

Buying and Selling the "Girlfriend Experience"

The Social and Subjective Contours of Market Intimacy

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In the back room of a discreetly furnished apartment in a quiet San Francisco neighborhood, I am sitting on a brown leather sofa talking with Amanda, who has just said good-bye to the day's first customer. We drink tea as the early afternoon sunshine streams into the room, illuminating many overstuffed bookcases, an exercise bicycle, and Amanda herself—a slender woman in her late thirties with dark hair and serious eyes. Smiling slightly, she shrugs when I ask her how the session with her client went.

Actually, I spent most of the time giving him a backrub, and we also spent a lot of time talking before we had sex. In the end, we went over [time] by about seven minutes. . . . You know it's really funny to me when people say that I'm selling my body. Of all the work I've done, this isn't abusive to my body. Most of my clients are computer industry workers—about half. Sometimes I ask myself: what about their bodies? These men spend 40 hours a week hunched over a desk. They live alone, eat alone, drive to work alone. Other than seeing me, they don't seem to even have time for a social life.

Amanda goes on to explain that today's client was a marketing executive for a prominent Silicon Valley software company. This client is a "regular," someone she has seen before, who has often complained to her that he is overworked and too busy to meet women. I wonder aloud how it is that he nonetheless has the time to drive two and a half hours on his lunch break to come and see her. Amanda observes with bemusement that for the majority of her client pool—educated, professional men who have contacted her through an on-line ad—such paradoxes are the norm.

This chapter is about the ways in which recent transformations in economic and cultural life have played themselves out at the most intimate of levels: the individual

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experience of bodily attributes and integrity, and the meanings afforded to sexual expression. The lens through which I examine these transitions is sexual commerce, the exchange of sex for money in the globalized, late-capitalist marketplace. My contention is that experiences such as those of Amanda and her clients reflect and thus offer insight into broader trends at work within intimate life in the contemporary West.¹

Once largely restricted to face-to-face interactions and the small-scale circulation of pornographic images, sexual commerce has grown to include a vast and ever-expanding range of commercially available products and experiences—fetish clubs; live sex shows; erotic massage; escort agencies; telephone and cyber-sex contacts; "drive-through" striptease venues; sexual "emporiums" featuring lap and wall dancing; sex tourism to developing countries and within global cities; and all variety of sexually explicit texts, videos, and pictures, in print and on-line—what is purportedly a more than \$20-billion-a-year industry, and a mainstay of both first and third world economies (Weitzer 2000; Kempadoo and Doezema 1998; Lopez 2000). By examining this growth and diversification of sexual commerce from the perspectives of the purveyors of sexual services and their consumers, my aim has been to articulate a political economy of sexual practices and desires. By detailing the relationship between money and sex at the "micro" level of bodies and subjectivities, I seek to reveal the relationship between economy and desire more broadly.

My argument is that the global restructuring of capitalist production and investment that has taken place since the 1970s has had consequences that are more profound and more intimate than most economic sociologists ever choose to consider.² The desires that drive the rapidly expanding and diversifying international sex trade have emanated from corporate-fueled consumption, an increase in tourism and business travel, and the symbiotic relationship between information technologies and the privatization of commercial consumption.³ At the same time, the rise in service occupations and temporary work, as well as an increase in labor migrations from developing to developed countries, have fueled the growth and diversification of sexual labor. For many sectors of the population, these shifts have resulted in new configurations of familial life as well as in new erotic dispositions, ones that the market is well poised to satisfy.

Old and New Markets in Sexual Labor

To historically situate my claims about the "newness" of late capitalist configurations of eroticism and desire, I begin with a brief review of some of the scholarship that documents the shifts in the social organization and meaning of prostitution that have taken place in the United States and Western Europe over the past few centuries. As social historians such as Judith Walkowitz (1980), Ruth Rosen (1982), and Barbara Hobson (1987) have pointed out, despite the frequent equation of "prostitution" with the "oldest profession," what many of us typically think of as prostitution has not existed for very long at all. The rise of large-scale, commercialized prostitution in the West emerged only with modern-industrial capitalism and its attendant fea-

tures in the late 19th century: urbanization, the expansion of wage labor, and the decline of the extended-kin based "traditional family." These structural transformations brought with them new cultural ideologies of gender and sexuality, and new symbolic boundaries between public and private life. Accentuated gender differences produced a "double standard" in sexual relations, dichotomizing women along class lines. While white, bourgeois, married women practiced sexual restraint in the private sphere of the home, many working-class women and women of color joined men in the public sphere as wage laborers and sexually available prostitutes.⁴ By the early 20th century, numerous "vice commissions" had been created to study—and thereby constitute—the social problem of modern prostitution.

By contrast, what historians typically refer to as "premodern" forms of sexual commerce were self-organized, occasional exchanges in which women traded sexual favors during limited periods of hardship. Premodern prostitution was small in scale, frequently premised on barter, and generally took place within the participants' own homes and communities. Only with the onset of modern-industrial capitalism did large numbers of women find themselves sequestered in a space that was physically and socially separate, thereby affixing them with the permanently stigmatizing identity of "prostitute." During the Progressive Era in the United States, red-light districts were officially shut down and the sex trade was criminalized, but this did not fundamentally alter the meaning of modern prostitution, which marked the female prostitute (but not her male customer) as a criminal outsider. Instead, associations with the image of a dangerous and gritty underworld were dramatically exacerbated, and prostitutes now had to cope with the added stigma of criminality.

The terms *modern* and *premodern* facilitate the comprehension of social realities that are in fact much messier than this simple categorization permits. Prototypically premodern forms of sexual barter never disappeared entirely but exist to this day as the dominant mode of commercial sexual exchange in many impoverished communities throughout the world, and in the sex-for-drugs barter economy of the inner city. The terms, nevertheless, capture something important in terms of large-scale social change. They highlight the ways in which new forms and meanings of sexual exchange emerge at particular historical junctures, coexisting with, and at times eclipsing, the forms that preceded them.

The globalized, late capitalist era of the late 20th and early 21st centuries has witnessed a similar transitional moment in paradigms of commercial sexual exchange. In postindustrial cities such as San Francisco, Amsterdam, and Stockholm, the boundaries of vice have been remapped in such a way so as to curtail the "deviant underworld" of modern prostitution, while the commercialization of sexual services overall has expanded.⁵

For example, in San Francisco, by the late 1990s the nine-square-block area of the City that had housed the city's primary street prostitution strolls for over 75 years was on its way to being incorporated into Union Square, the principal tourist district, as fashionable restaurants and high-priced apartment complexes continued to widen their spread. At the same time, advertisements for prostitution in the newspapers and through the new on-line services exploded, as did prostitution in 11 of the City's 17 legal strip clubs. Many of the very same women and men who had

been working on the streets now began to get cell phones and to take out ads, or to look for work in indoor venues. Unlike streetwalking, the new markets in sexual commerce were not concentrated in a *de facto* urban red-light district but were dispersed throughout the city, housed in inconspicuous Victorians in quiet residential neighborhoods, or relocated to indoor businesses in the city's suburban periphery.⁶ In similar fashion, the number of licensed massage parlors in the city overall was actually increasing, despite the police crackdown on Asian-run massage parlors in the Tenderloin. The explosion of commercial sexual services was met by an almost complete lack of concern by the police, despite their intense focus upon the prostitution of illegal migrants and on visible streetwalking.

The transformation that was under way in San Francisco did not merely concern the fate of a few hundred street prostitutes and their customers but was about a more wide-sweeping reallocation of urban space, in which the inner city was reclaimed by the white middle classes, while those at the social margins were pushed to the city's literal periphery (Smith 1996; Pred 2000; Solnit and Schwartzberg 2000). Although the neighborhood residents actively opposed flagrant and visible prostitution on their streets, it is important to note that, in contrast to moral reform movements of eras past, they did not issue a denunciation of the intermingling of sexuality and the market.⁷ To the contrary, the young, white professionals who flooded the city during the 1990s to work in high-tech, multimedia, and other industries were at the forefront of a new economy in sexual services, by creating a demand for them and facilitating new conditions of production. The sex trade did not disappear but instead changed its predominant form: the subterranean world of street prostitution, along with its classic paraphernalia—the pimp, the police officer, the prostitute as "public" and therefore disreputable woman—had begun to recede into the distance, while an array of spatially dispersed sexual services emerged to take its place. In table 9.1, I summarize the key spatial and political transformations of postindustrial sexual commerce, as well as the subjective components of these changes that I elaborate upon in the following discussion.

The Subjective Contours of Market Intimacy

The economic transformations of recent decades have restructured the social geography of sex work and the subjective meanings that guide the experience from within. While a fair amount has been written about the ways in which the new globalized economy has spawned a lucrative traffic in women and children from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and more recently, Eastern Europe (Demleitner 2001; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002; Bales 1999), I would like to point to a different level at which new global economic realities have been significant to the development of the sex trade in the West. They have contributed to a transformation in practices and meanings (what we might think of as the subjective contours of market intimacy) for participants on both sides of the commercial sex-work encounter.

In modern prostitution, what was typically sold and bought was an expedient and emotionally contained exchange of cash for sexual release.⁸ To survive in the trade, prostitutes learned to develop strategies to distance themselves from their la-

Table 9.1. Paradigmatic distinctions between modern-industrial prostitution and post-industrial sexual commerce

With the relocation of sexual labor from the street to indoor venues such as private homes, rented apartments, and "gentle men's clubs," the quality of sexual labor

that is entailed is also transformed.¹⁰ Sex workers increasingly emphasize the centrality of emotionally engaged conversation to their work, as well as a willingness to participate in a diversity of sexual activities (e.g., bodily caresses, full-body touching, receiving "pleasure," all of which can require a tremendous amount of emotional labor on the part of the sex worker), and bestowing mouth-to-mouth kisses. Compared to the labor of streetwalkers, the labor of indoor, self-employed sex workers is likely to require a larger investment of time with each client (typically an hour, as opposed to 15 minutes for streetwalkers), to take place within the confines of one's own home, and to remain outside the purview of the criminal justice system. Contemporary "intimacy providers" (as some in the industry have taken to calling themselves) charge by the hour rather than for specified acts, so their sexual labor is diffuse and expansive, rather than delimited and expedient.¹¹

In contrast to the quick, impersonal sexual release associated with the street-level sex trade, much of the new variety of sexual labor resides in the provision of what I call "bounded authenticity"—the sale and purchase of authentic emotional and physical connection. Katharine Frank (2002) has similarly observed the premium placed on authenticity in contemporary strip clubs, arguing that clients' desire for the real and the authentic is palpable even amid the postmodern simulations of make-up, costumes, breast implants, and stage names (not to mention cash exchange). Based on ethnographic observations and interviews, Frank documents the numerous ways that clients seek to signal the authenticity of their commercial sexual transactions with strippers, including payments through gifts or cocktails (more personal than cash transactions), and the persistent interest in dancers' real lives and identities.¹² As both Frank's research and my own make clear, what is being bought and sold is something quite other than an ephemeral consumer indulgence, yet also distinct from premodern forms of sexual exchange that naturalize the provision of nonsexual forms of intimacy. In postindustrial sexual commerce, emotional authenticity is incorporated explicitly into the economic contract.

For many sex workers, the provision of bounded authenticity resides in fulfilling clients' fantasies of sensuous reciprocity through the self-conscious simulation of desire, pleasure, and erotic interest. For others, it may involve the emotional and physical labor of manufacturing genuine (if fleeting) libidinal and emotional ties, endowing their clients with a feeling of desirability, esteem, or even love.

When I first started out, I enjoyed the sex. I'd go to work and "have sex." Now, I don't have that association that much. But my clients seem to think that being a nice guy means being a good lover. They do things to me that they should do with a girlfriend. Like they ask me what I'm into, and apologize for coming too soon. So I need to play along. They have no idea that for sex workers, the best client is the one that comes immediately.

—Amanda, 39, independent escort

I have been told by certain clients that what I do is better than what the psychiatrists and psychologists do. I had one client who was very fat, kind of unkempt, and really, really ugly. Apparently, the week before he saw me, he

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had gone to see two escorts that had turned him down. They told him that not even for money would they fuck him. But I did, plus I made him feel really, really good. So he thanked me. And he said to me, "Don't ever let anyone try to tell you that what you're doing isn't important work. I was lonely, tired, and I needed someone to make me feel good, and that's what you did. What you provide is the most valuable service."

—Michael, 37, independent escort

What I've noticed is that a lot of people really want to be witnessed when they come. They really want to feel that. You know, I totally get their desire and I want to be able to offer that. And so what I've learned how to do is to look at them deeply and very, very lovingly. . . . For them, it feels great, like it's so personal, like girlfriend stuff. But I feel that I'm just offering them . . . love from the earth, coming up my feet and coming out to them. So they get love. I'm just channeling love.

—Zoey, 30, erotic masseuse

In apparent contrast to indoor sex workers' accounts of the premium their clients place on erotic authenticity were comments from the clients themselves. During our interviews, they repeatedly stressed to me that one of the chief virtues of commercial sexual exchange is that the encounter is clear and bounded. In prior historical epochs, this "bounded" quality may have provided men with an unproblematic and readily available sexual outlet to supplement a relationship with a pure and asexual wife in the domestic sphere. What is unique to contemporary client narratives, however, is the explicitly stated preference for this type of bounded intimate engagement over other relational forms. Paid sex is neither a sad substitute for something that one would ideally choose to obtain in a nonmarket romantic relationship nor the inevitable outcome of a traditionalist Madonna/whore double standard.

Many of the clients I interviewed described a preference for a life constructed around living alone, intimacy through close friendships, and time-efficient, safely contained commercial sexual encounters. As such, they provide us with a concrete example of the profound reorganization of personal life that has occurred in postindustrial urban centers and nationwide during the past 30 or so years. Demographic transformations such as a decline in marriage rates, a doubling in the divorce rate, and a 60 percent increase in the number of single-person households have had subjective and erotic consequences that few sociologists have paused to consider.¹³

Harold Holzman and Sharon Pines (1982) have argued that it is the fantasy of a mutually desired, special, or even romantic sexual encounter that clients are pursuing in the prostitution transaction—something notably distinct from a purely mechanical sex act and from an unbounded, private-sphere romantic entanglement. They observed that the clients in their study emphasized that the warmth and friendliness of the sex-workers as characteristics that were at least as important to them as the particulars of physical appearance (Holzman and Pines 1982).

The clients that I interviewed were also likely to express variants of the statement, "If her treatment is cold or perfunctory, I'm not interested." They were con-

sistently critical of sex workers who are "clock watchers," "too rushed and pushy," who "don't want to hug and kiss," or who "ask for a tip mid sex act." For clients, successful commercial transactions are those in which the market basis of the exchange serves a crucial delimiting function that facilitates—rather than inhibits—the fantasy of authentic interpersonal connection.

One of the most sought-after features in the prostitution encounter has thus become the "girlfriend experience," or GFE. Among both clients and providers, the GFE has often been described in the following way (and here I quote from the explanation of one sex worker who specializes in this service):

A typical non-GFE session with an escort includes one or more of the basic acts required for the customer to reach a climax at least one time, and little else. A GFE-type session, on the other hand, might proceed much more like a nonpaid encounter between two lovers. This may include a lengthy period of foreplay in which the customer and the escort touch, rub, fondle, massage, and perhaps even kiss passionately. A GFE session might also include activities where the customer works as hard to stimulate the escort as she works to stimulate him. Finally, a GFE session usually has a period of cuddling and closeness at the end of the session, rather than each partner jumping up and hurrying out as soon as the customer is finished.

Ads for escorts in print media and on-line now feature the GFE experience in their advertisements, and there are entire web pages where people who specialize in this service can advertise.

Note, however, that the GFE is not, from the client's perspective, a sad substitute for a real girlfriend. The attachment of a monetary fee to the transaction provides a crucial boundary for both client and sex worker; the significance of which is illustrated by the consequences that ensue when boundaries are violated. Ananda, one of the few sex workers I have spoken with who admitted to occasionally looking for dating partners among her client pool, said that she had given up offering her preferred clients "freebies" or "bargain rates," because the offer inevitably met with negative results.

"They pretend to be flattered, but they never come back! If you offer them anything but sex for money they flee. There was one client I had who was so sexy, a yoga teacher, really fun. . . . Since good sex is a rare thing, I told him I'd see him for \$20 (my normal rate is \$250). Another guy, he was so sexy, I told him, 'Come for free.' Both of them freaked out and never returned. The men want an emotional connection, but they don't want any obligations. They don't believe they can have no-strings-attached sex, which is why they pay. They'd rather pay than get it for free.

Christopher, a male sex worker who had also once tried to redefine his relationship with a client, recounted something similar: "I called a trick once because I wanted to have sex with him again. . . . We agreed in advance that it was just going

to be sex for sex's sake, not for pay, and that was the last time I ever heard from him!"

The notion of bounded authenticity I am offering here has been misinterpreted by some critics of prostitution who continue to regard the commercial sexual encounter from within a paradigm of romantic love that is premised upon monogamous domesticity and intertwined life trajectories. Thus, Carole Pateman (1988:199) asks why, if not for the sake of pure domination would "15 to 25 percent of the customers of Birmingham prostitutes demand what is known in the trade as 'hand relief,' something that could presumably be self-administered. Yet as one client insisted, after explaining to me that he studied and worked all the time, and consequently did not have time to pursue a traditional relationship, 'It's more real and human than would be satisfying oneself alone.'" This client reveals an underlying erotic paradigm that is premised on the discrete sexual encounter and thus compatible with the rhythms of his individually oriented daily life. Increasingly, what is true for him is also true for other men like him, with similar white, middle-class, sociodemographic profiles.

Transformations in Economy, Kinship, and Sexuality

Finally, I would like to consider some of the broader social implications of the shift in commercial sexual markets I have been describing. Table 9.2 summarizes the theoretical model I developed to understand these transitions, but I do not intend to suggest an absolutist, teleological model of history. What is crucial to recognize about the aspects of social life summarized under the heading "Late Capitalism" in the final column is that they do not supplant the features of the prior historical epochs but take their place (however comfortably or uncomfortably) alongside. As with the series of economic, familial, and sexual transformations ushered in by modernity, the shift to a postmodern sexual ethic has been gradual and highly uneven. Nearly a quarter of Americans still live in nuclear families, and more than half continue to work in "non-flexible" jobs.¹⁴ In the most recent national survey of sexual attitudes and behaviors in the United States, nearly 15 percent of those surveyed stated that they believe sex should be for procreation only.¹⁵ Despite the evident frailty of marriage and long-term relationships in late-capitalist society, romantic love of the modernist variety remains a crucial repository of meaning for significant numbers of individuals. At present, there is a fierce political struggle being waged in the United States between the "old" and "new" regimes of intimacy, which has crystallized most visibly around the issues of gay marriage and abortion (both of which signal a distance from the "procreative" normative orientation toward sex).

Nor do I intend to suggest that the defining features of what I have termed the "postindustrial" paradigm of sexual commerce have emerged without important historical precedents. The tradition of the European courtesan (prized as much for conversation and culture as for her erotic capacities) and the "patronage prostitution" of Japanese geishas and Indian *dandasis* are but two well-known instances of emotionally expansive yet explicitly transactional erotic arrangements (Griffin 2001; Dalby 1983; Downer 2001; Ramberg 2006).¹⁶ Although I contend that contempo-

Table 9.2: Paradigms of economy, kinship, and sexual ethics in three historical periods

	Early modern capitalism	Modern-industrial capitalism	Late capitalism
Economy	Domestic production	Wage labor	Services, finance, and information; flexible accumulation
Kinship	Extended kin networks	Nuclear families	Recombinant families, isolable individuals
Sexual ethic	Procreative	Amative-companionate	Bounded authenticity

rary commercial sexual transactions incorporate some decidedly new features—in terms of their formal organization and in terms of the explicitly bounded and commoditized (as opposed to naturalized) quality of the intimacy that is transacted—sex workers have clearly traded in capacities other than sex throughout much of history. The wide range of such cases suggests that the “Taylorized sex” (a term coined by the historian Alain Corbin to describe the concentration, rationalization, and standardization of prostitution in France during the interwar years) featured within the paradigm of modern-industrial prostitution may itself constitute an exception, rather than the rule (Corbin 1990:338).

Although sociologists and historians of sexuality have amply described the “modernization” of sex, they have barely begun to theorize its “postmodernization” in the contemporary period. Theorists such as Manuel Castells (1996), Steven Seidman (1992), and Zygmunt Bauman (1998) do begin to point us in this direction. When Castells speaks of the “normalization” of sex, when Seidman refers to “unbounded eros,” and when Bauman describes “the postmodern erotic revolution,” they are most certainly evoking something similar. As Bauman writes, “Sex free of reproductive consequences and stubborn, lingering love attachments can be securely enclosed in the frame of an episode, as it will engrave no deep grooves on the constantly re-groomed face being thus insured against limiting the freedom of further experimentation” (1998:27). In a sweeping journey through global sexual politics, emergent sexual subcultures, and different varieties of globalized sex commerce, Dennis Altman has perhaps gone furthest, declaring it his aim to “connect two of the dominant preoccupations of current social science and popular debate”: globalization and the preoccupation with sex (2001:1). Altman excepted, most of the existing efforts to link sexuality and globalization are premised on a naturalism I seek to avoid. In these analyses, “sex” is something that exists beneath the social layers of human existence, by which it can either be constrained or freed. Although I diverge from Foucault (1978) in granting primacy to material conditions, with him I suggest that there is no “true” form of sex that lurks beneath its socially paradigmatic expressions.

Meanwhile, social historians such as Kristin Luker (1984) and John D’Emilio

(1983) have linked the “relational” model of sexuality (also referred to as “amative” or “companionate”) to the rise of modern romance and the nuclear family under capitalism, contrasting it with the prototypically procreative orientation of preindustrial society. Thus, Luker (1984) has deciphered contemporary abortion debates in the United States in terms of a contest between procreative and relational worldviews, linking women’s ideological positions on the question of abortion to disparate sets of material interests. In similar fashion, D’Emilio (1983) has explained the ways in which the peculiarly modern notion of gay identity could emerge only within a sexual ethic premised upon intimate relationship, since both were products of the individualizing freedom from domestic production and extended kin networks that was provided by a system of wage labor.

Following D’Emilio’s analysis of the emergence of a relational sexual ethic during the rise of industrial capitalism, I propose that the proliferation of forms of service work, the globalized information economy, and postmodern families peopled by isolable individuals have produced another profound transformation in the erotic sphere. Both the traditional “procreative” and the modern “companionate” models of sexuality are increasingly being supplemented by a sexual ethic that is premised on bounded authenticity. Instead of being predicated on marital or even durable relationships, this sexual ethic derives its primary meaning from the depth of physical sensation and from emotionally bounded erotic exchange. Whereas domestic sphere, relational sexuality derived its meaning from its ideological opposition to the marketplace, bounded authenticity bears no antagonism to the sphere of public commerce. It is available for sale and purchase just as readily as any other form of commercially packaged leisure activity. When sex workers advertise themselves as “girlfriends for hire” and describe the ways in which they offer not merely eroticism but authentic intimate connection for sale in the marketplace, when overworked high-tech professionals discuss their pursuit of emotional authenticity within the context of paid sexual transactions, and when municipal politicians strategize about the best means to eliminate the eyecore of street prostitution while encouraging the development of corporate “gentlemen’s clubs,” we can witness the unfolding of precisely this transformation.

Conclusion

What is the significance of the transformations that I describe for sex workers and clients, as well as for other inhabitants of postindustrial cities? In this chapter I have sought to complicate the view that the commodification of sexuality is transparently equitable with emotionally diminished erotic experience. Such an argument does not do justice to the ways in which the spheres of public and private, intimacy and commerce, have interpenetrated one another and thereby been mutually transformed, making the late-capitalist consumer marketplace one potential arena for securing authentic yet bounded forms of interpersonal connection.

Venturing into modernity, and postmodernity, may be seen as the ambivalent privilege of individuals from specific classes, racial-ethnic backgrounds, regions, and nations. It should thus come as no surprise to find that more men than women,

more middle-class professionals than working-class people, more of the young than the old, and more whites than blacks have been among the first social groups to fully partake in the sexual ethos that I have termed "bounded authenticity."¹⁷ A thorough assessment of the meanings of the incursion of the market into intimate life can therefore be a difficult and contradictory task—particularly for women. What Arlie Hochschild has termed "women's uneasy love affair with capitalism" (1997:229) is made all the more acute when we consider that many of the flourishing sectors of the late-capitalist service economy—such as child care, domestic labor, and sex work—are commercialized refinements of services that women have historically provided for free. As service industry workers, women now conduct this labor within the context of market-generated (as opposed to status-based) social hierarchies. As consumers, women as well as men are gradually gaining access to the particular conveniences and pleasures—and emotional confinement—of commercially mediated interpersonal relations.¹⁸ The emergence and success of new sexual markets provides evidence that female, as well as male sexuality, is currently being reconstructed as a series of isolable techniques for the provision of personal meaning and pleasure, as opposed to an expression of enduring connection with a particular individual. For increasing numbers of women as well as men, passion, emotional authenticity, and connection have not disappeared but have been packed ever more tightly into market commodities.

Notes

1. Ethnographic fieldwork and face-to-face interviews were conducted with a diverse array of sex workers (both female and male), clients, police officers, and municipal officials in San Francisco, Stockholm, and Amsterdam between 1994 and 2001. The names and identifying features of all individuals that I quote here have been changed to protect their anonymity. Of the multitude of recent works on "global economic transformations," two massive edited collections (see Held and McGraw 2000; Lechner and Boli 2000) are indicative of this omission. While they include sections on the implications for politics, culture, and identity of the body or sexuality, Harvey's (1990) landmark treatment of the transition from Fordism to flexible accumulation and Sassen's (1998) analysis of the emergence of significance of global cities also lack sustained discussions of the sexual domain.
2. By the "international sex trade," I am not referring to a coordinated social or economic network but to a highly diversified set of dispersed transactions during this period, but male prostitution was also prevalent in urban centers during this period, and more socially salient banner of "homosexuals" in sociological, medico-psychological, and political discourses (Weeks 1981).
3. By "postindustrial cities" I am referring to cities with local economies weighted heavily toward tourism, business and personal services, and high technology (Smith 1996; Milkman and Dwyer 2002; Swedish Institute 2001).
4. My colleague Elizabeth Wood, who similarly observed the suburbanization of sexual commerce in one mid-sized New England city, has referred to this pattern as the "strip-mall" phenomenon (personal communication).
5. For an analysis of evangelical women's moral reform movements in the 19th century, see Hobson (1987). Although contemporary Christian Right and radical feminist groups (as exemplified by as the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women) object to the intermingling of sexuality and the market in private as well as in public, articulating a condemnation of

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- prostitution that is strikingly similar to those of earlier moral reform movements, the neighborhood residents in San Francisco did not espouse this view.
8. Laura Agustín has described a transition from "pre-industrial" to "industrial" forms of sex work for migrants from Latin America who come to Europe to work in brothels: "Displaying [her]self nude in a window in Amsterdam for fourteen hours a day, or standing next to a road in the Casa de Campo in Madrid . . . are forms of prostitution which might be described as 'industrial,' compared with types at home that perhaps involve dancing and drinking with clients in a more leisurely manner and having sex with two or three in one night" (2000:156).
 9. The phrase *emotional labor* derives from the work of Arlie Hochschild (1983:7). She defines the term as that which is required "to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others. . . . This kind of labor calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality."
 10. As Katherine Liepe-Levinson (2002) observes, the number of strip clubs (or "gentlemen's clubs") in major U.S. cities roughly doubled between 1987 and 1992.
 11. For similar observations, see Lever and Dolnick (2000).
 12. See also Bernstein 2001 for a fuller discussion of the significance of authenticity to prostitutes' clients.
 13. By 1988, nearly a third of American households consisted of a single individual. In Western European countries, single-person households have been the most rapidly growing household type since the 1960s, with from 25 percent (in the United Kingdom) to 36 percent (in Sweden) of the population living alone (Sorrentino 1990; Kellogg and Mintz 1993). In the United States the percentage of unmarried adults rose from 28 percent to 37 percent between 1970 and 1988. And according to the most recent census data in the United States, by 2000, less than a quarter of Americans were living in nuclear families (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1989, 1992, 2001).
 14. Casella (2001) defines "non-flexible" employment as full-time, year-round, salaried work with over three or more years in the same company.
 15. On the distribution of "procreational," "relational," and "recreational" normative orientations toward sexuality in the United States, see Laumann et al. (1994).
 16. Historians have also noted that commodities other than sex were offered in the luxury bordellos of 18th-century Paris as well as in 19th-century China, where clients would come to dine, to socialize, or to share confidences with the madam (Nörberg 1998; Hershatter 1997).
 17. See Laumann et al. 1994, 518–529, for a detailed statistical breakdown of the correlation between normative sexual orientation and membership in master status groups in the United States.
 18. Although the bounded authenticity that women seek in their erotic lives is not necessarily provided by the direct purchase of commercial sexual services, there is nonetheless a growing market in sexually evocative romance novels, sex toys, "woman friendly" pornographic texts and performances, and sex classes and sexual advice manuals for female consumers (Snitow 1983; Loe 1998; Juffer 1998; Hardy 2001).

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10

Love Work in a Tourist Town

Dominican Sex Workers and Resort Workers Perform at Love

Denise Brennan

"A Double Wedding" and "Love in the Caribbean," the news headlines read.¹ The local event in Sosia—a tourist town on the north coast of the Dominican Republic—had become national news. Two white English female tourists met—and soon married—two Afro-Dominican male resort workers in a shared ceremony. They married two months after they had first met at the all-inclusive hotel in Sosia where the men worked and the women had been guests. The marriage ceremony took place after the men had been refused entry into England. Even though the men had tourist visas and all the necessary paperwork, when they landed at Heathrow, British immigration officials detained them, questioned them separately, and decided that they were so young, at 18 years old, that they might have the intention of overstaying their tourist visas and looking for work. But it was also on the issue of love—and its implausibility—that the officials denied the Dominican men entrance. "The authorities concluded that it was not reasonable that two young English women, with less than 15 days to get to know the men, would have sent two tickets to visit England, with no other additional motives," a leading Dominican news magazine reported (Victoria 1994:45). If officials reasoned that they were not really in love, they must have seen the men as pretending or performing being in love.²

President Joaquín Balaguer issued a statement on the wedding, the media led with the story, and neighborhood gossip in Sosia picked up on this event. The wedding became symbolic of how the Dominican Republic sells itself through tourism. Dominicans and foreign residents of Sosia alike declared, "There is no way the men love these women." "These guys are sankies, they want visas; that's it." By characterizing the men as sankies—essentially male sex workers—Sosia assumed the men were in the relationships solely for material gain. This assumption is clear in a cartoon from a now-defunct Dominican satirical magazine that lampoons the overnight weddings. The cartoon plays up the "predatory" side of the Dominican men in featuring in the second frame the mother of one of the English women crying, "Cuidado con los Sand Key Pants Kids!" (Be careful with the sanky-pankies!). It is just as illustrative of the presumed naïveté of the English tourists, who are portrayed as initially rejecting the advances of the predatory sanky-pankies. This cartoon, and