For a Stripper

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.6135
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She has dressed in red and black. Her boyfriend
Smokes and periodically looks at his colorful
Jeweled watch or gazes into the blue
Screen of his cell phone. Meanwhile, she considers
Me where I sit by her at the bar, and somewhere inside
The desire that I be naked stirs
Before her. This is a private
Dance. What does it cost? What do I take
Off that she has not seen beneath already?
My ratty shirt. My leather
Brogues. My glasses. The clear world
I teach how to handle words.
She has learned to wear her body
As I never will. She carries that single word,
Her first name, alone
To a stage like a dream in its absurdity.
She finds herself as she always is
Or as she is then only: bad and good together, shame
And innocence—so close in a rich dance of flesh
To the carnation-red cloth she has
Kept on tonight. So close, she does not know
She knows how God might see us—
Musing distantly, immune
To our concealments, her own
Powers veiled below
All beautiful nature, another
Nature there. She only knows

She must call us forth, as to an altar, one by one
Offering in her name what love
She has given us for her world.