

a forty-eight year old woman who has had unsuccessful operations on her knees, because they are unable to support her body weight? Are we to believe that there are no medical implications of weight? The important points made about the fitness industry and medical studies are lost when our credulity is strained, and we are caught in a tautological argument; to question any of the premises is to demonstrate fat-oppressive attitudes.

Notwithstanding, most of the articles address issues of concern to therapists. The effect of the process of dieting on metabolism is fully outlined, providing the reader with an understanding of why individuals gain weight despite average or restrained eating following a cycle of weight loss. Many of the articles cite appropriate resources for fat people, including the unique exercise program "Great Shape," such support groups as "Ample Opportunity," and magazines such as *Radiance*. Undoubtedly, this publication is most effective in the way it challenges us to question our non-conscious bias in our therapeutic encounters, and least effective in the way in which it avoids articles which could challenge the underlying premise of "Fat Oppression and Psychotherapy."

Carol L. Hill
Mount Saint Vincent University

Revelations: Essays on Striptease and Sexuality. Margaret Dragu and A.S.A. Harrison. *London, ON: Nightwood Editions, 1988, Pp. 175 paperback.*

What can one say about a book that begins with the proud statement, "Canada has the best striptease in the world," and ends with a ringing call to consider striptease as "one of the few shrines that exist in our culture for the representation of sexuality"?

Striptease does, of course, represent sexuality. And in this peculiar book, it is the stripper Dragu who explores the intricate ways in which strippers try to represent themselves or their experience of female sexuality, while male customers and bar managers imagine that they are getting "raw" sex, unmediated by culture. Dragu's tight and poetic prose evokes a world in which women attempt to use a sexist institution for their own purposes — to gain access to men's "entertainment" dollars while asserting their own style in fashion and in sexual gestures.

She carefully distinguishes among different stripping styles; for instance:

the New Waver wants to annihilate all the things the Burlesque Queen is dedicated to preserving. But as fast as she is smashing traditional aesthetics, she is presenting new ones. Anti-gracefulness and anti-beauty veer to an obsession with a signature sneer... Ultimately, the radically opposed camps of the Burlesque Queen and the New Wave stripper meet in an obsession with fetishistic symbols and props. Opposite camps meet at the icon supermarket.

The non-stripper amateur sociologist Harrison, by contrast, works not with individual strippers or distinct styles, but with the simple categories of puritanism versus liberation, clothed versus naked. Harrison merges the wonderful women we meet in Dragu's sections of the book into one abstract Stripper who, in turn, is but a signifier for Sexual Freedom. Making no distinction between the interests of male bar managers and owners and those of the female employees, she praises the institution of striptease for taking sexuality out of the pre-freudian cave of repression. She breathlessly proclaims, "astonishing as it may seem, sexuality in women is one of the biggest taboos of our civilization." For her, the public acceptance of striptease would be a sure sign of women's sexual emancipation.

Without explicitly theorizing the stripper's nakedness as a form of dress, Dragu suggests that taking off one's clothes on a stage does not give the public access to the essential truth about sex and the body. She criticizes "hippie" strippers who refuse high heels and pretend to be "natural," and revels precisely in the "artificial" (stiletto heels, glitter, velcro). By contrast, Harrison imagines that the point of stripping is to reveal a natural "truth" through nakedness. Not understanding that nakedness, especially ritualized public nakedness, is as much of a cultural construction as a business suit, she cannot tell us why strippers begin with lots of clothes on, or what might make certain acts affirming or demeaning for the stripper.

The sex trades in Canada have received very little attention from both scholarly and popular writers. Readers interested in the world of stripping may well want to buy this book. The chapters authored by Dragu are well worth it.

Mariana Valverde
York University