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Body Talk

Revelations of Self and Body in Contemporary Strip Clubs

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I spend a lot of time preparing before I go onstage at a strip club, which seems almost counterintuitive—spending all day getting ready to take off your clothes. Preparation is ongoing, of course—most dancers have regular salon appointments for manicures, pedicures, facials, body scrubs, waxing, highlights or coloring, or hair extensions. Many dancers also spend a lot of time in the gym. But a work day has its own routine, at least for me. Early in the day, I go running, usually only two miles since I'll get lots of exercise later on. I eat one large meal mid-day (so that I won't be too full later but also won't get too hungry), and start drinking my eight glasses of water. I go to a tanning booth for a short session, and then do my floor exercises—450 stomach crunches, push-ups, and stretches. When it gets closer to my shift I wash and condition my hair and exfoliate my skin in the shower. I don't have to shave because I always wax instead—that way you don't grow any nasty stubble or razor bumps around your bikini area. After showering I apply self-tanner, let it soak in for fifteen minutes, and then apply scented body lotion and let that dry as well

while I check for chips in my nail or toenail polish. I check for stray hairs along my pubic line, ankles, eyebrows. I dry my hair and set it in large rollers. Then, still undressed, I apply stage make-up to my body—covering bruises, blemishes, ingrown hairs, or discolorations. I follow this with an all-over bronzer—it would be easier and less messy if I could just bake in the tanning bed for longer, but I'm trying to minimize the skin damage from years of dancing. While the body make-up sets, I apply perfume on my pulse points and then begin putting on my facial make-up. A bit of concealer, M.A.C. stage powder, eyebrow pencil, eyeshadow in several colors, white eyeliner, dark eyeliner, mascara, tinted powder on my cheeks, lip liner, lip-stick. I wait to apply glitter to my body until after I do my face—it is nearly impossible to get off your hands. I don't always use glitter, but on nights that I do I apply it to my chest, stomach, and butt, and lightly on my arms and legs. I usually use glitter with a gold tone, which looks warm under the black lights. After the glitter, I wash my hands and take out the rollers (it's okay if the remaining glitter gets in my hair). Using a hand-held mirror and the full-length one, I do a 360-degree check of my body, looking for anything I might have missed.

Then I drive to the club, where I'll have time for a touch-up before having to take the stage for my shift—a bit more lotion, perfume, or vanilla-scented body oil, lipstick—and another 360-degree body check. The lights, of course, will perfect the work that I've already done. I select a costume from the choices in my locker—long gowns, two-piece bikinis, a schoolgirl outfit with a ridiculously short skirt, cocktail dresses in black, white, and red. The dress, of course, I'll be taking off. But the accessories I choose will remain, as they are an important part of being nude, part of the costume. Our removable g-strings come in a variety of glow-in-the-dark colors, some with beading or glitter. Jewelry, including belly chains and ankle bracelets, always looks good under the lights. High heels, sexy leather boots, elbow-length gloves, boas, thigh-highs, garters . . . And, of course, a nice, small purse that matches my outfit for storing the cash. Over the course of the night, I return every so often to the dressing room to make touch-ups and change outfits. Dressing, undressing, dressing, undressing—for an eight-hour shift.

At the end of the shift, I change once more—into sweatpants—and head home to count my money, shower, and climb into bed . . . naked.

Nudity, it has been argued, lies in the eye of the beholder and not simply in the exposure of the body's surface, and what constitutes nakedness is generally seen by anthropologists as varying by context and culture. The implication

of this variation, and in the need for a "witness," real or imagined, is that nudity is not just a state of being, but is, rather, a social process. Strip clubs, as venues in which nudity is commodified, standardized, and regulated and where bodily revelations are sought and purchased, provide a dynamic illustration of the production of nudity and its meanings. Drawing on ethnographic research in U.S. strip clubs, this chapter explores the ways that nudity is produced, controlled, and made profitable by the state, the clubs, and the dancers. The focus here is on strip clubs that feature female dancers and cater to primarily heterosexual male audiences, though these are not the only kind of clubs in existence. In addition, I examine some of the dynamics of concealment and revelation in interactions between exotic dancers and their customers, especially as these are shaped by gender and social class.

Some recent writers on striptease have taken an almost celebratory view of the performances given by strippers, arguing that they challenge gender roles and can liberate participants from existing systems of inequality or from normalizing or moralizing discourses. For instance, Dahlia Schweitzer writes that "[s]trip joints provide one of the few outlets in which women exercise unchallenged command over their bodies. Women freely express their sexuality in an environment that upholds their authority over it" (2001: 72). Similarly, Frederick Schiff argues that "nude dancing in commercial public places seems to represent the most widespread and direct challenge to puritan proprieties" (1999: 16).

While I agree that stripping can feel liberating to the dancers and to the patrons who visit strip clubs to watch them, I do not see striptease *as it currently exists* as an unproblematic challenge either to puritan morality or to existing social systems of privilege. In fact, striptease becomes meaningful precisely *because of* the fact that it can be figured by participants as a site for the expression of freedom from social controls at the same time as it is regulated, sanitized, and controlled in the interest of profitability. Now, granted, the sex industry is indeed a potential site for challenging social norms and assumptions about gender, sexuality, desire, and relationships. For many women who have worked as dancers, including myself, strip clubs have led to increased comfort with their own sexuality and with female bodies, and to new understandings of female virtue and freedom (Frank 1998, 2002b; Funari 1997; Johnson 1999; Mattson 1995; Queen 1997; Reed 1997). As Margaret Dragu, a former stripper, and A. S. A. Harrison write, stripping can be "surprisingly conservative," yet "in spite of its conformist ideas about itself and sexuality, it has always been able to make room for visionaries" (1988: 20). Dancing is also a significant source of income for many women, attracting young women wishing to rebel against middle-class norms of femininity, college students and single mothers who want a flexible work schedule and decent pay, drug addicts, writers, artists, and professionals. Because of their marginalized status, strip clubs and other adult entertainment venues attract customers who are sex radicals and outcasts (Califia 1994) as well as more conservative men (such as

men who categorize all women as Madonnas or whores, for example). As Masquelier notes in the introduction, and as some of the contributors to this volume expand upon, bodily surfaces are at times used to transgress embodied conventions and contest the existing moral order of a community. Yet at the same time, it is important to recognize the many ways that social inequalities of gender, class, and race, as well as extremely conservative ideologies about nudity and sexuality in the U.S., influence both the production and consumption of exotic dance. In this way, nudity is not necessarily or unproblematically a vehicle of social contestation, but can also provide a means of reinscribing the very categories upon which the status quo rests.

I began researching strip clubs in 1995 and worked as an exotic dancer off and on for six years during this time; thus, this chapter is drawn from a much larger project on the meanings and uses of commodified sexualized services. In 1997-98, I conducted fieldwork in five strip clubs in a fairly large southeastern city which I call Laurelton, working over a period of fourteen months as a nude entertainer. As strip clubs are highly stratified in terms of "classiness," I selected sites that ranged from the most prestigious clubs in the city (offering valet parking, luxurious atmospheres, expensive lighting and sound systems, dozens of dancers on multiple stages, etc.) to lower-tier "dive" bars (clubs that are dimly lit, sparsely furnished, and located in red-light districts or simply known as smaller neighborhood venues).¹ Though the degree of nudity varies in strip clubs around the country, Laurelton laws allowed the dancers to strip completely (though these performances were regulated, as will be discussed). Dancers were each required to give stage performances for tips; they were also, however, expected to circulate amongst the customers to sell "private" table dances for \$10 a song. Depending on the rules and layout of the club, the dancer might disrobe on a customer's table so that he could view her from below, on the floor between his legs while he was seated, or in front of his chair on a slightly raised platform. A club might have between one and four stages with dancers on each, and any number of nude women might be performing amongst the audience at any given time. The largest club also staged a mandatory spectacle each evening where every dancer in the club was required to disrobe simultaneously, regardless of whether or not she was being paid. The clubs in Laurelton that allowed full nudity prohibited any contact between dancers and customers during their dances and these rules were usually strictly enforced. Significantly, the prohibition of contact was also important to many of the customers that I interviewed and interacted with, as these men generally realized that other venues existed that would allow contact and had consciously avoided those sites.

At each of the selected clubs, I went through the application, audition, and training process as would any new entertainer and worked a variety of shifts to gain access to a range of different customers, employees, and experiences. Actually working as an entertainer meant that I was subject to the same rules and regulations as the other dancers, facing the possibility of either

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acceptance or rejection by the customers each shift and learning the bodily disciplines and techniques specific to the work. My employment allowed me access not only to the customers but also to all of the spaces of the club, and I was able to speak with other dancers, managers, floormen, DJs, advertisers, and club owners as well as the patrons. I also conducted thirty multiple, in-depth interviews with regular male customers of the strip clubs in which I worked, asking questions about sexuality and gender, work and money, family, intimate relationships, and their use of the sex industry. This chapter obviously cannot do justice to the variety of experiences and motivations expressed by the interviewees, and that is not my intention. Rather, I focus here on the production and meanings of nudity in these particular venues, especially in an interactive context.

Regulating and Producing Nudity

Contextualizing Nudity in Strip Clubs

It is a focus on bodily exposure that distinguishes strip clubs from other kinds of bars and nightclubs (though this boundary may be disappearing with some of the increasingly risqué fashions for women) and the focus on sexualized looking in a *public* atmosphere that differentiates the strip club from many other forms of adult entertainment such as pornography, prostitution, and oral or manual release in a massage parlor. Yet the desire to visit strip clubs is more than just a desire to passively see women's bodies, even for the most voyeuristic of customers. There are many ways to potentially "see" naked women—peeping, viewing pornography, reading medical texts, or developing intimate relationships with them, for example. These visits, then, must also be seen as expressing a desire to have a particular kind of *experience* rooted in the complex network of relationships between "home," "work," and "away," an experience that I have elsewhere analyzed as "touristic" (Frank 2002a). Touristic practices, according to sociologist John Urry, "involve the notion of 'departure,' of a limited breaking with established routines and practices of everyday life and allowing one's senses to engage with a set of stimuli that contrasts with the everyday and the mundane" (1990: 2). The sights that are gazed upon are chosen because they offer "distinctive contrasts" with work and home and also because "there is an anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered" (1990: 3). The behavioral structures of everyday life are indeed inverted for many customers inside the clubs; for example, women do the approaching rather than the men and thus face the possibility of rejection; women "ask" to be looked at naked ("Would you like to buy a table dance?"); and usually private performances of sexual desire or sexualized display of the nude body are suddenly made public. Further, while intimate relationships between individuals may be covertly facilitated with

money in everyday realms, inside the clubs this facilitation is blatant, immediate, and far less apologetic (though no less complicated in its various enactments). Nudity serves as a visual reminder of these social inversions—a sign of the difference of the setting from work and home as well as the difference of the women and the behavioral codes that govern the exchanges.

Though a strip club may be touristic for the male customers, and even for the regulars in particular patterned ways, it is, first and foremost, a workplace for the dancers. Granted, stripping may be a means of rebellion for young women in addition to being a lucrative job, especially for those in the middle classes (Frank 2002b; Johnson 1999). On the other hand, the fact remains that the parties to the transactions are coming to the encounters with different purposes—the men for leisure, the women for labor. These different purposes and meanings are not rooted in essential gender differences; rather, they are informed by labor relations as well as social positions (including, but not limited to, gender). Certainly these categories of worker and leisure seeker are not absolute: customers may conduct business activities at strip clubs, for example, and most customers are also workers in other arenas. Likewise, there may be some dancers for whom stripping feels more like leisure than work, at least on certain days, and a large component of the job involves engaging in practices associated with leisure—drinking alcohol, dining, conversing, flirting, having fun (or at least appearing to), and, especially, being undressed. Yet in the immediacy of the encounter, the money nearly always flows in one direction only—from the customer to the dancer (until later, when the dancer is asked to pay the establishment a cut of her earnings). Further, even though a man may be conducting a form of business on the premises, it is usually precisely because this space is inherently “not work” for him that it has been chosen. Thus, while one or both of the participants to any transaction may be “playing” at any given time, this play is firmly situated within a larger framework of cultural and economic relations.

It is within this framework that the dancers' bodily revelations become meaningful, and hence profitable, for themselves and for the clubs. Nudity, of course, has an assortment of sometimes conflicting meanings in the contemporary U.S. and can at different times (and to different observers) signify a variety of things, including but not limited to innocence, naturalness, authenticity, vulnerability, sexual power, truth, revelation of one's inner self, humiliation, degradation, a lack of self-respect, immorality, sexual accessibility, and a prelude to sexual activity. To see someone without clothes, especially in a public setting, can thus be confusing (even if expected) and requires interpretation by the participants involved. Anne Hollander argues that humans have invented both the notion of the “naturalness of nudity” and that of the “wickedness of nudity” (1975), and these kinds of interpretations reemerge in many elements of strip club exchanges and in the debates that erupt about their existence. Similarly, art historian Mario Perniola points out that a paradox

emerges in opposition between clothing and nudity due to the fact that Western culture has both Hellenistic and Hebraic roots. As Dennis Hall quotes Perniola to explain,

In Western thought's Hellenistic roots, on the one hand, we have a reverence for nudity based upon the ability to see the "naked truth," "the metaphysical ability to see beyond all robes, veils, and coverings to the thing itself in its exact particulars." . . . Getting to "the naked truth" is a process of getting undressed, getting free of clothing. From this perspective, being clothed is a privation. In Western thought's Hebraic roots, on the other hand, we also have a reverence for the condition of being clothed as a mark of humanity. "Clothing prevails as an absolute," Perniola suggests, "whether or wherever the human figure is assumed to be essentially dressed, when there is the belief that human beings are human, that is distinct from animals, by virtue of the fact that they wear clothes." . . . Getting to the truth is a process of getting dressed, putting on clothing. From this perspective, being naked is a privation. (Hall 2001: 70)

Public nudity is embedded in a host of additional symbolic and emotional meanings, again often ambivalent and frequently revolving around issues of power and control. Stripping an individual of his or her clothes as a form of military action, a punitive measure, or a means of humiliation is widely understood as a means of exercising power. At the same time, people who willingly or purposefully shed their clothes in public are often criminalized or stigmatized and seen as dangerous (powerful?) or pathological—"trenchcoaters," streakers, nudists, strippers. Prohibitions on nudity have long been seen as part of society's repression of natural sexuality and the body, both in academic theories and in folk understandings; thus, nudity can appear as transgressive, even dangerous to the civilized order. Patrons, being subjects to and of the same discourses as other individuals, also bring ideas about nudity as transgressive, dangerous, and liberating to their visits to strip clubs and their encounters with dancers. The notion that strip clubs were somehow an expression of a transcultural, transhistorical, "natural" male sexuality that was repressed in everyday life was important to many of the customers (despite the fact that there are many men who do not find the clubs appealing). Similarly, the idea that strip clubs were places in which one was at risk for physical or moral contamination was also motivating and eroticized for the regular customers. Men who disliked strip clubs, on the other hand, often claimed to see them as boring, commercialized, or contrived. Customers sometimes described themselves as "adventurers," dancers as "brave" and "wild," and strip clubs themselves as places "outside of the law" (Frank 2002a).

In strip clubs, customers also bring their own sexual histories to the transactions, as well as their beliefs about gender, sexuality, and consumption. Despite many individual differences, I did find patterns among the regular customers, those men for whom visits to strip clubs were a significant sexualized practice. Though few of the men claimed to be religious, and they

overwhelmingly expressed support for the dancers' right to disrobe and the "naturalness" of such an act, their enthusiasm usually quickly waned when I asked about how they would feel if it was a wife or daughter onstage. Many of the regular customers claimed to be married to very conservative women who had more extreme views about nudity and sexuality than they did. There were some customers, for example, who stated that they were never allowed to look at the bodies of their wives or partners, even during sex—in these cases, nudity might be fascinating, awe-inspiring, or even upsetting. Even for those men who did have access to private revelations of the female body, the fact that they were paying for live, public performances meant that there were additional emotional layers enwrapping their interpretations of their encounters—mixtures of shame, anxiety, excitement, and desire. If it is true that "there is no apprehension of the body of the other without a corresponding (re)vision of one's own" (Phelan 1993: 171), some of the pleasure in these commodified encounters arises from complicated, and concurrent, fantasies of security (rooted in the ritualized performances of sexual difference that unfold in the clubs) and fantasies of rupture or transgression (rooted in the feelings of degradation, vulnerability, and freedom that many of the customers felt would accompany their own public nudity) (see Frank 2002a).

The relationship of nudity to forms of power and control has long been bolstered by the regulation of bodily exposure by state and local governments in the U.S., as well as by the ways that those regulations are proposed, implemented, and debated in public forums. Though I do not have space here to detail the development of modern exotic dance out of other entertainment forms such as vaudeville, burlesque, and cabaret shows, it is important to realize that the history of striptease is thoroughly shaped by the history of regulation and the conflicts that surround sexualized displays and behaviors in American public culture. The distinctions made between art and obscenity, lewd or acceptable behavior, and moral or immoral forms or representations of sexuality can be seen as ongoing arguments that are carried out in legal forums, academic treatises, public culture and the media, and living rooms around the country. Frequently what is indecent in one decade is commonplace in the next (think of the scandal over the bodily exposure of famous burlesque star Lydia Thompson in the late nineteenth century—she wore *tights* and made them visible to an audience) (Allen 1991), yet that does not mean that the transgressions of the day are perceived any less seriously by their participants or treated less harshly.

Regulations against striptease have often been justified in the name of social control and public safety. Anti-burlesque campaigns, for example, surfaced almost immediately after the entertainment form arrived in America from Europe during the late 1800s, and continued to escalate throughout the 1930s.² While early protests against sexualized entertainment often focused on the sexual depravity or suspected prostitution of the female performers, later campaigns against burlesque, according to historian Andrea Friedman, began

to focus on the supposedly dangerous and aggressive sexuality of working-class males, especially when exposed to female nudity or immorality. Such campaigns, she argues, "offered an opportunity to articulate deep-seated concerns about male sexual orderliness in a profoundly disorderly world," and such fears of the out-of-control or aggressively sexual male would surface again in the 1950s and 1970s anti-pornography movements (1996: 237), and, arguably, have gained force in current debates about striptease. Such campaigns can also be seen as reflecting a class bias, with working-class or lower-tier forms of entertainment being penalized more harshly than those designated "art" and enjoyed by relatively privileged audiences (Foley 2002; Hanna 1999).

Despite attempts in every era to regulate theaters that featured different forms of striptease, however, it has continued to thrive and evolve as an entertainment form. This process of upscaling in strip clubs escalated in the 1980s, and upper-tier "gentleman's clubs" now exist in addition to neighborhood bars and run-down, red-light-district venues. The number of strip clubs in the United States has been growing rapidly; there were around 3,000 venues across the nation in 1998 (Hanna 1998). This growth has not occurred without the eruption of either national or local conflicts, however, and efforts to distance strip clubs from their illicit associations have become increasingly important to the club owners given the opposition that has arisen in a number of communities. Striptease is seen as dangerous and socially disruptive by conservative segments of the population and thousands of taxpayer and private dollars are spent in attempts to eradicate strip clubs in communities across the nation. Because of their lingering working-class associations, and the persistent, often erroneous belief that they are indelibly linked to prostitution, crime, and other "negative secondary effects," strip clubs have already been subject to more severe regulations than other kinds of entertainment, and some municipalities have attempted to use restrictive regulations to close down adult businesses altogether: requiring extremely bright lighting, prohibiting tipping, requiring bikinis or cocktail dresses at all times, stipulating that excessive distance be maintained between the entertainers and the customers, etc. (Hanna 1999).³ In 2000, despite a lack of sound evidence that strip clubs cause negative secondary effects, the Supreme Court upheld legislation regulating exotic dance in the city of Erie, Pennsylvania, ruling that "nude public dancing itself is immoral" (Foley 2002: 3). Immediately after the ruling, clips from a video taken at a nude club played repeatedly on the evening news, with only small digitized blurs over the dancers' breasts and pubic area—symbolic of the pasties and g-strings that the dancers would now be wearing. Instead of being something that individuals would need to consciously seek out, such images were broadcast into living rooms across the country as a sign of the "dangerous," but ever fascinating, exposed female body. In Laurelton, the combination of full nudity and alcohol was regularly under fire from this kind of restrictive regulation, and there have been numerous legal challenges to the clubs there.

The intricacies of the many battles that were fought in locales across the country throughout the twentieth century would be impossible to detail here, as would the complexities of the justifications that continue to be given for regulating, harassing, shutting down, or allowing venues that offer the display of sexualized female bodies to their patrons. Instead, it is important to realize that regulation and scandal does not just repress unruly "natural" desires in the name of civilization and order, but actually helps to create and shape those desires (Foucault 1978).

Producing Nudity: Regulations and Manipulations by the State and the Clubs

In strip clubs, after all, nudity is in many ways sanitized and controlled—through local regulations, by the managers, and by the dancers—and behavioral boundaries are enforced by legal and social codes. Legal regulations, for example, may stipulate which kinds of movements by the dancers are allowed and provide detailed prescriptions for the presentation of the body. Police surveillance, uniformed and plainclothed, is not uncommon in the clubs, presumably to maintain order and ensure that the laws are not broken. Dancers can be ticketed or arrested for infractions. In Laurelton, dancers were prohibited from touching their own breasts or genitals during their dances and from touching the genital area of their customers, were supposed to maintain a one-foot distance between their body and the customer, were not allowed to bend or move in ways that exposed the interior of the vagina, and were required to keep moving at all times when unclothed.⁴ Dancers were also required to have at least a one-inch strip of pubic hair. If a dancer accidentally removed too much hair during her bikini wax or while shaving, she was asked to shade it in with eyebrow pencil. Though the clubs that I studied allowed full nudity, other municipalities around the country may require g-strings, bikinis, or pasties to cover the nipples, which range from clear Band-Aid-type strips to sequined tassels. In Laurelton, shoes were required at all times by the Health Department since many of the clubs served food, a law that many of the dancers found fairly amusing.

When new regulations are proposed, club owners and dancers frequently argue that they will lose business. Although this is indeed the case in the short term, and there are clubs that do not make it through the transition period, it is also true that the customer base rejuvenates itself over time, sometimes with a different composition. Laurelton, for example, allowed only topless dancing for many years. After the laws were rewritten in the 1980s to allow full nudity, dancers working at the time told me that many regular customers actually refused to visit the revamped clubs. (It is not just tighter restrictions that can cause clubs to lose business.) It was not long, however, before men who enjoyed fully nude dancing began to frequent the clubs. Stricter regulations are threatened quite frequently and occasionally do drive clubs out of business or force dancers to relocate. Sometimes the laws also backfire, reducing con-

trol of customer behavior—bikini clubs, for example, may not be subject to the same rules against customer/dancer contact that topless or nude clubs may be. Likewise, clubs that serve alcohol may have tighter restrictions on performer and customer behavior. However, there are enough customers who desire regulations to allow for any number of viable businesses—one can find no contact, topless bars that are packed with customers every night in Colorado and North Carolina as well as fully nude lap dancing clubs in California. What may really hurt business, in the end, is the permissiveness of people toward bodily exposure more generally. What Brian McNair has called “striptease culture” (2002) may be creating a younger generation that is less titillated by bodily revelation—after all, one can see a lot of skin on a college campus or on MTV—but seeking different kinds of prohibited contact or other kinds of transgression.

In addition to laws and regulations set nationally or locally, the clubs themselves also regulate and produce nude bodies, in the name of profit as well as control. Clubs have a need to remain within the boundaries of the law, but may also want to control behavior and manage bodies in order to create an upscale atmosphere, as “classiness” certainly includes an element of moral superiority even in the realm of sexuality. Clubs which installed poles on their stages encouraged more acrobatic dancing and more explicit views of the nude body, for example. Upscale clubs in Laurelton, on the other hand, featured runways instead of poles and had rules about how far a dancer could bend over to accept tips or allow customers to see between her legs and which dance moves could be done (sometimes even stricter than the local prohibitions against lewd dancing). Runway stages encouraged a strut, and dancers tended to move more like fashion models than pornographic ones. Upscale clubs may require floor-length gowns, at least one accessory, or even frequent costume changes. Most clubs, however, do require high heels at all times; in Laurelton the rule was four- to five-inch heels. One upscale club in which I worked had a mandatory toenail polish rule for dancers who wore open-toed shoes because the manager thought it was more elegant. Clubs also had rules about the removal of clothing, sometimes formalized and sometimes informal. One club in Laurelton, for example, required that dancers be clothed for their first song during stage sets, topless on the second song, and fully nude on the third and final song of their set. Another club, however, required that dancers go nude onstage as soon as they made ten dollars (the cost of a private table dance), and if they did not make that amount they were asked to remain clothed, even if other dancers on the stage were not, to encourage tipping.

The more upscale the strip club believes itself to be, the more the dancers are chosen for their conformity to traditional gender stereotypes of demeanor, comportment, conversational style, and appearance—the images of class being sold are often directly tied to the appearance and behavior of the dancers. Particular working-class signs can be used to exclude women from the upscale clubs—tattoos, piercings, a less standard body size and shape, too much make-

up or hair spray, or certain ways of speaking and moving. Large scars or bad teeth, imperfections that are often corrected by women with the economic resources to do so, are generally seen only at the lower-tier clubs, at least in the larger cities.

Clubs could produce bodies in other ways as well—through their internal geographics, staging and seating arrangements, mirroring, lighting systems, décor, and special effects like fans set in the stage floors, smoke, and strobe lights. My body at the upper-tier Panther Club looked extremely different than it did at the lower-tier Pony Lounge, for example. At the Panther, the height of the stages perfected the breast line of the dancers, as the customers were always positioned such that they had to look up at the nude bodies of the women. The lighting was exquisite, making one's skin look tanned and flawless and disguising cellulite, scars, and discolorations. At the Pony Lounge, however, the lighting was harsher and the smoke was released from a visible pipe over the head of the dancer on the main stage, instead of misting from the floor the way it did at some of the upper-tier clubs. Some clubs have installed extensive video camera systems, ostensibly to monitor the behavior of the customers, but certainly also to make sure that dancers do not bend the rules or lie about the tips they have collected (Egan 2003).

Finally, dancers also regulated their own bodies and nude performances in order to be profitable as well as for reasons of status or to maintain personal boundaries of morality or self, as discussed in the next sections. One might suggest that customers also regulate the dancers' bodies and performances through their patronage and their tipping practices, yet though customer stereotypes and expectations clearly have an extraordinary influence on the club's rules and the dancers' presentations, it is also the case that dancers exercise quite a bit of agency in deciding upon precisely what will draw them the most profit or make them the most comfortable with the work.

Manipulating Revelation: Nudity as Costume

The naked body, as should be evident from my field notes at the beginning of the chapter, can be conceptualized as a kind of palette and was so conceptualized, consciously or not, by the dancers. As Paul Ableman writes, true nakedness is rare if we mean "the nakedness of people whose body surface is both unadorned (with clothing or ornamentation) and unmodified (by tattooing, painting, or scarification)" (1982: 15). Similarly, Terence Turner discusses the Kayapo of the Amazon, who exhibit an elaborate code of bodily adornment despite the fact that they do not wear clothing (lip plugs, penis sheaths, beads, body painting, plucked eyebrows, head shaving, etc.) and writes, "the apparently naked savage is as fully covered in a fabric of cultural meaning as the most elaborately draped Victorian lady or gentleman" (1980: 115). Dancers, in the sense that Turner is referring to, are probably less naked than the rest of us under our clothes.

One of the first things that a new dancer learns is how to adorn, present,

and move her body in ways that are legal, profitable, and comfortable. Dancers continually modified their skin through grooming (cleansing, hair removal, texturizing of the skin), make-up, scents, and tanning. Some dancers sported an all-over tan (leading customers to continually ask where they sunbathed), others wore bathing suits even in tanning beds in order to have a distinct line between white and brown skin; some created tan lines with make-up or chose not to tan at all. Body make-up could be used in different ways in addition to creating the highly desirable tan—to highlight and contour the breasts or to cover blemishes or tattoos, for example. Skin was the absolute boundary in Laurelton and thus a particular object of fascination. Though a customer might have contact with a dancer's clothing (she could wrap a boa or a dress around his neck, for example), he was officially not allowed to touch her skin during a dance. Though contact might surreptitiously be made by the dancer (holding the customer's hands, brushing his skin with her hair, etc.) or the customer (welcome or unwelcome), bouncers patrolled the clubs and such unsanctioned behavior was rare.

Hair has deeply symbolic meanings in many cultural systems (see, for instance, Obeyesekere 1981; Rooks 1996; Turner 1980) and may become meaningful in different times and places through color, length, style, and so forth. The hair on the head, as well as the hair elsewhere on the body, is connected to gender systems in the U.S.: women are expected to remove hair on their legs, armpits, bikini line, and face, for example, yet long hair on the head is generally associated with femininity. Dancers almost always conformed to this expectation of hair removal on their own, were asked to by the management, or were penalized for not doing so by the customers.⁵ In addition to the hair on their legs and under their arms, in the nude clubs many dancers also removed all of the pubic hair from the labia, leaving only a small strip in the very front (sometimes now called a "Brazilian" wax by salons as the popularity of the style grows among the general public). Most women in the clubs, though certainly not all, wear their hair relatively long to meet customer and management expectations of a feminine style. Hair extensions are increasingly common and are replacing wigs because they look more natural and will not become dislodged during a dance. Longer hair has the advantage of being able to highlight particular body parts—it can be pulled in front to hide and then reveal the breasts; in a rear-view pose it can brush the top of the buttocks; it can conceal or emphasize the eyes. Hair color may also be used to send signals to customers and be associated with particular looks and personalities—the bubbly or sexy blonde, the exotic brunette, the feisty redhead. Though wilder styles and colors were found at the lower-tier clubs, particularly among younger dancers, the upper-tier clubs tended to be more standardized.

Accessorizing the body did not stop at the skin or the hair, of course, and numerous kinds of plastic surgeries are undergone by dancers perfecting their look: breast implants, breast lifts or reductions, lip injections, nose jobs, liposuction, tummy tucks, labia standardization, etc. Other kinds of body modi-

industry, as everything can be overdone as a means of generating attention: necklines can plunge, skirt lengths can rise. Make-up can be exaggerated. Fitch boots might have platform heels and rise eight inches from the floor. Again, valuations may be associated with particular kinds of costuming. Dancers may employ signs of wealth and glamour, and costumes can be extravagantly accessorized in a manner far too opulent (or trashy) for the average middle-class woman. How these signs are read by the customers varies, but is often patterned by the setting. In everyday life, of course, attracting too much attention can be risky or annoying for women and the clubs could thus offer a safe place in which to try out forbidden looks or movements (Frank 2002b; Johnson 1999). Many of the costumes worn in the clubs would be completely inappropriate in other spheres and at other times (which is part of the fun of being a dancer and part of the reason that at Halloween so many women suddenly become strippers, prostitutes, "sexy teachers," or cats in skintight catuits).

Perniola writes that in the figurative arts, "eroticism appears as a relationship between clothing and nudity." That is, eroticism is "conditional on the possibility of movement—transit—from one state to the other" (1989: 237). This is so in a strip club as well—though perhaps a few customers would still be titillated if the dancers took the stage already nude—but with an added, gendered transit as dancers also move between categories and potentialities, performing as "fantasy girls" who may be simultaneously, or alternately, virgins and whores (Egan 2003). Though costumes are variable, there are certainly two themes that continue to reappear in dancers' self-presentations and adornments: sexual availability/knowledge and innocence/untouchability. These themes emerge in a paradoxical relationship to each other—no dancer is actually sexually available within the confines of the club (or we are no longer talking about stripping) and no dancer is innocent in all social circles when her transgressions (distorting in public and for money) become known.

The Dynamics of Concealment and Revelation

Revelations of the body are an important part of a dancer's job, and we have explored the way that the state, the clubs, and the dancers themselves regulate and manipulate these revelations, though from different perspectives and with different interests in mind. Another kind of revelation, glimpses of the other's subjectivity, also becomes commodified in the interactions between dancers and their customers and is implicated in understanding *nudity* as a social process rather than a state of being.

In the West, distinctions are sometimes made between the terms "naked" and "nude," often to "discriminate between a certain kind of stylized and usually idealized representation of the body and a merely naked body" (Ableman 1982: 49). The *nude*, then, is traditionally seen as a refined state of being

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To be naked is to be deprived of our clothes and the word implies some of the embarrassment which most of us feel in that condition. The word *nude*, on the other hand, carries, in educated usage, no uncomfortable overtone. The vague image it projects into the mind is not of a huddled and defenceless body, but of a balanced, prosperous and confident body: the body reformed. (Clark 1956: 3)

Similar distinctions between representations have been made in the debates about the boundaries of art, erotica, and pornography. As art historian Lynda Nead argues, the female nude must be "recognized as a particularly significant motif within western art and aesthetics," as it "symbolizes the transformation of the base matter of nature into the elevated forms of culture and the spirit." Non-art, or obscenity, she argues, is seen as "representation that moves and arouses the viewer rather than bringing about stillness and wholeness" (1992: 2). Adult entertainment, of course, with its purpose of arousing and/or satiating sexual desire, is obviously most often associated with the pornographic and the obscene (whether it be print pornography, film or video, or live stripping) than recognized as art. Arguing that striptease is a form of expression and a legitimate cultural art form like other kinds of dance, however, has been one strategy that strip clubs and their supporters have taken to combat restrictive regulation (see Hanna 1998).

The terms *naked* and *nude* are also used synonymously, of course, and both derive from the same common root in Sanskrit, *nagnag*, which had connotations of shame (Ableman 1982: 49). Dancers in the clubs I worked in did not distinguish between being naked and nude linguistically, either with customers or with themselves. Naked, as a more informal term, was often used in conversations between dancers and customers and by the DJ in my experience: "Sarah needs ten more dollars before she gets naked!" or "Would you like to see me naked?" On the other hand, that there were differences between states of undress was a given—some dancers would not be seen without their wig or hairpiece; others refused to take the stage without a certain set of high heels, etc. Most women that I worked with also had ritualistic routines that preceded a shift, either short and simple (applying mascara or putting on their heels) or more elaborate. Further, even if it was not explicitly stated, many dancers did seem to feel a difference between nudity as a form of dress and nakedness as an exposure of the inner self.

And so did the customers. Going to strip clubs obviously presents the opportunity to look at scantily clothed, naked, or semi-naked women. Though many outsiders recognize that stripping involves bodily exposure on the part of the dancers, fewer realize that over the last few decades strip clubs have become ever more interactive and derive a great deal of their erotic charge from the promise of highly personalized encounters through table or lap dances. Unlike the burlesque shows of earlier years (Allen 1991), the highly choreographed Parisian striptease written about by Roland Barthes (1972), and the

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spectacular topless revues found in tourist locations such as Las Vegas, contemporary gentleman's clubs have "house"⁶ dancers who usually mingle with the audience members individually, possibly spending more time conversing or dancing at a single customer's table than disrobing on stage. This is certainly the case in Laurelton, especially on slower nights. This increased personal interaction requires new strategies on the part of the dancers for generating and maintaining customer interest, often involving performances of authenticity ("You're different from the other customers, I'll tell you my real name") and revelations of self ("Let's get to know each other") (see Frank 1998).

Perniola writes,

In our century, the erotics of dressing and the erotics of undressing appear in porno theaters and striptease acts, but only very rarely do they achieve an effective erotic transit. This happens in striptease when, through an intense look at her audience, the stripper succeeds in inverting a relationship that is usually one-way. From the moment the spectator feels himself watched, it is as if the stripper's nudity functions like a mirror: he has to confront himself and his own potential nudity. (1989: 259)

His point is quite apt—part of what the customers were also seeking was some sort of revelation of subjectivity, as most dancers will admit. Dancers understood this element of the men's desire and carefully crafted strategies by which they could "expose" themselves in ways that would be satisfying to their customers. For regular customers, after all, nudity eventually becomes almost commonplace, and the men repeatedly told me that they returned again and again to the clubs because of the interactive component of the encounters. Many of the regulars expressed a desire to "get to know the dancers," asking questions about their family life, goals and dreams, and hobbies. Even those who did not necessarily want to move the interactions to this level often sought further revelations—those moments when they might be privy to something more than the other customers were getting (increased value), more than was legally allowed, or even more than the dancers wanted to reveal at a given moment.

Revelations through Interaction

In a piece on Parisian striptease, Barthes writes that striptease is based on the fundamental contradiction that Woman is "desexualized at the very moment when she is stripped naked" (1972: 84). The classic props used in striptease, he argues, ensure that the nakedness that follows the woman's act is "no longer a part of a further, genuine undressing." Instead, it "remains itself unreal, smooth and enclosed like a beautiful slippery object" (1972: 85). The dance routine is also a barrier to the true erotic for Barthes, because through a series of ritualistic gestures it hides the very nakedness that it is supposed to reveal. He writes that professional strippers can "wrap themselves in the

miraculous ease which constantly clothes them, makes them remote, gives them the icy indifference of skillful practitioners, haughtily taking refuge in the sureness of their technique" (1972: 86). He notes, however, that eroticism resurfaces in the amateur contest, where beginners undress "without resorting or resorting very clumsily to magic, which unquestionably restores to the spectacle its erotic power." With "no feathers or furs" and "few disguises as a starting point—gauche steps, unsatisfactory dancing, girls constantly threatened by immobility, and above all by a 'technical' awkwardness (the resistance of briefs, dress, or bra)," amateurs are denied "the alibi of art and the refuge of being an object," which gives their disrobing an "unexpected importance" (1972: 86). Barthes, of course, is discussing striptease that took the form of elaborate costuming and lengthy stage shows which included little "private" or individualized contact between the stripper and the members of the audience, a type of performance which is quite rare in contemporary strip clubs but which is sometimes talked about nostalgically by both dancers and customers. Nevertheless, the popularity of amateur contests in contemporary strip clubs, the allure of "new girls," and the customers' confessed dislike of professionalism all support Barthes's contentions, at least in part.

What Barthes perhaps did not realize, or what has perhaps changed since he wrote, is that some dancers have themselves become mythologists of sorts—self-consciously fashioning ways to produce an illusion of further unveiling in a room where any number of women may simultaneously be nude. Such a strategy, of course, does not work for every woman; nor does every woman need or want to use it—there are some customers, after all, for whom nudity itself is thrilling enough to compel financial generosity or who enjoy the spectacular rather than the individualized parts of the experience. Yet such "intentional" unveilings could indeed be profitable and dancers used a number of strategies to produce such intimate exposures—telling stories about their personal lives, feigning or summoning up attraction for the customer or embarrassment about being undressed in front of him, or providing customers with real names or cell phone numbers, for example (Frank 1998).⁷ Dancers also sometimes crafted mistakes in their performance or attire to appear inexperienced or new.

The lack of "professionalism" exhibited by dancers new to the business implied to some men that they would not be as skilled at manipulating men out of their money. To others, it seemed to provide a tension between purity and defilement, a kind of revelation that was particularly exciting. On the other hand, there were certainly interactions that made dancers feel uncomfortably exposed, emotionally or physically, though the particularities varied for different women and boundaries were maintained in a variety of ways. Though I did not meet many women like this while working, there are indeed a few dancers who struggle with their public nudity and use drugs or alcohol to overcome their discomfort. More often I encountered dancers for whom some situations created an uncomfortable feeling of being revealed. Some dancers

hierarchies within the industry are certainly affected by social class. Skeggs writes that "physical attractiveness may work as a form of capital (corporeal capital)" but also as a form of class privilege (1997: 102). Class privilege in attractiveness may also take the form of specialized knowledge and tools, as well as the resources to procure them.

Schiff compares nude dancing clubs with topless clubs in Houston: the nude clubs he writes about cater to mostly working-class customers and feature dancers with less standardized bodies than work at the upper-tier topless clubs. Yet while Schiff analyzes the fact that the nude dancers in the clubs he visited had "alternative" body styles—"their breasts are often small or sometimes flaccid," they may be overweight or have body piercings or tattoos—as "oppositional" to mainstream moralities, such stratifications of body types and earning potentials are fairly mainstream class and gender differences. Women who have the most options as far as where they work, which customers they interact with, what kinds of services they will perform, and when (and how easily) they retire from the sex industry when they decide to do so are usually those who are able to conform to middle-class standards of appearance (and sometimes also of behavior, comportment, and interaction). Some dancers at every club enhanced their appearance through techniques such as hair extensions, plastic surgeries, year-round tanning, etc. Access to such techniques, however, as well as the quality of the results, was connected to social class and economic assets. Even applying stage make-up and accessorizing one's costume carried with it certain kinds of cultural capital as well as learned skill and financial flexibility. Cultural capital could also influence dancers' interactions outside the club, especially knowledge of the appropriate level of sexualized comportment and appearance for different situations. Women who had large implants or kept up a "stripper look" or behavior in other spheres could face harassment because of this self-presentation and because of their visibility as women who transgressed expected codes of feminine display. Customers distinguished between dancers whom they found attractive in the club and dancers that they would find attractive in other spheres as well—the girl you could "take home to mom," the "girl next door."

In a buyer's market such as Laurelton, dancers were not only in competition depending on the level of club that they worked in, but also often with each other inside the same clubs. A dancer who could not compel the financial support of the patrons was not allowed the "refuge of being an object"—in many cases dancers reacted to a lack of interest from the patrons as if it was a personal failure. This is not to say that every man desired interactions with women who were considered conventionally attractive, as men's tastes vary. Further, just as some men eroticized the moral "lowness" of the dancers as compared to their chaste wives, other men eroticized the poverty or lowness of dancers who could not work in the upper-tier clubs (Frank 2002a). For these men, bodily perfection (or even its approximation) was a means of creating an unattainable object; it was the more approachable, imperfect dancer whose

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attentions held an erotic charge and whose performances were seen as more revelatory, authentic, and exciting.

Dancers were often caught in the middle of a tension between attraction and repulsion, sometimes quite self-consciously. They were presenting themselves not only as beautiful or sexually alluring, as acceptable sexual objects, but also as defiled by their public nudity and their acceptance of financial compensation for sexualized companionship and the voyeuristic pleasures of the customers. This aspect of the men's experiences became evident in statements the men made about the lowness of dancers in comparisons to their wives, girlfriends, or daughters, as well as in the ways that negotiations were made inside the clubs. Though the stigma of exotic dancing is significantly less than that of prostitution, and may arguably be lessening, there are still many social settings where stripping is seen as unacceptable, immoral, and degrading. Strippers have been denied custody of their children, humiliated in school, socially ostracized, and sometimes criminalized. Ableman writes that "shame can attach itself to very varied parts of the body":

It has been said that if a woman were surprised in her bath, she would cover, if she were a Moslem her face, if a Chinese her feet, if a Sumatran her knees, if a Samoan her navel, if a Laotian her breasts and if she were an Alaskan she would put the ornamental plug back in her lip. But the overwhelming majority of women, as well as men, would cover the genital parts. (1982: 43)

While Ableman is clearly generalizing widely, he is right that shame is not consistently associated with one part of the body or one kind of exposure. In strip clubs, what the men feel is shameful, and thus often exciting, may not match what causes the dancers to *feel* shame—bodily revelations in the clubs, after all, are carefully managed and not usually experienced as invasive. Still, when confronted with a woman who does not cover in the expected way or who is known to make public what "self-respecting" or "moral" women keep private, many people respond with fear, derision, and sometimes retaliation.

While the interactions that I am discussing do not involve sexual activity, they do involve viewing the female genitals—publicly and sometimes within close range. Nude clubs, in my experience, generated more anxieties than topless clubs. Some men, in fact, admitted that they rarely viewed female genitalia. Other men did not admit it but gave me many reasons to assume that this was the case, such as a complete lack of anatomical understanding, nervousness and discomfort, or an inability to look. Despite the fact that the male customers often insisted that "the female body is beautiful to me," for a man who is used to having sex in the dark (and even one who isn't), cultural and religious devaluations of the female body, especially the genitals, may play an important and exciting part in his experiences in strip clubs.

At one club, the women danced on tables that were illuminated from below, right above the customers' food and drinks (we joked about the fact that

we were still required to wear shoes by the Health Department and told the customers that they were lucky we waxed off most of our pubic hair). Certainly, the genitals are a reminder of the "abject" (urine, feces, the unclean, the impure), as they mark a boundary between inside and outside, forming the margins of the body (Nead 1992: 32). The surfaces of the genitals may be cosmetically enhanced through stage make-up or waxing, but the threat of contamination is still omnipresent. Indeed, as one moves into other realms of the sex industry these boundaries are redrawn, and a customer may come closer to, or further away from, such bodily thresholds.⁸ In Laurelton, where the dancing is completely nude, the man may find himself gazing up not only at a woman's labia during a table dance, but also at her anus—the "essence of lowness, of untouchability" (Miller 1997: 100). The anus, which was prominently displayed by the dancers in particular positions and angles, is also figured as a locus of possible homosexual activity—after all, it is the possible erasure of sexual difference, the only part of the genital area that looks similar on both sexes. Given that identifications are multiple, fluid, and even contradictory in fantasy life, and given that some of the men clearly identified with the position of "being desired," by the dancer or *as* the dancer, the fantasy of having one's anus seen (perhaps by a man) certainly has some complicated erotic potential.

Bodily fluids, of course, have social and cultural meaning, and are often seen as contaminating or dangerous (Douglas 1966; Kristeva 1982). The very fact that body fluids have been seen as contaminating, however, can also be a source of erotic excitement for some individuals, a fact that has long fueled pornography and erotica. Some customers told stories about witnessing a tampon string that had come untucked or a trail of blood on a woman's leg while she was dancing, a piece of toilet paper stuck to someone's genitals, or liquid "dripping" from the vulvas of women working in lower-tier clubs whom they suspected of having engaged in sexual relations before performing on stage. Other customers told stories about these kinds of events that they'd heard second- or third-hand, and such stories circulated in both upper- and lower-tier clubs almost like urban legends. The narratives and possibility alone fascinated some of the storytellers; certain others may have hoped that they might spontaneously observe such "leakages." For some men, then, ideas about defilement and purity—of or by either the dancer or themselves—play a role in their experiences in strip clubs. Sexualization, erotics, revelation, and social class are thus tangled up together in complicated patterns of both cultural and personal fantasy.

Nudity is produced, controlled, and made profitable by the state, the clubs, and the dancers in strip clubs. Through multiple social processes, bodily exposure comes to be meaningful and revelatory. While dancers exercise

agency in their everyday lives (as all of us do) and in their interactions in strip clubs, we must be cautious in analyzing these venues as celebratory sites, at least for now. As a dancer, I often found myself prohibited from expressing particular parts of my body, by the laws prohibiting me from touching interactions, and even by the customers, who wanted particular kinds of moves, poses, and looks. Working in a lower-tier club may mean that one sacrifices some income for more flexibility—this is a choice made by more privileged dancers, however. Those dancers who worked in the lower-tier clubs by necessity often expressed a desire to move up to the flashier, more upscale clubs because the money and the working conditions were better. Customer, dancer, and community beliefs about gender and social class influence the meanings that underlie the transactions negotiated in strip clubs and mean that the dynamics of concealment and revelation are part of wider social processes. To see nudity as essentially liberating or transgressive is to miss the many ways that the meanings of nudity, and the effects of nudity, are produced within existing social relations.

NOTES

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1. In addition to my experiences working in Laurelton, I also danced intermittently in an upper-tier topless gentleman's club in the Midwest for a number of years. Further, I have toured and observed in dozens of clubs across the United States.

2. For a detailed history of burlesque, see Allen 1991.

3. In my own experience, I have found that many of the regulations intended to prevent physical contact between the patrons and the entertainers tend to backfire. The clubs that I have worked in with the minimum of physical contact between the parties have been completely nude clubs that served alcohol and that permitted nude dances a foot away from the customer. With too many restrictions and prohibitions on nudity, a different customer base begins to frequent the clubs—sometimes men who care less about the pleasure of the voyeuristic spectacle and more about purchasing more sexual activities such as lap dances.

4. Interestingly, the model artist shows, or "*tableaux vivants*," which became popular during the mid-1800s took a slightly different view of what acceptable nudity was, featuring an actress who "assumed a stationary pose dressed in tights, transparent clothing, or nothing at all," and who changed positions occasionally to allow the audiences different and more risqué views. The focus here was on immobility rather than movement, though there was a transgressive, and illegal, incident in the 1840s in which "the performers abandoned their stationary pose and proceeded to dance the polka and minuet while completely nude" (Gilfoyle 1992: 127).

5. Vicki Funari (1997) describes dancing in a San Francisco peep show where the customers accepted her "abundant" body hair. In my experience, San Francisco strip clubs and peep shows are less conservative than those in the southern and midwestern United States.

6. House dancers are regular employees of the clubs in which they work (or independent contractors, depending on the state). Feature dancers, on the other hand, have traveling acts and pornographic credentials, and receive special billing from the clubs.

7. Elsewhere I have written extensively about the customers' desires for, claims to, and perceptions of authenticity in their interactions with the dancers (Frank 1998, 2002a). A discourse of authenticity is important to the male customers of strip clubs, regardless of whether their interactions in the club are actually real and sometimes even because of the fact that they are not real. The paradox that arises is that the incessant demands of some customers to make experiences "speak" the truth leads directly to the possibility that such demands might remain ultimately unmet, a contradiction of which many regulars are aware. I argue that authenticity cannot really be discovered in a place, an object, or an experience—it is a psychological process, derived from the interaction between self and other (imagined or actual). Unlike some theorists of postmodernity and consumption, I do not believe that a concern with authenticity is disappearing—although the terms within which it is understood may mutate over time. The concern with authenticity will not disappear among those engaged in commodified interactions or touristic practice, along with other kinds of social interactions, because authenticity is ultimately a relational problem.

8. Even within a category like pornography, of course, there are boundaries that are drawn and redrawn. As Laura Kipnis argues, the humor found in *Hustler* "seems animated by the desire to violate what Douglas describes as 'pollution' taboos and rituals . . . a society's set of beliefs, rituals, and practices having to do with dirt, order, and hygiene (and by extension, the pornographic)" (Kipnis 1996: 143). The social transgressions of *Hustler* are thus quite different from those of *Playboy*. A recent series of hardcore pornographic films from Extreme Associates exploits the allure of this phenomenon. The films, entitled *Cocktails*, were directed by a woman and feature female performers drinking various mixtures of bodily fluids—saliva, semen, enema fluids, urine, etc.

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