

ASLI ZENGİN. *VIOLENT INTIMACIES: THE TRANS EVERYDAY AND THE MAKING OF AN URBAN WORLD.* DURHAM: DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS 2024, 271 P. ISBN: 9781478025627

PEYTON CHERRY¹

Composed of a series of vivid personal stories by transgender individuals in Turkey and descriptions of Turkish legal and political histories, Aslı Zengin's monograph is a valuable from-the-field account of violence, intimacy, space, and state. Regardless of one's regional speciality or theoretical focus, Zengin's writing compels and educates about the everyday lives of people marginalised by a complex interplay of systems. *Violent intimacies: the trans everyday and the making of an urban world* is a monograph published in 2024 by Duke University Press. In six chapters bookended with an introduction and coda, Aslı Zengin covers the different mechanisms by which the Turkish state enacts violence on transgender citizens while also focusing on the strategies these individuals use to make spaces for community and family.

This book is situated across multiple disciplines, including anthropology, transgender studies, queer and feminist studies, and Middle Eastern studies. Zengin's book covers over a decade of research on trans everyday lives in Turkey. In the introduction, Zengin defines the concept of 'violent intimacies' as one used to 'expose the connective tissue of a cisgender normative social order that is intertwined with neoliberal governmentality, biopolitical and necropolitical order, and authoritarian management of social difference' (6).

Zengin distinguishes 'violent intimacies' from 'intimate violence', arguing that 'violent intimacies centres on the formation, organisation, and circulation of intimacy through violence and hence encourages readers to rethink the very notion of intimacy itself' (8). The author supports this distinction through both her theoretical engagements with intimacy, affective and physical proximity, and embodiment; and through the evocative accounts of transgender individuals. The rest of the book is organised by concepts as follows: (1) displacement as emplacement, (2) extralegality, surveillance, and police violence, (3) psychiatric demarcations of sex/gender, (4) touch, gaze, and the heteropenetrative state, (5) justice, criminal law, and trans femicides, and (6) funerals and experiments with trans kin.

The description of the geographical spaces used every day by transgender individuals, or *lubunya*, is the focus of the first chapter and crucially lays out the neighbourhoods and streets where *lubunyalar* were able to find work, homes and a sense of community. Although Zengin's addition of the historical changes different Istanbul neighbourhoods have undergone is significant to mark when and where the *lubunyalar* she speaks with have been displaced or emplaced, it is sometimes difficult to imagine or follow. This would likely be of no issue for a reader familiar with Istanbul, but for other audiences, the chapter would benefit from more maps, photos, or illustrations to communicate place.

¹ DPhil in Anthropology, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, University of Oxford. Email: peyton.cherry@anthro.ox.ac.uk

Following the movement of trans women through these neighbourhoods, especially Beyoğlu, establishes the methods by which networks and 'safe' spaces are cultivated. Importantly, Zengin argues that 'the presence of this place [Beyoğlu] has been essential to the reproduction of a sense of trans communality' and that even with multiple displacements 'trans people succeeded in establishing a form of emplacement by founding Istanbul LGBTT [a trans majority LGBTI+ organisation] and creating an intimate space of proximity with and for one another' (65).

Violence faced by police and government interventions is the focus of chapters two and three, including how discriminatory attitudes towards transgressive genders and sexualities are medicalised. Chapter two's emphasis on surveillance uses examples of the fines trans people were subject to through the hidden 'bonus system' where different categories of crimes would offer different points to police officers. Through the categories of *travesti* (transvestite) and *bilinen bayan* (the known lady) trans women became specific targets as police attempted to decrease sex work on the streets. This forced trans women to engage in even more sex work to pay the fines. Zengin sets this system of punishment within 'the logic of hypervisibility' wherein trans women are 'intensely visible as objects of police force and public gaze, while rendering them intensely invisible as ordinary subjects in everyday life' (93).

For Zengin, 'hypervisibility' is a concept interwoven with the violence and intimacy of transgender lives. It extends into the efforts of *lubunya* who wish to be legally recognised as their gender identity, which requires psychiatric sessions and medical surgeries. The third chapter creatively introduces anecdotes from medical professionals who presided over the state-mandated group psychiatric sessions and from *lubunya* who experienced them. By showing parallel perspectives of the psychiatric sessions and examinations required by *lubunya* to prove their 'true' sex/gender, Zengin more accurately illustrates the situation for readers, even those who have no prior knowledge of these topics.

Chapters four and five continue the themes of surveillance, hypervisibility, and legitimacy by describing the requirements for genitals trans people must have and the lack of punishment for the murder of trans people, especially trans women. Zengin describes the experiences of trans women who underwent surgeries requiring a penetrable vagina to meet the requirements of the state, analysing how 'touch and tactility operate as political tools' (131). The construction of biological sex via touch and gaze are vital elements to Zengin's argument and the brief chapter is a perfect companion to the previous one about psychiatric evaluations of transness. The hate crimes against trans people analysed in chapter five introduce how the acceptance of violence towards minority groups based on categorisation as 'honour crimes' or 'crimes of tradition' upholds the cultural norms of a cisgender normative state and permits defences such as 'unjust provocations' to limit the sentences of those who harm LGBTI+ individuals (157).

The final chapter brings the readers full circle with the funeral of a trans woman named Sibel which was described in the introduction. Through more personal anecdotes and several photographs from the field, Zengin discusses how *lubunya* communities often struggle to organise a funeral which permits trans kin to be laid to rest recognised as the gender they chose to live as. The concept of 'trans kin' is vital for this chapter and understanding themes of belonging, communality, and place-making throughout the monograph. Many *lubunyalar* are concerned about how they will be remembered after death, including whether they will be remembered at all. Some *lubunya* whose bodies are claimed by their blood relatives are buried in cemeteries for the unknown (*kimsesiz*). Due to both their transness and their occupation as sex workers, blood family may literally and figuratively bury their trans kin. Zengin engages with the notion of these acts as 'killing a person even beyond their physical death' and suggests that 'the blood family can be one of the most violent sovereign models of intimacy, a deadly one, in fact' (189).

However, Aslı Zengin does not depict any group in her monograph as simply evil or ignorant, arguing that it is institutional models and morals of gender, sexuality, and sex which largely determine the reactions of *natrans* (non-trans) Turkish citizens to the *lubunyalar*. She ends on a bittersweet note about the dissolution of Istanbul LGBTT and a description of what has happened to her interlocutors in the years since her fieldwork, including the reality that she has lost contact with many.

With a tremendous amount of care and sensitivity, Zengin writes about the recent histories of *lubunyalar*, and, although the first third of the book is sometimes too dense for non-specialists, the majority reads clearly and expertly. I expect this monograph will become a suitable touchstone for many scholars researching transgender issues, various types of violence and intimacy, and the complexities of visibility.

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