Introduction

Violence & Intimacy

IT WAS A BRIGHT SUNNY DAY IN Istanbul in May 2010. At around noon, I arrived at the mosque for the funeral of Sibel, a fifty-five-year-old woman. A big crowd of trans women was gathered in the narrow street surrounding the mosque. Some trans women came to the funeral wearing headscarves, while others were bareheaded.[1] Sibel, a close friend to many trans women in Istanbul LGBTT, a trans-majority LGBTI+ organization, had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage a few days prior while she was soliciting sex work at night.[2] After her emergency hospitalization, people from Istanbul LGBTT started visiting and caring for her in turns. Sibel's friends informed her blood family about what had happened to her, though they had abandoned her. She lost consciousness after the hemorrhage, and she remained in the hospital. A few days after being admitted, Sibel died.

After her death Sibel's trans friends claimed the rights to her deceased body and its burial. This process was not easy; it involved long negotiations with Sibel's blood family members over certain terrains of intimacy, that is, over care and belonging. This situation was not unique to Sibel. For trans people I worked with in Istanbul, kinship ties were a domain of incessant negotiation and contestation because abandonment by the blood family was a common experience. They had to cope with familial rejection of gender recognition, the refusal of financial or emotional support, and, at times, the denial of funeral rituals and practices after death. At such times, trans friends often took the initiative, reclaimed the body, and organized the funeral. In doing so, they replaced the family and announced themselves as the "real" family. The entrance of these friendships into the

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domain of family through particular structured practices was an intimate survival strategy in the face of everyday social marginalization and abandonment. Sibel's funeral evinced some of these intimate survival strategies.

The domain of family and kinship is part of a broader social world that produces forms of abandonment, exclusion, and marginalization for trans lives. Sibel's friends also had to negotiate with state authorities and religious figures whose collective decisions were strongly shaped by cisheteronormative legal regulations, institutional practices, and religious interpretations of social and familial life in Turkey. Sibel had identified and lived her life as a woman. However, in the eyes of the Turkish state, she was a man: she held the blue state-issued ID that until 2017 identified male citizens, whereas a pink one identified female citizens.[3] Had Sibel completed her official gender transition, an arduous medicolegal process that takes approximately two years, she could have held a pink ID card that officially recognized her as female at the moment of her death. She had only partially completed the state-designated trans surgical procedures and hence died in a bodily configuration that transgressed the strict binary institutional categories of sex/gender.

Sibel's funeral ceremony and burial ritual evoked a crisis of illegibility about her body, causing a variety of social actors to debate and negotiate her gender/sexual difference. Her sex/gender-transgressive body became a source of multiple interpretations and inscriptions of categories of sex/gender, kinship, religion, and citizenship. Religious authorities, particularly imams, emphasized Sibel's "real" sex and gender, as did Sibel's blood family members and the state's medicolegal actors from the Mezarlıklar ve Cenaze Hizmetleri Şube Müdürlüğü (the Department of Cemeteries and Funeral Services). Sibel's friends from the LGBTI+ activist community, who were also part of these negotiations, challenged some of those claims and advocated for Sibel to be mourned as female/woman and as their kin. They contested a violent framework of cisheteronormativity through their intimate attachments to Sibel and her deceased body.

This book is about these creative and constructive tensions between violent efforts to define and disambiguate sex/gender transgression, on the one hand, and trans people's incessant negotiations with these efforts in the trans everyday, on the other. As much as trans people are shaped by the cisheteronormative powers of the state, the family, and religion, they also act on these powers to transform them. *Violent Intimacies* argues that everyday troubles with sex/gender transgression in personal, social, and institutional life shape trans lives and deaths as well as state power, family

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and kinship, regimes of sexuality and gender, urban geography, and feminist and LGBTI+ activism in Turkey.

Cisness is not about the perfect harmony or untroubled relationship that an individual is assumed to have between their sexed/gendered self and their assigned sex at birth or while in utero. As trans studies scholars potently demonstrate, this assumed harmony is in fact a fantasy, an idealization that makes cisness an uninhabitable normative category.[4] Yet, at the same time, cisness powerfully operates as an institutional regulatory tool to treat or mistreat people. As Jules Gill-Peterson shows, cisness can be an effective tool for the state to strengthen its political domination over social life. The state can weaponize cisness against its trans citizens and their families to restrict their participation in public and political life.[5] Joining these critical trans approaches to cisness, this book refers to cisheteronormativity as a political ideology that systematizes violence, exclusion, and discrimination in social and institutional life.

In the trans everyday, cisheteronormative violence works as a currency in social and institutional life, causing gradual exhaustion and leading to everyday stigmatization, injury, and even the slow or premature death of trans people. Institutions such as schools, hospitals, courts, the military, and government offices saturate trans lives with biopolitical and necropolitical techniques through which state power diffuses, expands, and legitimizes cisheteronormative violence in quotidian, intricate, and intimate ways.[6] Relations of cisheteronormative violence shape trans lives, taking the forms of "terror as usual" or "a multitude of small wars and invisible genocides conducted in the normative social spaces."[7] This violence, however, is not only about sex, gender, and sexuality; rather, it is a social currency produced in a relational economy of neoliberal governmentality, regimes of surveillance and securitization, authoritarian nationalist religiosity, and ethnic and racial discrimination. Other marginalized groups, such as Kurds, non-Muslims, workers, Romas, and refugees, also pay significant prices in this political economy. For instance, the police deploy securitization techniques on LGBTI+ people and sex workers that were originally developed and deployed against racialized groups like Kurds, or vice versa. Similarly, state-initiated or -approved urban transformation projects may target not only sex workers and trans people but also the underclass, Romas, Kurds, migrants, or refugees. Violence is intersectional and an institutional resource for the state to intimately govern, manage, and securitize the marginalized based on forms of control and punishment of social difference. Urban displacement, social discrimination and exclusion, sexual and gender regimes,

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blood family and kinship, medicolegal regulation, police surveillance, and religious interpretations are threaded together in the production of differential values over life and death for different social groups. This threading intimately shapes the everyday experience of sex/gender embodiment for both trans people and other marginalized people. In fact, cisheteronormative violence forms a connecting tissue between these processes and actors and establishes intimate alliances between them.

This book is an immersion into these differential yet relational domains of (un)making trans worlds in Turkey. Beginning in 2010, I started to collaborate with trans people as a *natrans* (nontrans) queer feminist anthropologist for my doctoral research, a collaboration that has gained multiple definitions and meanings over time.[8] Long before this, as an undergraduate college student, I had become intellectually and politically involved in building bridges and forming coalitions across queer, trans, and feminist theories and struggles. This endeavor has always been *about* and *beyond* research purposes, begetting its own intimate fruits in the form of friendships, comradeships, and more across sites of queer/trans feminist struggle. Our work together intersected with a variety of political sites in the urban queer, trans, and feminist world of Istanbul, ranging from conferences to meetings, and from demonstrations against femicides, urban transformation, and police violence to campaigns for sexual and gender rights. Alongside our political work, we shared our lives in homes, cafés, restaurants, bars, and parks and streets and attended dance parties, socials, and *meyhane* nights, as well as funerals.[9] This everyday involvement provided a comprehensive understanding of the both world-shattering and world-making conditions of the trans everyday.

Violent Intimacies approaches transness not only as a category of identification but also, and most importantly, as a condensed site of a relational economy of violence in and through which social difference is produced and managed. Transness, at the same time, is a site of intimacies in the plural. With this approach I join other scholars of trans studies who critique the concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality as the only vector to understand trans issues and instead shed light on a wider scope of analysis of hierarchies of life, existence, social organization, and ways of knowing. I echo Susan Stryker and Aren Aizura's salient identification of the analytic and political need for the circulation of "transgender" and need for multiple modes of analysis rather than its signification as a static identity category or specific way of being in the world. Trans studies significantly contributes to "the proliferation and articulation of new modes of embodied subjectivity,

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new cultural practices, and new ways of understanding the world, rather than becoming an enclosure for their containment."[10] In the introduction to *Transgender History*, Stryker defines *transgender* in its broadest possible sense by approaching it as "the movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting place, rather than any particular destination or mode of transition."[11] This definition not only provides a compass that navigates us through various meanings, workings, and movements of gender but also allows for an understanding of multiple meanings of transness that are present, under construction, emergent, or potential. In this formulation of transgender, once the movement starts, there is not necessarily a fixed, stable, or determined point of arrival. However, this definition, at the same time, presumes a place of origin, a socially imposed location of gender, from where the person departs. Recent scholarship in critical trans studies helps us contest this underlying assumption that there was a clear origin or place of departure in transness.[12] It has generated understandings of transness as a formative site for relations of race and racialization, diaspora and migration, surveillance and securitization, political economy and labor, disability, and indigeneity.[13] Building on this critical scholarship, *Violent Intimacies* offers new perspectives for studies of state power, securitization and surveillance, urban geography, family and kinship, and, more broadly, intimacy.

The trans everyday in Turkey is a site of potentiality and world-making at the thresholds of dominant sociocultural life, a terrain that is both violent and intimate, extraordinary and ordinary, oppressive and productive. This location of transness is also a transnational site of theory that aims to transgress the ongoing hegemony of North American–centric and Eurocentric accounts in trans studies. Contrary to implicit or explicit scholarly assumptions, locations outside Euro–North American contexts are not solely the places where theories are tested for their applicability or failure. Howard Chiang succinctly criticizes "the ethnic supplementary" position that non-Americanist and non-Europeanist scholarship is expected to occupy as a fixer to intellectual content created by Americanists and Europeanists in trans studies. He notes, "To this day, Americanists and Europeanists are still considered the proprietor of novel theoretical insights concerning transgender proper."[14] In agreement with these statements, I underscore that the "non-West," including Turkey, involves multiple and diverse geographies of theoretical production to understand the world beyond local, national, and regional boundaries. This book is one such theoretical endeavor.

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I show how transness in Turkey theoretically makes us rethink the notions of violence and intimacy and the relationship between them. I claim that in the entangled world of the trans everyday, one currency is violence, and the other is intimacy. This world, moreover, includes family members, landlords, neighbors, police officers, medical personnel, legal experts, religious actors, clients, lovers, partners, activists, and strangers. Trans people's bodies, their personal relationships, and trans spaces of inhabitation and socialization are, in very violent ways, made sexually and morally legible and less ambiguous by these social actors. For this reason, this book offers a novel concept, *violent intimacies*, as a means with which to understand the concurrent work of violence and intimacy which, I argue, exposes the connective tissue of a cisheteronormative social order that is intertwined with neoliberal governmentality, biopolitical and necropolitical order, and authoritarian management of social difference. Incorporating intersectional aspects of the trans everyday in a single framework, each chapter illustrates a specific site of violent intimacy from which violent manifestations of intimacy or intimate manifestations of violence emerge: the street, the police, the medical institution, the legal domain, and the family and kinship, as well as trans femicides and funerals.

The violent conditions of trans lives in Turkey are, at the same time, the conditions of trans empowerment, resistance, resilience, and struggle in intimate ways. The everyday life of trans people involves not only victimization, objectification, and suffering but also the formation of affinities, solidarities, proximities, sentiments, and care in, through, and/or in reaction to relations of violence and regimes of power. Like at Sibel's funeral, trans people adopt and care for their friends and reclaim their friends' funerals and meet their friends' monetary needs in the face of familial abandonment and disowning. They turn violence into the creative substance of family and kin work. They redefine their political organizations and community spaces by turning them into their homes. They actively participate in the transformation of urban geography. They invent tactics to cope with state violence, and they pressure the police to formulate new extralegal tactics of securitization. They create themselves as political actors in organizing and mobilizing around hate crimes, police violence, state control over the gender confirmation process, violence against women, and gender-based discrimination in general. The trans everyday also unfolds through dance parties, performances, brunches, picnics, dinners, and *meyhane* nights where intimacies manifest and mediate between people as love, care, joy, and laughter, as well as tears. These sites of intimacy create incandescent

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beauty through which trans and queer people cultivate belonging, form coalitions, and imagine as well as act on affective and collective forms of social transformation. An immersion into these everyday practices, sites, and struggles helps us approach violence and intimacy as constitutive of, conducive to, and immanent to each other and as the source of both oppression and resistance.

Theorizing *Violent Intimacies*

This book does not take the domain of intimacy for granted. Rather, it closely dissects intimacy in its multiple layers and analyzes how violence constitutes it through the lenses of sex/gender transgression. In an endeavor to theorize the formative relationship between violence and intimacy, I engage with anthropological theories of violence that examine it as productive and formative, molding people's understanding of themselves and what they fight for.[15] Violence is part of people's everyday existence, a human condition, and it is "not something external to society and culture that 'happens' to people."[16] Anthropologist Veena Das is one of the most influential scholars who has written extensively on the social life of violence and its relation to the intimate domains of everyday life. Das theorizes violence as entrenched in everyday life as a site of the ordinary. "The [violent] event," she notes, "attaches itself with its tentacles into everyday life and folds itself into the recesses of the ordinary."[17] According to Das, there is a mutual absorption between the violent and the ordinary, and the lives of particular communities and persons are embedded in this violence (or the memory of such events), turning the everyday itself into the eventful.[18] Das is interested in those intimate moments/sites of the everyday to trace how the event folds into ongoing relationships through speech, sexuality, and domesticity.

I owe Das a great deal for my discussion of the ordinary of everyday trans lives in Turkey as embedded in violence and eventfulness. However, there is an underlying presumption in Das's definition of intimacy, which prioritizes cisheteropatriarchal formulations of domestic, kinship, neighbor, and communal relations. My work intervenes in studies of both violence and intimacy by not only showing how violence *attaches* itself to the intimate domains of everyday life beyond cisheteropatriarchy but also demonstrating what intimacy *is* within relations of violence, what intimacy becomes *through* violence, and how violence *generates*, *forms*, and *begets*

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plural intimacies in a wider framework. In that sense, I also distinguish *violent intimacies* from the common notion of *intimate violence*, which some readers might conflate with the central concept of this book. While scholars frequently associate intimate violence with multiple meanings of domestic or partner violence, violent intimacies centers on the formation, organization, and circulation of intimacy through violence and hence encourages readers to rethink the very notion of intimacy itself.

In spite of its common usage and circulation, *intimacy* eludes an easy definition. Popular understandings of intimacy render it synonymous with the body, the household, domesticity, or sexuality. Indeed, *intimacy* captures these meanings but cannot be reduced to them.[19] Human geographers Natalie Oswin and Eric Olund define it as "a protean concept, a heterogenous ensemble," and stress its capacity to afford closeness and belonging even when unwanted.[20] Intimacy is plural, fluid, flexible, and contingent, and hence it is complex, capacious, and difficult to contain. Yet its ambivalent and eccentric qualities allow for an analytically and theoretically rich conceptual framework to trace circuits, exchanges, flows, and entanglements between the worlds of the individual and the social.

Intimacy is integral to the formation of what is called "the human," the self, subjectivity, as well as communities, publics, collectives, and socialities.[21] It is a site of constant query, "the sensory, the affective, and domestic space," or a domain that "builds borders, creates distances, marks off knowledge and shared forms of it."[22] Intimacy challenges the accustomed boundaries between private and public, personal and political, familial and state, and global and local and reveals their porous and interwoven constitution. In my own interpretation of the term, I find *affective and physical proximity* the most concise definition that facilitates an examination of an ensemble of relations among power, space, bodies, and affect.

This book addresses intimacy as embodied proximities formed and mediated through social relations, affective ties, and senses, including family, kinship, friendship, cohabitation, reproduction, sexual and gender relations, care, love, joy, hate, disgust, jealousy, touch, gaze, and death. Attention to embodied proximities enables me to scrutinize intimacy in its close and tangled relation to power and violence. What interests me in this relationship between intimacy and violence is not the sphere of individual subjectification.[23] Rather, along similar lines as other scholars of intimacy, I am more interested in the social and political qualities of this association.[24]

Intimacy can take creative and imaginative forms in the production of the ordinary. As critical theorist Saidiya Hartman demonstrates, intimacy

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can be the site of a radical position in life, a fugitive possibility from the regimes of the proper, a refusal of assimilation and erasure, and a reservoir for hopes and dreams of survival and change.[25] In the ordinariness of life, intimacy can constitute "a revolution in minor key."[26] This book traces these forms of intimacy in trans people's laborious, creative, and imaginative endeavors in building a place for their lives in this world. One example is *gullüm*, a unique way of socializing and conversing among both queer and trans people. *Gullüm* indicates a social gathering, a gossipy conversation, a social occasion of drinking alcohol and chain-smoking, dancing, or simply engaging in shared humor. It is a creative and resilient collective attempt at inserting laughter, fun, joviality, and euphoria into the violent world of everyday trans and queer lives. It is a source of self-empowerment as well as collective fulfillment. So much beauty is generated in these moments of *gullüm*, through shared laughing, gossiping, joking, dancing, chatting, drinking, smoking, playing music, singing, flirting, kissing, making out, and/or getting laid. It is the joy of queer and trans life that is affectively and collectively produced, a life that embraces crying and laughter at once. Both as a verbal repertoire (especially in terms of conversational skills and a source of fun) and as a bodily repertoire (in the form of dance parties, brunches, political meetings, and demonstrations), *gullüm* provides trans people with an affective temporal shelter and shield from the exhaustion of everyday violence and discrimination. Hence, it perfectly exemplifies the theorization of violent intimacies, and this book offers multiple moments of *gullüm* throughout its pages.

Intimacy with violence and death is a significant currency of everyday trans existence in Turkey, a situation that makes violent intimacies also sites of the political. Violent intimacies can become sources of resistance, alternative modes of living, world-making socialities, and transformative practices of affective labor. A shared sense of both past and present experience with everyday violence weaves together trans friendships and communal relations. Learning further from trans understandings and experiences of the world shows us the working of intimacy in desiring, dreaming, and designing "new forms of life beyond the bounds of law and suffocations of patriarchy and [cis]heteronormativity."[27]

The theory of violent intimacies establishes the coconstitutive relationship between violence and intimacy that is manifest in the everyday lives of not just trans people but all those who inhabit ethnic, racial, religious, sectarian and economic margins. This book takes trans lives as one ethnographic, and heavily understudied, site from which to understand the

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mutually generative relationship between violence and intimacy. For trans lives, the theoretical concept of violent intimacies brings together stories of victimization and survival, abandonment and adoption, marginalization and resistance, and death and life that might otherwise appear dissimilar. The particularities of trans lives show how relations of violence constitute a social field of creative living within which trans people shape and invent forms of intimacy that allow them to inhabit the world. These particularities will no doubt be different in the case of other marginalized groups, whose living will take on its own creative forms. But they will share with trans lives the powerful uses and effects of violence coupled with intimacy.

Violent Intimacies of Space

One crucial component of violent intimacies is space. Intimacy marks spaces and bodies as much as it is marked by them. Here I take inspiration from critical theorists Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's discussion of sex and sexuality as something "mediated by [the] public," and anthropologist Sertaç Sehlikoğlu's related conceptualization of intimacy as part of this public mediation.[28] Dominant forms of intimacy, as in cisheteronormative, procreational, familial, or kin-based relations, reaffirm and preserve their coherency through cultural narratives, discourses, symbols, and practices that mediate these forms of intimacy in public. Intimacy is a site, medium, and product of sensory experiences: "sound, smell, taste; the ways bodies and objects meet and touch . . . zones of contact and the formations they generate."[29] The organization and distribution of spatial arrangements, along with bodily differentiation, stability, movement, and habitation, are processes that can also give rise to the formation of plural intimacies, including violent ones. Bodily encounters, interactions, and exchanges mark spaces with social boundaries that are sexual, gendered, ethnic, racial, and classed. Sensory engagements through touch, gaze, smell, and sound produce intimate spatialities of embodiment. Proximity, as well as distance, in both physical and emotional terms, shapes social geographies of life and "spatialities of intimacy."[30]

For example, streets have always been integral to the formation of a vibrant social and intimate life in Turkey. People spend long hours chatting, walking, standing, and playing games in the streets. In some parts of Istanbul, one can even talk about a blurred line between public and private, as one may find women, senior people, and youth treating streets

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as an extension of their homes, meeting with their neighbors and friends. Random street corners can easily turn into popular hangout spots. Not only coffeeshop and restaurant owners but also any shopkeeper may extend their workspace into the street by putting tables and chairs on the sidewalks without facing obstacles. Street vendors of various kinds pop up everywhere. Beyoğlu, my main field site, exemplifies this vibrant and intimate urban life. As you will read in the following chapters, the streets of Beyoğlu function as an essential infrastructure for everyday socialities and everyday intimacies.

Yet the same intimacies of the street can turn violent to strangers, outsiders, or transgressive social actors like trans people, sex workers, racialized others, or homeless people. Spatial mediation and bodily encounters, philosopher Sara Ahmed argues, also foreground the formation of communal intimacies, such as the national, ethnic, and, I would add, cisheteronormative "we."[31] Ahmed stresses how the determination of who is considered "we" is affectively shaped across bodies and signs, marking individual and collective bodies with the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries.[32] By way of example, Ahmed argues that the specific emotions of hate and fear circulate among people and stick to some bodies more than others, thus creating zones of intimacy among those who become proximate with each other in their alikeness, while establishing relations of distance with the others, deemed as dangerous or as strangers. The mediation and formation of these intimacies always has a violent spatial component through which certain bodies are made "out of place" or "made into strangers on the shape and skin of everyday life."[33] In that sense, violence, or, more precisely, the threat of violence posed by the unfamiliar, transgressive life or body, creates and conditions certain intimacies based on similarity and familiarity.

In Istanbul, for instance, cisheteronormativity, as a form of communal and spatial intimacy, incessantly marks trans people's bodies as unfamiliar, out of place, and transgressive. Trans people are displaced from the visual and material field of public life in violent ways that include the use of spatial techniques of surveillance and securitization, extralegal police violence, urban transformation projects, and the flow of neoliberal capital into their neighborhoods. Sex/gender transgression and transness are instrumentalized and utilized in the violent organization and production of urban geography. Yet trans people also shape the urban landscape through their intimate work of emplacement in forms of inhabitation, cohabitation, resistance, and survival. Urban geography indeed is a field of incessant struggles that is mutually shaped by trans lives and forces of cisheteronormativity, neoliberal

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governmentality, and securitization techniques. I analyze this geography at length in chapters 1 and 2 to illustrate the violent production of spatial intimacies, or *violent intimacies of space*.

Trans people are not the first to engage in the struggles that emerge in Istanbul's urban geography. The city has always been a contested terrain of not only violence but also protest. Beyoğlu, a neighborhood that has historically been popular as a place of entertainment, culture, and commerce, has a special significance in this political urban geography. Over decades, it has been a crucial site for voices of political protest, including feminist and queer/trans issues, labor rights, the Kurdish struggle for freedom and equality, commemorations of the Armenian genocide, the rights of refugees and migrants, and oppositions to projects of gentrification. Trans and LGBTI+ Pride Marches were always organized in Beyoğlu until their prohibition in 2015.[34] These marches were a regional event that attracted LGBTI+ people from the wider Middle Eastern region for almost a decade. During the Gezi protests in 2013, thousands of people attended these marches, where one could also see a growing number of placards and banners written in Arabic and Persian alongside Turkish, Kurdish, and Armenian. The parades saturating Beyoğlu's streets with songs, dances, and slogans are still vivid in my memory: people slowly moving between tall buildings, hanging from their balconies, smiling, waving their hands, joining their voices in slogans, or simply watching the assembly with bewilderment and curiosity, the sea of people gradually becoming louder and louder. At the top of our voices, we were filling the neighborhood with slogans of love: "Aşk aşk hürriyet, uzak olsun nefret" (May love and freedom prevail, not hate); "Ayşe Fatma'yı, Ahmet Mehmet'i; birbirlerini sevebilmeli" (Ayşe should be able to love Fatma; Ahmet should be able to love Mehmet); and "Nerdesin aşkım? Burdayım aşkım! Ay ay ay!" (Where are you, my love? I am here, my love. Ay ay ay!). Words and tunes of love occupied the streets, creating an intimate and affective soundscape in Istanbul.

Without a doubt, the street has political significance for feminist, queer, and trans struggles beyond Pride Marches. These movements mobilize in the streets to raise political awareness around allegedly private and personal issues such as domestic and familial violence, sexual harassment, rape, child brides, and trans and *natrans* femicides, as well as love, desire, sex, and body positivity. The spatiality of the street and the temporality of the night, in other words, have always been constitutive of feminist politics, particularly since the 1980s and, for LGBTI+ movements, since the 1990s. The street is an essential "infrastructural condition" and

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"good" for bodies to assemble, and for political organizing.[35] It supports bodily action and provides the conditions for bodily political expression. As Judith Butler notes, when the street is foreclosed, that has a direct effect on bodily capacities.[36]

Prior to 2015, the streets of Beyoğlu maintained their status as places of assembly for dissent. This situation started changing drastically in the post-Gezi period, which intensified further with the declaration of a state of emergency in July 2016. Not only queers and trans people but also other dissenting groups—feminists, secularists, leftists, Kurds, minor conservative parties, non-Muslims, peace activists—are struggling to find a space to challenge the neoconservative authoritarianism in the country. The state has used punitive and prohibitive measures against any political organizing for democratic participation, social and political rights, inequality, and the socioeconomic and environmental costs of neoliberal capitalism. In short, Beyoğlu's streets and many other streets have become increasingly vulnerable spaces. And yet trans lives have always been vulnerable in the streets (chapters 1 and 2), and the intimate yet violent exercise of state power, especially as embodied by the police, is central to this dynamic. The state and its organization of power is another, crucial pillar of violent intimacies in the trans everyday.

The Color of Intimate Citizenship: Pink and Blue IDs and the State

One of the goals of this book is to show how the state in Turkey gains intimate content and produces its trans citizens as intimate subjects through its biopolitical and necropolitical government suppression of sex/gender transgression. The book contributes to anthropological studies of the state that treat it as a form, "the presence and content of which is not taken for granted but is the very object of inquiry."[37] This approach problematizes understandings of the state as a uniform, autonomous, fixed, bounded entity, institution, or thing, replacing them, as Begoña Aretxaga stresses, with subjective dynamics that are key to understanding the state in its relation to people and movements.[38] The lived experiences of such dynamics establish the phenomenological ground between the state administration and its "proxies," paving the way for the state to come into being in particular forms of presence.[39] My discussions draw on trans people's intimate—subjective, embodied—experiences with state power.[40]

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Modern states have always been intimate with their citizens. Scholars have drawn widely on the involvement of the state in the so-called private sphere of its subjects, from affective and sentimental ties of domesticity to the zones of desire, sex, and sexuality, which it imbues with political content.[41] Areas such as marriage, sexuality, and reproduction, to name a few, tend to be critical sites of state regulation and the focus of persistent state projects. As historian Nancy Cott underscores, "No modern nation ignores the intimate domain, because the population is composed and reproduced there."[42] With the implementation of biopolitical practices and governmental techniques, the so-called private sphere emerges as a locus of constantly evolving forms of state power that determine what kinds of intimacies (sexual, domestic, familial)—and who—will be deemed legitimate.[43] Socialization is a process in which the workings of state power operate through the establishment of intimate (including sexual) links that reach into the inner lives and bodies of its citizens. Paying attention to these intimacies exposes a story of the affective, visceral, corporeal workings of everyday state power and a particular shape the state takes.

The categories of sex and gender are integral to the formation and intimate workings of Turkish state power as the state seeks to govern and regulate not only bodies and sexuality but also its subjects' intimate conducts and desires. The state has little room for ambiguous or ambivalent gender and sex. It actively produces and deploys governing projects that constantly strive to disambiguate ambiguously sexed and gendered bodies and recruit them as heteronormatively gendered national subjects. These projects lead to the formation of violent intimacies between state actors and trans people across a wide range of institutional settings, including the medicolegal world of sex/gender confirmation, the security and police departments controlling the public presence of sex workers, the judicial world of hate crimes targeting trans women, and the bureaucracies of death, cemetery, and inheritance services.

Everyday encounters and interactions in these institutions set the stage for constructing what Aretxaga calls "terrifying forms of intimacies" between the state and trans people's bodies that are integral to modern disciplinary practices and rational technologies of control.[44] This is particularly evident when it comes to the sex/gender confirmation process, in which the state plays the role of vagina inspector and becomes preoccupied with penile penetration as a tool for eliminating, and hence regulating, sex/gender transgression. The institutional fixation with penetration, I argue, paves the way for a violent politics of touch and tactility. Developing a

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conceptual nexus of corporeality and the sensorium, I analyze *the politics of tactility and touch* shaped in the knot of violence, intimacy, and sex/gender transgression. I suggest that the sensory apparatus, specifically various forms of violent touch by institutional actors on people's bodies, helps us to understand the organization and exercise of intimate state power. This focus informs us about sex/gender-transgressive people's subjective, embodied experience with the state and its power, and the unique combinations of intimacy and violence through which the state takes a masculinist, cisheteronormative, patriarchal, and penetrating form. I conceptualize these forms of touch and corporeal proximities as *the violent intimacies of the state*.

The state had no medicolegal regulation surrounding transgender identity or gender confirmation surgery (GCS) in Turkey until 1988, when Bülent Ersoy, a famous trans woman singer, won her seven-year legal struggle to change her sex in her official record from male to female, thus gaining the right to a pink ID card (chapter 3). The legal code, introduced with her case, remained unaltered until the change in government in 2002, with the inception of the rule of the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP; the Justice and Development Party), a neoliberal conservative political party that entered the political scene in 2001 and held the parliamentary majority until 2018. When they came to power, the AKP changed several aspects of the legal system, including modifications to the Civil Code. With these changes, the gender confirmation process was put under rigorous medicolegal control and institutional supervision.

During my research, changing their government-issued ID cards from blue to pink, or vice versa, was a significant concern for trans people. To have GCS and change their ID cards today, trans people are required to undergo a psychiatric evaluation lasting one and a half to two years, various medical tests, and until very recently, sterilization (see chapter 3). One's age, marital status, and reproductive status also constitute significant legal barriers to receiving a new ID card: a person must be unmarried, be older than eighteen, and have no children. This system involves the constant evaluation of trans people's gender role performance and bodily configuration by various institutional actors (i.e., therapists, doctors, forensic medicine people, juridical authorities) according to the dominant categories of sex and gender in Turkey. The gender confirmation process, including the issuance of new IDs, is based on bodily reconfiguration and requires trans people to reconstruct their sex-assigned bodily parts in accordance with their gender, thus rendering obligatory a particular production of bodily

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materiality. In other words, before issuing a new ID, the state insists that trans people prove their "true" gender identity and modify their bodies accordingly. This medicolegal path to a pink or blue ID is not unique to Turkey but rather a transnational product of European scientific approaches to sex/gender nonconformity and transness. Scientific modalities, largely produced in English, German, and Swedish medicolegal environments, have shaped the institutional discussions and practices regarding trans bodies and their sex/gender in Turkey, an issue that I discuss in detail in chapters 3 and 4.

The spatialized state project of sex/gender disambiguation extends beyond the medicolegal world of gender confirmation. It also includes the displacement of trans women from their houses and neighborhoods (chapter 1), the criminalization and securitization of trans presence in public (chapter 2), the distribution of criminal justice at court cases over targeted trans femicides (chapter 5), and the organization of trans people's funerals and intimate claims over their lives, relationships, and bodies (chapter 6). The achievement of sexual and gender legibility via the cisheteroreproductive couple and family life is at the center of the entangled world between trans people and state actors (i.e., police officers, doctors, forensic scientists, and juridical actors). In fact, the dominant Turkish family structure and morality function as the cornerstone of a broader dominant intimate order that shapes state discourses and policies as well as everyday sociocultural life.

The Intimate Order of the Turkish Family and Cisheteronormativity

Like many other family models around the world, the hegemonic model of cisheteroreproductive blood family in Turkey, with all its emotional, material, and symbolic work, draws borders between lives, bodies, and desires in terms of inclusion and exclusion, belonging and nonbelonging.[45] Most blood families expect the internalization of these norms and values by their members, especially their children. Lives outside the cisheteroreproductive family structure are socially recognized as lesser and hence receive fewer shares of social capital, such as respectability, status, and power, as well as state resources, such as legal and financial protection. "The Turkish family structure" (*Türk aile yapısı*) is a common reference point in every social site, from popular media to the news, from political speeches to ads. Extended family members (such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) are

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also considered part of this structure through the consolidation of blood ties. Children, parents, and extended family members have debts toward each other, and together, as citizens, they owe debts to the state through their social reproduction.

Far from being new, family-oriented intimate state projects date back to the Ottoman modernization reforms of the nineteenth century. Historians of the late Ottoman Empire have extensively documented the imperial state's introduction of new forms of intimate control over women's bodies as part of its emerging population policies on public health, reproduction, and progeny.[46] When the Turkish Republic was established after the collapse of the empire in 1923, the focus on nation making was equated to the construction of the new civic man/woman and the making of the modern family and its well-being.[47] Acting, feeling, and identifying as "modern" has been strongly linked to a nationally shared domestic intimacy established by how people married each other and how they lived their domestic space, among other practices.[48] The calculation and valuation of modern national membership at the affective level, or the sentimental formation of the new collective national Turkish "we," has been tied to the construction of the emotional content of citizenship, or national identity, through specific institutional pedagogies and discourses—a relationship that also has been a topic of research beyond Turkey.[49] That is, the public redefinition of the ideal modern Turkish national subject has been established through protocols for how people are to live their domestic and private lives.[50] In particular, Turkish citizenship has emerged as an intimate modernization project that is grounded in a more private (personal, familial, and sexual) morality. A patriotic and patriarchal model dominates the relations of the "public sphere" through the promotion of a strong connection between the intimate domains of the quotidian and the survival of the nation. Citizens are expected to love their nation in the same way they do their families and are led to believe that their family lives directly affect the future of the nation.

As historians of sexuality in the Middle East widely document, same-sex desire and sexual acts, particularly between men, were prevalent and not considered deviant until the modernization process in Arab, Ottoman, and Persian contexts.[51] Beginning in the nineteenth-century, the social institutionalization of heterosexuality transformed intimacy to become the marker of modern citizenship. Adaptation to (European standards of) modernity was equated with a strictly heteronormative monogamous model of sexuality and desire.[52] Heterosexualization, as a project of modernization, required that straight love and sexual desire be instituted as the

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dominant and most efficient intimate currency of social and private life. The historical shift from same-sex to opposite-sex, from homoeroticism to heteroeroticism, from polygamous to monogamous marriage in socially accepted forms of sexual intimacy has grounded the present-day normative structure of desire, sex, gender, and intimacy in Turkey and beyond.[53]

Throughout the republican era, a series of institutional practices and regulations secured the blood family as a site for the reproduction of gender and sexual inequality. These institutional conventions inscribed intimacy mainly as a family asset bound by blood, and granted blood family members and the spouse legal rights over the body of a citizen after the citizen's own individual rights (inheritance or funeral rights, for example—see chapter 6).[54] The desire for a cisheteroreproductive nuclear family is cultivated carefully from an early age, socializing boys and girls into specific masculine and feminine roles. The production of these gender roles and the gender hierarchy further shapes the processes, desires, discourses, and practices of family making and family life.

For instance, most Turkish families and state institutions organize themselves around a regime of gender and sexuality that idealizes hegemonic masculinity as cisheterosexual, able-bodied, authoritarian, conservative, culturally Sunni Muslim, middle- to upper-class, Turkish (as an ethnic self-identification; not Kurdish, Armenian, or Jewish, for instance), and light-skinned (rather than dark). Popular culture (mainstream movies, TV shows, novels, ads, etc.) provides ample material to examine these dominant sexual, gender, racial, and classed patterns.[55] Their representative currency largely revolves around discouraging Turkish boys/men from overtly displaying emotions that are considered stereotypically "feminine," and hence weak, including pity, fear, sadness, and compassion. In popular soap operas and movies, boys/men usually express emotions considered to be representative of strength, such as aggression and outrage. Protectiveness and possessiveness, which can take financial, cultural, national, and sexual forms, are also significant aspects of idealized masculinity. A constant play of vigilance and willingness to claim and protect, as well as sacrifice for family, kin, community, and flag and nation, is essential.

As scholars of masculinity in Turkey suggest, a boy's/man's performance in the following sites shapes how his masculinity is perceived in private and public environments: the circumcision ceremony, education, soccer culture, military service, employment, marriage, and reproduction.[56] The military is one of the most prominent domains for the production of gender in Turkey, particularly hegemonic masculinity. Excluding women and

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the feminine, the Turkish military enables cisheterosexual, able-bodied male citizens to represent the nation-state through fraternal links and a sense of superiority over women. The completion of compulsory military service solidifies hegemonic masculinity insofar as a man becomes a proper candidate for marriage only after having received his discharge certificate from the army.[57]

My aim here is not to depict ahistorical, homogeneous, and uncontested notions of gender in Turkey but rather to establish the historically specific socioculturally and institutionally idealized masculine and feminine norms and patterns that are at work in everyday life. The presentation of a general framework here is meant to provide a comprehensive sociocultural background against which it becomes possible to grasp what it means to be a trans or a gender-nonconforming person who has to tackle and negotiate normative gender roles in everyday life. The prevailing binaries of sexuality and gender in Turkey exert powerful forces in people's lives, whether they are trans or *natrans*.

These forces might differ in their effects on trans women, trans men, and trans nonbinary folks, since they are differently positioned in intersectional hierarchies of sexuality and the sex/gender binary. For example, obligatory military service figures differently in the lives of gays, trans men, male-assigned trans women with blue IDs, and gender-nonconforming people with blue IDs. Trans men, even after they receive their blue IDs, are considered disabled and thereby exempted from military service. Others can avoid the draft in three ways: by evasion, by declaring conscientious objection to military violence, or by receiving a "rotten report" (*çürük raporu*) or "pink discharge paper" (*pembe tezkere*).[58] The first two options are difficult because they are illegal and put people at risk of imprisonment. The third option, receiving a "rotten report," is tied to the applicant's medical condition, which can include severe health problems ranging from neurological to psychological illnesses, and from vision loss to internal diseases. These health problems are evaluated according to the Health Regulations for Turkish Armed Forces, which include "homosexuality" under the category of "psycho-sexual disorders" (Article 17).[59] The regulations' definition of homosexuality includes some gay practices and excludes others. As sociologist Oyman Başaran aptly argues, the militarized medical discourse defines homosexuality in relation to specific gender values, roles, and norms that are socially and culturally considered "feminine" in Turkey, producing "homosexuality" as an effeminate institutional category.[60] It is not the engagement in same-sex sexual intercourse but the gender role that one

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holds in this contact that demarcates one's sexual orientation. In this sense, the cultural distinction between the masculine, "active" penetrator and the feminine, "passive" recipient allows men to enter same-sex relations without challenging their straight sense of self.[61] Men who participate in vaginal or anal penetration may still pass as straight, while the recipient partners of these sexual interactions are dominantly marked as feminine.[62] While feminine gay men, male-assigned trans women, and gender-nonconforming people with blue IDs receive a "rotten report" relatively more easily in that they are collectively categorized as "homosexual," gay men who deviate from the military's imagination of homosexuals as effeminate are subject to a much more meticulous and difficult process.

As noted previously, once *natrans* men accomplish their duty as soldiers, they are socially encouraged to be the patriarchal heads of their own families (*aile reisi*). Outside the private space of their homes, these men are invited to identify with the state and are granted control over women's bodies and sexuality, often through the deployment of "morals" (*ahlak*) or "honor" (*namus/şeref/ırz*) discourses. The notion of honor is contentious. It has been internationally exhausted as an analytic trope to mark Middle Eastern and Mediterranean geographies as inherently backward, violent, and timeless landscapes.[63] Within Turkey it has also been weaponized against Kurds through the discourse of "crimes of tradition," later revised as "crimes of honor."[64] Turkish people and state institutions have deployed criminal "honor killings" as a racializing discourse to imagine themselves as modern subjects who favor greater gender equality between men and women than Kurds, who are stereotyped as victimizing their women through "honor killings," an issue that I discuss extensively in chapter 5. A critical body of feminist work undermines this othering, as it historicizes the continuous preoccupation with honor in modern Turkey and demonstrates how cultures of honor have also been appropriated, maintained, and cemented in modern institutions of the state, ranging from medical to juridical settings.[65]

Anthropologist Ayşe Parla compellingly argues that there is a need for careful and thick descriptive work that avoids defining honor as a generalized and timeless cultural notion but instead recognizes its historically specific cultural power in everyday practice and institutional discourse.[66] I agree with her important insights to the extent that the sociocultural valuation of honor continues to inflict sexual violence on women, queers, and trans people. Yet I also think that the discourse of "honor" was much more common in popular and political discourses up to the 2010s and has

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more recently shifted to a discourse of "morals" or "decency" (both words are translations of *ahlak*), which reflects the importance of paying attention to historically shifting and specific dominant discourses of sexual morality.

As cisheteropatriarchal concepts, "honor," "morals," and "decency" organize power relations not only between men and women but also among men, establishing strong links with female sexuality and social hierarchy.[67] In Turkey dominant gender regimes encourage men to compete with each other in terms of their capacity to possess and protect the female body and sexuality. The famous Yeşilçam studio movie period of the 1960s and 1970s, the booming industry of Turkish soap operas locally since the 1990s, and, more recently, the internationally influential industry of Turkish television series are saturated with performances of men's sexual morality displayed through the sexuality and embodiment of female family members (e.g., wife, fiancée, sister, mother) or girlfriends.[68] These melodramas, as both reflections and producers of everyday gender relations on the ground, represent masculinity in terms of entitlement to possess and discipline female sexuality and women's bodies.

Women in Turkey have wide access to education and the world of employment. However, discourses of chastity, domesticity, reproductivity, and moral purity continue to value and prioritize women as wives and mothers. Tying women's social recognition to their cisheteroreproductive capacities and the institution of the family marginalizes other practices of life that women may inhabit and enjoy. Although large urban environments provide people with alternative forms of intimacy and opportunities for nonmarital sex, the general conservative texture of social morality mostly disapproves of and actively prohibits intimate and sexual relations outside the boundaries of marriage. That is, family functions as the condition of women's social recognition, and marital intimacy as the totality of their (recognized) sexual experience.[69] Women are pressured not to display any sign of active sexuality in public and are expected to control their sexual drives in social life. Acts that might defy such normative expectations would approximate them to being a "slut" or "prostitute" in the public eye, disturbing "common morals" or "public decency." Men normatively see themselves as entitled to perform specific dominant masculine roles to regulate female sexuality and femininity in public and private life.

That said, I should underline the varied relationship among public female sexuality, sex/gender nonconformity, and the spatial organization of life in Turkey. There are wide variations, for example, between urban and rural environments, between touristic sea towns and interior regions,

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and between smaller and megaurban settings. Even in megaurban centers like Istanbul, class, religion, neighborhood, and other forms of social difference varyingly shape how women and sex/gender-transgressive people (are expected/permitted to) display their sexuality, gender, and bodies in public. For instance, my first book on sex work, *İktidarın Mahremiyeti (Intimacy of Power)*, showed that while visible and active forms of female sexuality and sex/gender transgression might be readily penalized in a more lower-class or conservative neighborhoods of Istanbul, the same practices might be welcomed in fancy or elite neighborhoods.[70] This spatial fragmentation also manifests itself in the publicity of trans lives in urban landscapes, a theme that I expand on in the next chapter.

In this social geography of sexual morality, active and "illegitimate" female sexuality and same-sex relations among men can damage men's reputations, which also extends, most significantly, to family reputations. Ahmet Yıldız's murder in 2008, for instance, was the first publicly known gay "honor killing" in Turkey.[71] A twenty-six-year-old Kurdish gay man and university student, Ahmet was shot dead on the street in front of his apartment in Istanbul. The murder case remains unsolved, but his runaway father is the primary suspect. As this incident, which involves a gay man, indicates, what constitutes sexual immorality is not the female per se but *illegitimate* or *transgressive feminized sexuality*. As noted previously, the stereotypical public view of gay men in Turkey associates them with femininity and being "soft" (*yumuşak*), which is to say they are not manly enough. Ahmet's openly queer life feminized him in his family's eyes, breaching the norms of hegemonic masculinity and thus staining his family's reputation and bringing the punishment of death. Hearings on Ahmet's case mobilized LGBTI+ activists in Istanbul to demand equal human rights and hate crime legislation in the broader struggle for sexual and gender justice. In a masculinist and cisheteronormative society, both queer murders and trans/*natrans* femicides make the availability of killing a shared gendered experience.[72]

The majority of these killings, as in Ahmet's murder, are intimately tied to sociocultural devaluation of the feminine in general. For over a decade, I have participated in and organized several protests against these killings as a member of feminist and LGBTI+ groups. In all of these protests, the rallying cries were the same: hate, death, violence, misogyny, exclusion, masculinity, patriarchy, men, the state. Chapter 5 focuses on the court cases related to these femicides and the political life around them.

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The specific sociocultural meanings of cisheteronormative sexuality and gender roles and hierarchy in Turkey are formed through strong intimate ties and alliances among the cisheteroreproductive familial order, the dominant regime of gender and sexuality, and the social and legal organization of state power. These ties and alliances constantly reaffirm and endorse cisheteronormative structures of everyday life that plague and exhaust those who fall outside them.

The current AKP government has only intensified this historically rooted dominant intimate order by investing further in the circulation and cultivation of desires for a national future that is oriented around the cisheteroreproductive family. Since the AKP took power in 2002, everyday life in Turkey has been changing relentlessly through a raft of government measures and locally enforced directives embracing even more conservative norms and values. The state has introduced further legal amendments that strengthen the institution of the blood family and family values and regulate women's sexuality by effectively attaching them to the demands of family, men, and the state. Consider these examples: in 2004 the government attempted (and failed) to modify the Turkish Penal Code by criminalizing adultery (*zina*); in 2008 then prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan initiated a pronatalist discourse, encouraging married couples to have at least three children; in 2017 he increased that number to five; in 2010, shortly after the government issued a circular on equal opportunities for men and women, Erdoğan explicitly stated that he did not believe in gender equality; the Ministry of State for Women and Family Issues, founded in 1991, was renamed as the Ministry of Family and Social Services erasing women's status as specific subjects of state concern. Intermediary mechanisms and local state actors (including bureaus attached to the Presidency of Religious Affairs) were used to convince couples to remain married if they were contemplating divorce, in order to protect family life.[73]

The state's hegemonic discourse on family life and gender roles, corresponding with the promotion of religion to younger generations in schools, brought new interventions into the organization of everyday life. There has been an escalation of state involvement in popular concerns related to how people drink, kiss, and entertain themselves; what kinds of homes they can have; and with whom they live, among others. The government has introduced new regulations on abortion and women's reproductive rights, restricted the sale and consumption of alcohol, introduced exorbitant taxes on alcohol and tobacco consumption, promoted women

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as the primary caregivers of families, prohibited single-person apartments in some construction plans, introduced more Sunni Islam religion courses into the elementary and high school curricula, forcibly removed two passengers who were kissing each other on public transport, investigated student apartments where females and males resided together, and banned political protests and demonstrations, including, since 2015, the LGBTI+ Pride March.[74] These state actions under an authoritarian administration have contracted both private and public spaces for dissenting groups, including trans people. Lives beyond the limits of the blood family and kinship structure are deemed less valuable and undeserving of state protection or distribution of resources. Official discourse privileges the family, denying recognition to those who do not represent themselves in familial terms. Trans people's claims and struggle over their intimate relations with their friends and their bodies are contested, negotiated, and shaped at the intersection of those legal regulations, institutional practices, and norms that inscribe the cisheteroreproductive nuclear family as the hegemonic model of intimacy in Turkey (chapter 6). Transness and sex/gender transgression, in fact, is one site among others (e.g., sex work, straight or queer single womanhood, gay manhood, nonmonogamy, single motherhood) where intimate ties and alliances between the state and the family are consolidated.

Needless to say, people in Turkey are not passive recipients of gendered and cisheteronormative frameworks of intimacy and embodiment. In fact, feminist groups in Turkey have been organizing against the hegemony of marriage, marital sex, and sexual violence since the 1980s. Beginning in 2012, feminist, queer, and trans groups and people have increasingly collaborated against the organization of social and everyday life within the strict confines of the family and the sex/gender binary.[75] My research and my political work over the years have shown me how participation in feminist, queer, and trans struggles and the finding of common vulnerable ground spawns new intimacies and affections for many. These political groups reject the social and institutional insistence on recognizing women as part of the family rather than as individuals and have organized to promote alternative forms of living arrangements, relatedness, love, sexual life, or networks of solidarity beyond the cisheteroreproductive nuclear family model. Several trans people who were injured by police violence or abandoned by their families found shelter, care, love, and survival in these communities. The intimate and affective ties that have emerged and grown among the community have translated into networks of care, political

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organizing, and struggle against police violence, familial abandonment, and social exclusion. The pleasurable, the joyful, and the humorous also played a significant part in the trans everyday through, for instance, *gullüm* moments. Communal energies, affect, and labor derived from relations of intimacy facilitated a radical environment of self-care.

Hence, *Violent Intimacies* is also a story about the world-making agency, capacity, and conditions of the trans everyday. The following pages demonstrate collectively produced moments of fugitivity, temporary worlds of suspension and transcendence, spaces for restoration and recovery, strategies of survival, and the embrace of laughter and tears in an otherwise cruel and violent world. Before diving into these stories of the trans everyday, it is crucial to provide a short history of trans activism, as political organizing constitutes one pillar of these world-making efforts.

LGBTI+ and Trans Activism: A Brief Transnational History

This book approaches transness in Turkey as transnational, a context that is constantly interacting with global medical discourses on transness, Western LGBTI+ terminology, political and legal discourses on hate crimes and human rights, and multifaceted understandings of sex and gender from scattered locations in the Global South.[76] The global mobility of people, capital, information, and identities, as well as its hierarchies and asymmetries, significantly shapes the trans everyday in Istanbul. Similar to other sites in the broader Southwest Asian region, local understandings of gender, sex, and sexuality in Turkey are far from untouched by transnational flows of northern (understood also as Western, global, modern) scientific, medical, and political discourses and practices.[77] These discourses and practices travel across local contexts, informing particular understandings of trans identification. As anthropologists Evelyn Blackwood and Saskia Wieringa argue, cultural location and global connectedness are in a dynamic and complicated relationship, such that gendered and sexual subjectivities are neither simply local nor wholly determined by northern discourses and practices.[78] Queer and trans lives, such as those I consider in this book, necessarily "reproduce and reconstitute the specific discourses, knowledges, and ways of understanding the world of their particular locations," which are both local and global.[79]

It is crucial to approach this transnational framework as a more scattered than coherent environment, with multiple spatialities and temporalities

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that connect across different postcolonial or occupied contexts in the Global South. For instance, the recent displacement of people en masse has given the transnational geopolitical situation even more prominence in Turkey. Wars, invasions, authoritarianism, and economic precarity in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, and Sudan; government oppression in Egypt; sanctions against Iran; and colonial projects targeting Kurds and Palestinians have made Turkey a crossroads for refugees and migrants. Multinational refugees stay in Turkey temporarily while seeking resettlement in Canada, the United States, or European countries, as Turkey provides refugee status and long-term settlement for Europeans only.[80] This situation has significantly impacted the lives of LGBTI+ refugees, who are subject to transnational and national legal regulation of sexuality, gender, mobility and borders, and racial discrimination in the liminal space and time in Turkey and beyond.[81] Therefore, it is important to recognize Istanbul, especially, as a multilayered and scattered transnational location that hosts queers and trans people from elsewhere in Southwest Asia and North Africa.

These cross-cultural and long-distance encounters can also create zones of what Anna Tsing calls “friction,” that is, “the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference.”[82] With regard to local nonconforming sexualities and genders, such frictions can occur in myriad settings, ranging from the nation-state’s reproductive policies to civil law, and from family life to the general heteronormative culture prevailing in everyday social life. One should approach these processes also as part of larger transnational stories that intersect with multiple competing projects within the national context varying, for example, from neoliberal frameworks to attempts to join the European Union (EU). Some of these competing projects take place also within the “developing/emerging nation” context with agendas of state modernization and the expansion of NGOs and the spread of human rights discourse, and more.

The human rights/NGO synergy with LGBTI+ movements and organizations has been crucial, and in relation to them, the facilitating role of EU accession should not be underestimated. However, from the perspective of contemporary dynamics, the most influential and fundamental of all these trends is probably the shift to neoliberalism. With the opening of Turkey to relatively unrestricted trade and financing through the economic model of private enterprise and free markets in the early 1980s, Turkey in general, and Istanbul in particular, became a popular destination for the in- and outflow of global capital, labor, discourses, images, lifestyles,

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and identities.[83] It is no surprise that these global flows have influenced and shaped the lives of trans people as profoundly as those of *natrans* people. What follows is a brief history of LGBTI+ and trans activism that has emerged from this transnational location of Istanbul.

The emergence of broader organizational efforts around LGBTI+ rights in Turkey dates back to the early 1990s with the foundation of Lambdaistanbul (1993), the first LGBTI+ organization of Turkey, later followed by Kaos GL (1994) in Ankara. While 1996 proved to be a key year in terms of organizational visibility, it was not until the mid-2000s that these organizations formally established themselves as associations.

In Istanbul LGBTI+ people used to organize regular gatherings in various places, including clubs and cafés.[84] When preparing for its first organized public activity in 1996, Lambdaistanbul invited local, national, and international figures, including intellectuals, artists, and representatives of LGBTI+ organizations from abroad, to participate in a series of events. The governorship of Istanbul prohibited the events the day before they started. Following the cancellation, the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights decided to add "homosexuals" to its reports on Turkey.[85]

Meanwhile, the first gay and lesbian radio program on Açık Radyo (Open Radio) began streaming regularly on Sundays between midnight and one in the morning; it lasted for a year and a half. This occurred during the organization of the United Nations Habitat II Conference, preparations for which included increasing police violence and pressure against trans people living in apartments close to the conference venue (chapter 1). At the Habitat conference venue, Lambdaistanbul organized a table together with the İnsan Kaynağını Geliştirme Vakfı (IKGV; Human Resource Development Foundation) a pioneering NGO established in 1988 that researches and develops intervention programs around marginalized sexuality, HIV/AIDS, sex work, and sex trafficking in the context of urban migration.[86] One of my field sites, Kadın Kapısı (Women's Gate), was a center initiated by the IKGV (see appendix on methodology).

Due to Lambdaistanbul and the IKGV's table at Habitat, the LGBTI+ organization gained visibility in the local media. They used this to release a press statement drawing attention to the police violence being used in the ongoing displacement of trans women; then, organizing under the Lambdaistanbul banner, they mobilized various local and international actors—individuals and institutions—to visit trans women's neighborhoods and protest against the police violence and the violation of the women's rights.

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In July 1996 the first Pride event took place at a dance club. In the years that followed, Pride expanded to include talks, panels, and movie screenings, gaining its current status as an annual event. Two years later, in 1998, the first nationwide LGBTI+ gathering took place, attended by Lambdaistanbul, Kaos GL, Sappho'nun Kızları (Sappho's Girls/Daughters), Bursa Spartaküs (Bursa Spartacus), and Almanya Türk Gay (Germany Turkish Gay); these meetings continued at six-month intervals until 2004.[87] Besides organizing these meetings, the groups listed took a lead role in organizing social events such as dinners, picnics, movie screenings, and parties to bring LGBTI+ people together and create a space for bonding and conversation.

These activities continued into the 2000s at an increasing pace and with growing attendance. The rainbow flag made its first wide public appearance in Ankara on May 1, 2001, at the initiative of Kaos GL. The following May 1, LGBTI+ people marched through Istanbul under the banner of the "No to War Platform" (Savaşa Hayır Platformu) against the impending US war in Iraq and the Turkish involvement in it.[88] With its strong ties to the transnational political arena, this demonstration established LGBTI+ visibility. The protestors chanted "Homofobini sorgula" (Question your homophobia), "Zorunlu heteroseksüellik insanlık suçudur" (Forced heterosexuality is a crime against humanity), and "Eşcinsel hakkı, insan hakkıdır" (Homosexual rights are human rights), which all had clear connections to international discourses on human rights. Toward the end of the same year, Lambdaistanbul participated in another mass demonstration against the war in Iraq, this time with its own banner reading "Lambdaistanbul EŞCINSEL Sivil Toplum Girişimi" (Lambdaistanbul HOMOSEXUAL Civil Society Initiative). Until 2006, Lambdaistanbul did a lot of organizing work at universities, at conferences, and in the streets, which made it possible for the organization to develop more permanent relations, communication, and collaborative work with other political organizations, particularly with feminist and nongovernmental organizations working on human rights issues.

From the early 1990s through 2008, Lambdaistanbul was also a political home for trans people. Until the late 2000s, trans women anchored the trans activist scene, whereas trans men emerged as political actors later, in the early 2010s. At first, some trans women perceived trans men as unfamiliar. I remember hearing some trans women reacting to the slogans including the word *trans man* at the LGBTI+ Pride in Istanbul in 2010, trying to make sense of the term.

Trans men gained more visibility and recognition within the LGBTI+ movement in Istanbul with the 2007 establishment of the Voltrans Initiative by three trans men. One of the founders was Ali(gül) Arıkan, a

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longtime activist in the feminist and LGBTI+ movement prior to Voltrans. Before his passing in 2013 as a result of ovarian cancer, he dedicated his last years to fighting against transphobia and struggling for the betterment of trans men's lives. Ali also started a blog in 2009 to talk about his trans experience and the problems of trans people in general and in Turkey in particular.[89] His blog received wide readership and became popular as a source of advice and guidance, especially for young trans men. Regarding the initial confusion about or nonrecognition of trans men as an identity in the LGBTI+ movement, in 2009 he commented as follows:

> When one says "trans," the first person that comes to mind is usually a transsexual [*transseksüel*] woman. There might be two reasons for this: first, our perception; second, society's perception. Society disregards, looks down on, and so torments trans women because they are women, and also they have "given up on their manhood." Mainstream media portray them as "monsters." For me, trans women are the pioneering actors of the LGBT struggle. This issue of "visibility" is similar to the case of gay men, who are the first people to come to mind when one mentions "homosexuals" [*eşcinsel*, lit. same-sexual]. So, lesbians and bisexuals become invisible. Yet transsexual and transgender men are at the bottom of the list when visibility is at stake. There might be many reasons for that, including the values attributed to "manhood," people's preferences to not organize, thus remaining invisible, or the dominant misperception that *erkek fatmalar* (tomboys) are relatively well-respected members of society, so trans men will have less trouble.[90]

Meanwhile, trans women, who had previously organized under Lambdaistanbul, decided to create a trans-majority space and, in 2007, founded a center, initially as a civil initiative, which they named Istanbul LGBTT. This was the second trans-majority organization in Turkey after the foundation of Pembe Hayat in Ankara in 2006.[91] Although used mostly by trans women, Istanbul LGBTT was open to everyone from LGBTI+ circles. During my fieldwork trans women would talk about the long-lasting transphobia within the LGBTI+ movement at various levels, ranging from the biased distribution of jobs in LGBTI+ associations to the prioritization of problems on the political agenda. Hence, they had found it necessary to create a predominantly trans space. Esra, Sedef, Sevda, Ceyda, and Meryem, trans activists for more than two decades in the early 2010s and the protagonists of many stories in this book, formed the core group of the organization. Esra and Sedef were the main founders of Istanbul LGBTT;

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before Istanbul LGBTT, they had worked in several political organizations, including leftist political parties and Lambdaistanbul. Separating from Lambdaistanbul was a story of escalating tensions that had long existed between trans and *natrans* people in the urban queer/trans world of Istanbul. Neither Lambdaistanbul nor Istanbul LGBTT hold permanent spaces anymore since 2016 and 2019, respectively, but they continue to organize occasional events as groups.

Philological Troubles: Use of Terms, Categories, Identities

Categories are archives. How we produce and define categories, what kinds of categories we choose over others, how we use or refuse them, or why we disidentify with them has a social and political history. Transness in Turkey is a site within which the category of transgender has emerged transnationally and undergone shifts in meanings over time. As anthropologist Gayle Rubin notes, "Categories invariably leak," they are limited, and "they can never contain all the relevant 'existing things.'"[92] They are historical, volatile, temporary, and inadequate containers in a sea of complexities and excesses of life. The contemporary trans scholarship presents invaluable efforts to turn this excess into a powerful element in the definition of transgender. To again draw on Susan Stryker's definition, *transgender* refers to "a wide variety of phenomena that call attention to the fact that 'gender' as it is lived, embodied, experienced, performed, and encountered, is more complex and varied than can be accounted for by the currently dominant binary sex/gender ideology of Eurocentric modernity."[93]

As much as they are excessive and volatile, categories are also crucial to the organization of our lives, our desires, our identities, and our senses of self. They have a dialectical power intrinsic to their construction, organization, and circulation: they function as regulatory instruments or even as weapons in the hands of normalizing institutions that impose a certain normative template on the complexities and ambiguities of life, thus perpetuating large-scale harm to those who do not fit or who cannot be contained. They serve for the production of norms that produce security for some populations and vulnerability for others.[94] They objectify us to establish truths and realities about our lives and bodies. At the same time, however, we objectify, instrumentalize, or use them to claim subjecthood, personhood, and belonging. We use them to make meaning about life and to establish and mobilize political claims. We use them to resist hierarchies

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of truth and reality and to transform logics of state power and unequal conditions of life.

Against this backdrop of categorical work, queer and trans activists in Turkey draw from the transnational proliferation of diverse categories for labeling distinctive understandings of sexed/gendered beings and sexual behavior, identity, and/or rights. Some of the local terminology of the LGBTI+ movement in Turkey "dubs" Western categories of sexual identity, mimicking them, yet animating them in a distinct fashion.[95] Turkified versions of LGBTI+ terminology form a sense of belonging in a global LGBTI+ community and allow for strategic access to transnational rights discourses. At the same time, they gain a life of their own by producing difference, which situates them in a "grid of similitude and difference."[96] How people work with them and the kinds of content they give to these discourses are of great significance. As anthropologist Tom Boellstorff underscores, "The similarity in terminology might mean similarity in identity, or it might not. It is an empirical question and thus depends on (1) careful listening that comes from actual research, and (2) how we determine what counts as 'similarity.'"[97] The LGBTI+ activists constantly negotiate the specification of sexual/gender identities and the rapidly changing discourse on gender and sexuality in their everyday lives. They mediate, modify, and shape the categories borrowed from the West along with the local queer terms, especially *gacı*, *dönme*, *lubunya*, *eşcinsel*, and *ibne*. Fundamentally, with respect to the issue of transnational categorization, the cultural, social, and political practices in Istanbul's trans and queer world show that people approach sexual and gender identity "as something [they] build and protect, rather than as a static category to which they either do or do not belong."[98] Simple translation becomes particularly fraught, therefore, and I avoid it here.[99]

The word *dönme*, similarly to *queer*, was widely reappropriated by trans people and integrated into colloquial parlance during my fieldwork. Originally, *dönme* meant "convert" and was historically used to denote people who changed religion, especially crypto-Jews under the Ottoman Empire who became Muslims in the seventeenth century.[100] The current use of the term among trans people has no religious implications (at least none that are obvious or conscious) and merely signifies conversion from one sex to another. In the local lexicon, however, I found *gacı* and *lubunya* to be more commonly used than *dönme*.[101] Both *gacı* and *lubunya* have more comprehensive meanings than *dönme* to the extent that they refer to the feminine gender. In other words, whether one has undergone any

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degree of GCS or not does not affect one's identification as *gacı* or *lubunya*. Indeed, trans people might also address some gay men as *gacı* or *lubunya*, depending on the men's level of feminine gender role performance. To a certain extent, the local categories of *gacı* and *lubunya* embrace trans people, gay men with feminine gender, and those who occupy a liminal position between the two.

Between the time of my main fieldwork and the time of completing this book, there have been notable social transformations in the world of queer and trans people in Turkey. The chapters that follow extensively discuss these transformations with a specific focus on the trans everyday, but here I want to focus on the specific category of *lubunya*, as it has gained more popular currency and been embraced by the wider trans and queer community since 2019. On one level, this shift reflects a powerful example of transness as an excessive site that cannot be represented, signified, or contained by a single category or by the international categories of LGBTI+. On another level, there is a much more interesting story to tell about the porosity of categorical borders. *Lubunya* now also embraces *natrans* lesbians, queer women, trans men, and nonbinary *natrans*/trans people alongside trans women, gay men with feminine gender, and those who occupy a liminal position between the two. The recent expansion of *lubunya* to include a wider group of LGBTI+ people, I argue, has something to do with the formation of new alliances among feminist, queer, and trans groups around transfeminism, alliances that emerged in reaction to the local forms and discourses of TERF (trans exclusionary radical feminism).

Starting especially with the International Women's Day March in 2011, the feminist scene in Istanbul has been marked by tensions between some *natrans* feminist women and a group of activists, including trans, queer, and other *natrans* women. While for some *natrans* feminists, trans politics has meant just another form of identity politics and is thus not engaged in a struggle to liberate women, trans activists often saw *natrans* feminists as gender essentialists and gatekeepers of the category of "woman."[102] In 2012 the *Amargi Feminist Journal* organized a series of roundtables to provide a platform for dialogue among feminist, queer, and trans politics. These exchanges, later published as a book, are characterized by questions now familiar to those of us at the intersection of feminism and trans activism:[103] What is feminism? Whose feminism counts as feminism? Which demands herald a more feminist agenda? Who is a woman? What's the difference between having "feminine experience" and "compulsory feminine experience"? Transfeminism emerged as an urgent and central topic in these conversations.

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Some of the *natrans* feminists have transformed through these conversations and revised their approach to feminism in general. Consequently, the 2012 Women's Night March included trans, queer, and some *natrans* feminist activists carrying their own placards that read "Transfeminists are here!"

In 2018 another crucial trans-related topic caused rifts and tensions among trans/*natrans* feminists and LGBTI+ people, inflaming the political scene once again. This time the issue revolved around the use of puberty blockers and hormone replacement therapy among trans children and youth, and its vilification by some *natrans* feminists. Conversations around hormone therapy triggered long-standing biases against trans women, which found expression in transmisogynistic phrases like *trans women's male privilege*. The entire exchange turned into months-long intense fights between trans/queer feminists and TERFS (who preferred to identify as "gender critical feminists"), that frequently flared up and continue to do so.[104] Because the disputes spilled over onto social media, they reached out to a wider audience, leading to growing support for trans and queer people among academics, journalists, human rights lawyers, NGO workers, and some political parties in addition to feminists and LGBTI+ people from across the country. Hence, the recent reclaiming of *lubunya*, I argue, is a product of this stimulating environment. The language we use to create categories and terms for our lives is a terrain of living; it evolves, responds, reacts, and reconfigures assemblages and alliances.

By bringing these local terms to the reader's attention, my intention is not, as already criticized by some scholars, to recover the "authentic" sexual and gender vocabulary or to safeguard the "traditional" terminology from the global discourses on sexual identity and thus to replicate a "self-romanticizing" gaze.[105] Although I distinguish in my usage between the "foreign" and "native" depending on my immediate focus in the text, I do not seek to maintain a sharp, rigid, or in any way purist division. Rather, my intention is to highlight the coexistence of both the local and the global terms for sexed and gendered practices, identities, and bodies and to draw attention to their relations and deployments in everyday language. And it should be noted that the local and the global are multivariant and not oriented only to Europe or North America.

Here I would make the point that the "borrowed" terms, such as *trans* or *transgender*, have more institutional and political value; they have a more formal register and are thus more commonly used as written forms. The local thus becomes colloquial. For example, when trans people visit a doctor or lawyer, they do not use the terms *gacı* or *lubunya*. Not only

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would they defer to the medical setting and the professional world of doctors and other health workers, but it would not make much sense to claim medical or legal services from the state with these terms, since no assistance is available on the basis of what they name. In these examples, language and space map onto each other in interesting ways and connect to intimacy, in that colloquial terms are reserved for friends and chosen family members, while more formal ones function as a marker of institutional relations or otherness/violence.

My primary selection of terminology has been shaped by these types of considerations. In reporting linguistic interactions and exchanges, I am attentive to people's choice of words in talking about themselves and their lives, identifications, disidentifications, and bodies, as well as those of other trans and queer people. When local terms were used in our conversations and interactions, I convey the original, without modification. I have also deployed the local words *gacı* and *lubunya* when I describe or talk about more informal and intimate settings, interactions, and encounters. I use *trans* as an umbrella term to refer to people who transitioned between genders or were transitioning through (varying degrees of) gender confirmation processes, who disidentified with any existing category of gender, and/or who, at the time, identified themselves as *transseksüel*, *trans*, *transgender*, or *travesti* but still considered themselves within the general category of trans.

Turkish is a gender-neutral language. There is only one pronoun for third-person reference, with suffixes added for the plural and other noun cases. No matter how much I try to do justice to the original meaning of words and their embedded cultural values and significations, there is an inescapable layer of incommensurability between the Turkish and English languages in this regard. In this book I sometimes deploy *they/them/their* to resolve this problem of translation. I am not concerned with making a strongly ideological point here, however, and prefer to casually accept the gender dichotomy of standard English, with, for example, feminine forms along with *trans woman* when referring to someone self-identifying as *gacı* and *lubunya*.

Mapping the Book

Chapter 1 is a story of trans geography in the urban landscape of Istanbul. Situating the sexual and sex/gender-transgressive character of Beyoğlu within a broader social context of racial, religious, economic, sexual, and

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gendered spatialized otherness, I delineate the historical and contemporary significance of space and place making to trans lives and queer possibilities. Trans people's everyday violent experiences of spatial discrimination, marginalization, and displacement by a range of institutional (e.g., the police) and noninstitutional (e.g., capital owners, landlords, neighbors, etc.) actors shape and remake urban geography through the lenses of sex/gender transgression. Their everyday struggles over the urban landscape are not only about constant displacement and forced mobility but also about spatial intimacies in forms of inhabitation, cohabitation, and emplacement.

Building on spatial forms of violent intimacies, chapter 2 examines the changing relationship among law, order, and trans people between the 1960s and the 2010s. This period experienced significant transformations in the deployment of the police force to criminalize and punish trans people in both public and private spaces. I elaborate on the forms of violent intimacies constituted between trans people and police officers, who embody state power through legal and extralegal means of surveillance and securitization.

Violent intimacies between the state and trans people's bodies become more apparent in sites of medicolegal regulation and control of "transsexuality" and gender confirmation, the topic of chapters 3 and 4. To change the color of their government-issued IDs, trans people must follow stringent institutional steps and search for ways to prove their "true" sex/gender for medical and legal authorities. This evaluation process opens trans people's bodies to various practices of violence, including specific forms of touch between the medicolegal actors and the trans body. I detail the entire gender confirmation process becomes as a site from which to scrutinize how the Turkish state, through its medicolegal techniques and actors, gets violently intimate with trans people's bodies.

Chapter 5 continues with the inscription of trans lives, bodies, and queer desires into the domain of law through femicides. Bringing together trans and *natrans* femicides, I look at the political life that is organized around sex/gender-transgressive and transgender deaths. My specific focus is on trials for trans femicides—which contribute to the mobilization of legal claims on "hate crimes," a category of crime that has not yet passed into the Turkish criminal law—and on the elimination of "unjust provocation" as a mitigating factor in the culprit's sentencing. These court cases constitute a crucial site to explore the intimate yet conflicted relationship between law and justice within the context of LGBTI+ politics.

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Chapter 6 sheds light on the resilient, imaginative, and creative labor of trans people by telling their intimate stories of friendship and family and kin making. I demonstrate how trans people recast everyday conditions of violence, familial abandonment, and death, transforming them instead into relations and currencies of intimacy. They deploy the family as a form of intimacy strategically reworked through queer alignments and ties. Through an intertwined network of care, labor, love, joy, and affect, trans women consistently invest in their friendships, contest the primacy given to blood families, and survive a violent urban geography.

Finally, the coda reflects on the changing forms and meanings of violent intimacies in trans lives in the ongoing sociopolitical transformations in Turkey, particularly since the Gezi protests in 2013 and the coup-attempt in 2016.

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