over forty subcultural members during a six-month period of research in 1988 at a strip club in a major North American metropolis. Such initial ethnographic work was intergrated with methods of cultural history and theoretical critique in order to produce this exploratory dissertation on strip. There are many other virginal avenues for ethnographic research in this area. Women who attend female strip shows could be interviewed. People who have never attended strip dance performances could be interviewed on their interpretations of strip. Dancers from a hundred clubs in an equal amount of countries could be interviewed. Work may center on the interrelationships of dancers and customers, dancers and dancers, customers and customers. There is a ple-

thora of ethnographic research possibilities here.

Despite many theoretical and practical differences between post-modern ethnographic work and my own, there may be certain interesting similarities. First, I have been fairly explicit in discussing the fragmentary and limited scope of my ethnographic research -- in the introductory and concluding sections of this dissertation, and now in this appendix. Second, I have tried to develop a dialogical tone in this work; as I argue in " Section One: Movements of Theory and Practice: "

> I have made a serious attempt at letting the different social actors involved in the production and consumption of strip who were ignored in the previous field studies ... speak for themselves about their own practices. 5

However, it still may be argued that this dissertation privileges vision as a mode of analysis and extends the optical metaphor or bias of traditional ethnographic work in the study of the spectacular forms of cultural practice such as strip dancing. This criticism may be valid if one assumes, following James Clifford, for example, that the scholar can escape or transcend this dominant visual paradigm and produce an alternative cultural poetics of speech. However, the post-modern ethnographers have not even adequately described and defined this supposed visual paradigm and I am inclined to assume that such notions seem to generalize mechanistic theories of the " gaze " from the subjective to the cultural realm.

If my speculations are indeed mired in a visual prison-house of language, then sobeit. In order to reconstruct strip dance as cultural practice rather than as mechanistic object of logocentric analysis, I have made a concerted effort to place my own discourse within the discourse of strip dance. Instead of assuming an imperious rhetoric with claims to scientificity and transcendence, the language I use is playful, pun-filled, and hopefully pleasurable for both writer and reader, mirroring the pleasurable possibilities of strip. I focus my gaze on the cultural history of strip dancing and on the varying interpretations of strip by its practitioners. I do not shift my eyes to in order to generate a general theory of pleasure, spectatorship, and strip -- but I endeavour to provide specific ethnographic historical, and theoretical discussion that may facilitate such general understanding in the future.

I have openly admitted and acknowledged that this dissertation is a creative, personal and polemical reconstruction of strip dancing. I have pointed out the limitations of my research while also emphasizing the importance of notions of complexity and specificity for the study of these cultural practices. However, such self-reflective revelations do not vitiate the critical relevance or internal logical coherence of the arguments contained herewith. The reader will have to decide for her or himself if my particular visions of strip dance are indeed out of sight.

2. Notes

1
Stephen A. Tyler, " Post-Modern Ethnography: From Document of the Occult to Occult Document, " in Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1986). pp. 125-126.

2
James Clifford, " Introduction: Partial Truths. " in Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1986) p. 12.

3
See Clifford, pp. 1-26.

4
Anthony Giddens, " Action, Subjectivity and the Constitution of Meaning. " in The Aims of Representation: Subject/Text/History, ed. Murray Krieger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). pp. 167-170.

5
See pp. 20-21 in this dissertation.