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Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity, and the Commerce of Sex (Worlds of Desire: The Chicago Series on Sexuality, Gender, and Culture)

Elizabeth Bernstein

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Generations of social thinkers have assumed that access to legitimate paid employment and a decline in the 'double standard' would eliminate the reasons behind women's participation in prostitution. Yet in both the developing world and in postindustrial cities of the West, sexual commerce has continued to flourish, diversifying along technological, spatial, and social lines. In this deeply engaging and theoretically provocative study, Elizabeth Bernstein examines the social features that undergird the expansion and diversification of commercialized sex, demonstrating the ways that postindustrial economic and cultural formations have spawned rapid and unforeseen changes in the forms, meanings, and spatial organization of sexual labor.

Drawing upon dynamic and innovative research with sex workers, their clients, and state actors, Bernstein argues that in cities such as San Francisco, Stockholm, and Amstersdam, the nature of what is purchased in commercial sexual encounters is also new. Rather than the expedient exchange of cash for sexual relations, what sex workers are increasingly paid to offer their clients is an erotic experience premised upon the performance of authentic interpersonal connection. As such, contemporary sex markets are emblematic of a cultural moment in which the boundaries between intimacy and commerce—and between public life and private—have been radically redrawn. Not simply a compelling exploration of the changing landscape of sex-work, *Temporarily Yours* ultimately lays bare the intimate intersections of political economy, desire, and culture.

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