

### *For a Stripper*

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.