

SEXUAL MARGINS:  
A STUDY ON AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF “THE STATE”  
AND WOMEN SEX WORKERS IN ISTANBUL

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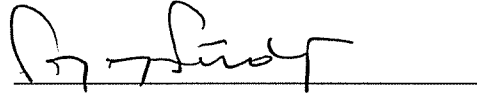
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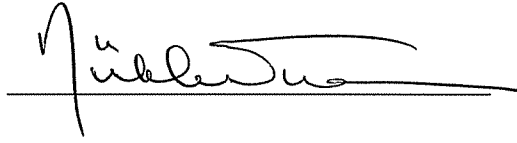
Sexual Margins: A Study on an Ethnography of  
“the State” and Woman Sex Workers in Istanbul

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## Thesis Abstract

Aslı Zengin, “Sexual Margins: A Study on an Ethnography of “the State”  
and Women Sex Workers in Istanbul”

This thesis aims to analyze the construction of sexual margins of “the state” as a specific relation between the ordering functions of “the state” and women sex workers. The main point in this study is how “the state” establishes itself as a masculine body in these margins. To achieve this goal, it compares the regulations, disciplinary mechanisms and various practices related to legal prostitution on the one hand and illegal prostitution on the other.

By conceptualizing silence, space, and violence as analytical tools, a particular performance of “the state” is explored through margins in both sovereign and governmental terms simultaneously. In this context, while licensed and unlicensed women are continuously rendered exceptional subjects, the ways in which they are exiled to the margins of the state and of the public designate two different constructions of “the state’s” margins.

The main differences in the construction of these margins lies in the stability of the former compared to the fluidity of the latter. The main point that this comparison reveals is the extent to which the letter of the law is instrumental in constituting not only the legal sexual woman worker as subject, but also how, through reference to these regulations, the illegal woman sex worker. However, in his latter case, regulations become extremely subject to individual wills, and therefore unstable, thereby constructing a space of arbitrariness that allows a form of sovereignty based on the constantly imminent exception.

## Tez Özeti

### Aslı Zengin, “Cinsel Kısıtlar: “Devlet” ve İstanbul’daki Kadın Seks İşçileri Üzerine Etnografik bir Çalışma

Bu tez, devletin düzenleyici işlevleriyle kadın seks işçileri arasındaki ilişkiye bakarak, devletin cinsel kısıtlarının nasıl oluştuğunu açıklamayı hedeflemektedir. Bu çalışmadaki en önemli nokta devletin mevcudiyetini bu kısıtlarda nasıl erkek olarak kurduğudur. Tüm bunları açıklamak için, kayıtlı ve kayıtsız fuhuşla ilgili düzenlemeler, disiplin mekanizmaları ve çeşitli pratiklerin karşılaştırması yapılmıştır.

Sessizlik, mekan ve şiddet analitik kavramlar olarak ele alınarak, devletin bu kısıtlardaki belirli bir performans biçimi araştırılmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, hem kayıtlı hem de kayıtsız çalışan kadınlar sürekli olarak istisnai önelere dönüştürülürken, aynı zamanda bu kadınların devletin ve toplumun kısıtlarına sürgün edilme biçimleri, iki farklı devlet kısıtlarının oluşmasına tekabül eder.

Kısıtların kurulmasındaki en önemli farklar, birinin sabitliğine karşılık diğerinin hareketli olmasında yatar. Bu karşılaştırmanın ortaya koyduğu en önemli nokta, yasanın sadece kayıtlı kadın seks işçisini özne olarak kurmasındaki araçsallığı değil, aynı zamanda kayıtsız kadını da bu düzenlemelere başvurarak nasıl oluşturduğudur. Fakat düzenlemeler, kayıtsız çalışanlarda gayet kişisel iradelere dayanmakta ve böylece sürekli değişiklik göstererek istisna halini her an ortaya çıkarabilecek bir hükümlerlik biçimine izin veren keyfiyet alanı yaratmaktadır.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

On 22 July 2007 general elections, for the first time in Turkey's history two licensed women sex workers, Ayşe Tükrükçü and Saliha Ermez, ran as independent candidates. Although they did not come up as winners, their voice was heard at least by some people. What is important to emphasize is not the number of people that their words reached, but the political space that they constructed to speak as women prostitutes and the words they filled that space with. In the center of their election campaign, were anger, disappointment and suffering towards "the state". They screamed their experience with the state. They cried out for what "the state" had taken from them. They screeched how their lives are filled with "the state" and its discriminatory, violent and deceitful acts. They were calling themselves "lifeless women whose lives have been stolen".<sup>1</sup>

Especially Ayşe Tükrükçü played a major role in making her voice heard as a woman prostitute. Recent accounts in the media show that she is getting ready to organize a political party for marginalized women, particularly the ones who have faced sexual assault and violence. The following words explain her attempt and keen desire to organize marginalized women sex workers as political agencies:

"Whenever we attempted to get into the society as chaste women, the system has always reminded us of our past lives. They humiliated us by saying "do not forget where you come from", but on the other hand, they also kept collecting taxes from the brothels. Hence, we aim at organizing a party for saving the ones who face violence, for saving women from the

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<sup>1</sup> "Hayatı çalınmış hayatsız kadınlar"

filthy world of prostitution and reuniting them with their social rights and securities. Naming this shame needs courage. We are showing this courage (...) everybody in this party will be from ‘the bottom’ of the society”<sup>2</sup>

The objective of this thesis is to dig into that “bottom”, in the lives of women sex workers. In the everyday lives of women sex workers, “the state” exists with its regulations, force, exclusionary and silencing mechanisms, and creates a marginal space to perpetuate its power in a gendered and sexual way. Hence, what I mainly explain in this thesis is the construction of the sexual margins of “the state” in relation to prostitution.

In formulating my questions I owe very much to Das and Poole’s (2004) conceptualizations of the margin and the state that they develop in their work *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*. They stress the significance of understanding “the state” through its margins where “the state” can no longer be conceptualized as a rationalized administrative form of political organization, but can be comprehended as a sovereign power that continuously establishes a relation between violence and its ordering functions. Hence, to look at the practices and politics of life in these realms is a medium to apprehend the political, regulatory and disciplinary practices that construct what we call “the state”<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> “Biz namusumuzla topluma karışmak istediğimizde sistem sürekli bize geçmişimizi hatırlattı. Bizi ‘nereden geldiğinizi unutmayın’ diye aşağıladılar ama, genelevlerden vergi toplamayı da bildiler. İşte biz de böyle önü kesilen insanların şiddetten kurtulmaları, fuhuş batağından kurtulmaları, sosyal hak ve güvencelere kavuşmaları için bir parti kurma hedefindeyiz. Türkiye’nin ayıbını Türkiye’nin önüne sermek cesaret ister. Biz bu cesareti gösteriyoruz (...) Bu partide herkes ‘dipten’ olacak.”  
<http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/news/415484.asp>

<sup>3</sup> I prefer to write “the state” in quotation marks since I do not take it as a unified and general entity. Rather it takes different forms of performance in diverse contexts. Hence, I am arguing a specific construction of “the state” in the particular context of prostitution.

One way to grasp the margins of “the state” is to analyze those areas that comprise of individuals who are “reconstituted through special laws as populations on whom new forms of regulation can be exercised.” (Das & Poole, 2004, p. 10) This understanding is very much applicable to the context of licensed and unlicensed women sex workers in Turkey. Laws that define, categorize and separate sex workers and their constant screening as licensed and unlicensed can be analyzed within those terms.

In Turkey, prostitution can be practiced legally according to the framework drawn by special codes which originally date back to 1930, but were modified in 1961 and 1973.<sup>4</sup> The existing conventions cover only women sex workers, and transsexual and male sex workers fall outside the established rules related to legal prostitution. The most important outcome of these conventions was the creation of a commission called Fight against Prostitution (CFAP) (*Fuhuşla Mücadele Komisyonu*) which is responsible for practicing the codes and bylaws specific to licensed and unlicensed women sex workers. CFAP is composed of three branches; management, health and execution respectively. The management branch comprises of the head of Provincial Health Directorship and an officer hired by her/him, the most authorized police chief and a commissioner hired by him, an officer from the vice squad, a consultant from the dispensary of venereal diseases and a specialist from the social service department. The health branch consists of a number of doctors and nurses, and they perform medical examinations of the sex workers and check the health conditions in the brothels. The last branch, execution, is composed of the most authorized police chief, officers from the vice squad, civil police, clerks and file clerks. They are all responsible for determining and registering women who are involved in sex work, revealing the hidden places where sex work is facilitated, bringing

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<sup>4</sup> Resmi Gazete, 19 April 1961

the ones who are suspected of being involved in sex work to the hospital for medical examination, closing the places of prostitution if necessary and forcing implementation of the rules that are agreed upon by the commission.

Seemingly, CFAP is structurally organized against the threat of venereal diseases, therefore, designs its acts so that they are appropriate for controlling the flow of diseases that arise from sexual interaction. However, the effects of this organizational design expand further into the everyday lives of licensed and unlicensed women sex workers through diverse institutional actors. These institutional actors are responsible for registration, surveillance, health controls, chasing of illegal sex activity and catching, and spatial controls. Hence, the legal code opens a wide field of action through which operations, the role of state agencies, and the interventions of a range of social actors can be observed. Consequently, the domain of prostitution involves multiple interactions between “the state” in Turkey and licensed/unlicensed women sex workers.

In this domain of prostitution, licensed women are allowed to work in privately owned brothels that are regulated by “the state”. The whole process of obtaining relevant documents and being subject to various institutional examinations in relation to health and security (that is state practices), as well as ideologies operating within these institutions that are both produced by and produce common sense perspectives of sex workers play an important role in shaping women sex workers’ subjectivities and notions of gender and inequality.

Unlicensed sex workers’ subjectivities and notions of gender and inequality are also very much shaped by their relationship to “the state”. These women are often subject to police raids, arrests and insults which they try to overcome by engaging in illicit relationships with state officials, particularly with the police. In that sense their

marginality is shaped by violence and (forced) sexual relationships which they imagine to engage in not only with particular men but with “the state” itself.

“The state’s” practices concerning prostitution have also spatial aspects that regulate and discipline women sex workers’ lives. Through enforcement of the laws, two different spaces of prostitution are constructed regarding legal and illegal prostitution and each space has its particular engagements with “the state”. Brothels are located and regulated according to strict rules defined by the conventions and women are made to lead a particular life behind the walls as a result of those disciplinary orders. There is also a guard, who is called *vekil*, at the entrance of each brothel building and he is responsible for watching over women’s lives and implementing the laws inside the brothels. *Vekils* are official men appointed by the state. Together with assigned policemen, who guard brothel streets, they shape licensed women’s lives.

Unlicensed women are not isolated in fixed places in contrast to the case of licensed women. Rather they hold temporary places for prostitution and continuously change their prostitution places as a result of instantaneous and frequent police raids. Their lives are shaped by the “chase and catch” strategy of the policemen. As a result, fluidity becomes a defining characteristic of the spatiality of illegal prostitution.

In this context, the relation of “the state” with legal and illegal prostitution depicts two different frameworks. Therefore, by focusing on both licensed and unlicensed women sex workers in Istanbul, my thesis aims to make a comparative study of the construction of two different margins by various state practices and how the state itself is constituted in that very process. Moreover, I also hold a debate about a specific construction of “the state” as a gendered and sexual entity, that is, as a masculine one, rather than a gender/sexual-neutral one.

I would like to note that for this kind of analysis on prostitution in Turkey, it is difficult to find empirical data and work. Not least because the world of prostitution is mostly considered as dangerous and troublesome, and because it is a systematically silenced issue. Silence about prostitution should be comprehended in a twofold fashion; the silence of “the state” and the silence of women sex workers. The first should be regarded as an example of silence as representation of power. Institutions’ unwillingness to share their information about prostitution designates “the state’s” power in turning particular knowledge into secrets, thus, producing an intimate space in its domain. On the other hand, women’s silence denotes a position of powerlessness in the sense that rather than choosing to stay in silence by their own free-will, women prostitutes are silenced through many practices concerning their lives. At this point, it is significant to realize silence as an analytical tool to apprehend the margins of “the state” and to excavate the constitutive elements of multiple silences.

To be more explicit, while in this thesis, I am scrutinizing the question of how sexual margins of “the state” are constructed with reference to prostitution, I use three analytical tools: first, silence; second, space; and lastly, violence in its articulation with emotions, intimacy and corruption. I claim that, by deploying all of these as apparatuses of its power, “the state” constructs its sexual margins as well as itself as a masculine body. This thesis is organized into three chapters, each of which problematizes those respective issues.

The first chapter concentrates on my fieldwork experience with an aim of depicting my encounters with the silence. During the initial steps of my research, I tried to gather information about prostitution through institutions. However, all my efforts failed and I was incessantly confronted with the unwillingness of institutional actors to

share their documents or data about women sex workers. At first, I tried to overcome the institutional silence, but then I recognized that it represents the very power of “the state” that assigns secrecy to particular forms of knowledge and that produces intimate sites to perpetuate and strengthen its existence.

Conversely, another type of silence that I faced is related to women sex workers. I could find few women to interview and even to reach those women has been a difficult task since they are rendered invisible in the public by many regulations, practices and disciplinary mechanisms. In their case, silence together with their absence in the public refers to their powerless position. Moreover, in the cases they agreed to talk to me, some of them chose to speak in a discourse that is publicly recognized. Thus, I have confronted another type of silence even when the subject was speaking. So, by telling these stories of my encounters with silence, the first chapter presents a detailed picture of how I formulated the central question in this thesis and conceptualizes silence as a constitutive element in the formation of sexual margins of “the state”. The following chapters scrutinize the penetration of “the state” in the lives of women prostitutes through different means.

In the second chapter, I analyze the relation between space and the body, and describe the spatial mechanisms of “the state” to regulate and (dis)place the bodies of women prostitutes relegate them to the margins. Actually, throughout the chapter, two different formations and conceptualizations of body-space relation are illustrated in comparison to each other. Whereas spatial mechanisms regarding the bodies of licensed women produce a fixed, ordered and well-regulated space of prostitution, the ones concerning the bodies of unlicensed women construct much more fluid, performative and ever-changing spaces of prostitution. Both types of mechanisms serve to make

women sex workers' bodies spatially invisible and play a central role in drawing the boundaries of "the state's" sexual margins.

The last chapter digs into the issue of margins in a much more detailed way since it describes contestations, negotiations and relations between institutional actors and women prostitutes in a concrete way. In this chapter I show how "the state" gets into and shapes the everyday lives of women by deploying violent, emotional, intimate and corruptive practices and constructs itself as a masculine body. It should be noted again that all those practices show different characteristics in the cases of legal and illegal prostitution. In the world of prostitution, mundane acts of "the state" designate how bio-power and sovereignty collaborate with each other and gain a sexual form of functioning. Together with the previous two chapters, this chapter is a contribution to depict the exceptional state of women prostitutes.

### Methodological framework

In search for some answers to the issues in my thesis, I intended to pursue an ethnographic research in Istanbul. I carried out fieldwork between March 2005 and December 2006. However, it was not a continuous fieldwork and has been broken many times owing to the problems concerning the subject of my study. Although Istanbul is such a huge city to be set as a research field, my field has been mostly concentrated on the districts of Taksim, Elmadağ, Tarlabası, Dolapdere and Aksaray. Most of the prostitution places and their actors are condensed in these areas. Due to constraints about my subject of study, I was not able to do a satisfactory participant observation in the field. For example, I was not allowed to go and do a research in either brothels or the



hospital, in which the health controls of women sex workers are practiced. However, with my participation in a NGO working on prevention of HIV/AIDS, I could visit places like pubs, underclass bars and some illegal prostitute houses. Most of my visits to these places were at night in an attempt to find women while doing their business.

Because that time period is formed by hours when women sex workers could become more visible and reachable compared to the time zone during the daylight. Those visits gave me a general idea of the sex sector, specifically of the illegal one. As a result of my fieldwork experience, at the end, I have a map of a fragmented and instable field.

Most of the data gathered about prostitution has been obtained through the interviews conducted with women sex workers. My interviews were carried out through a chain of people belonging to different environments and having different relations with the sex sector. Among them were journalists, doctors, NGO workers and some women from feminist organizations, and they helped me establish links with women sex workers. Therefore, interviewees are neither the habitants of the same area nor do they work in the same environment.

This thesis has been written on the basis of data collected from five women sex workers, two of whom are retired licensed and the other ones are unlicensed women prostitutes. At the moment I talked to them, the ages of the licensed ones were fifty-nine and sixty-two, and others were twenty-five, thirty and thirty-four years old. Despite my efforts to conduct an interview with a woman who actually works in the brothels, I finally backed down due to institutional and individual impossibilities. Moreover, I could not maintain long-term relationships with my interviewees and could only talk to them for two or three hours at the very first meeting. Especially the unlicensed ones continuously change their places. I have lost their traces after our first meetings.

With the retired licensed women, the situation was also similar. Although they are much more static compared to the unlicensed women, they did not want to meet me again after the first meeting. Hence, rather than setting up in depth interviews, I was able to do semi-structured ones both with unlicensed and licensed women prostitutes in a limited amount of time. The formulation of my questions depended on women's relations with institutional actors, their lives in the brothels and in the streets, and the difficulties that they face both in those places. However, I did not force women to speak in a way determined by a strictly drawn questionnaire. On the contrary, I let them tell me what they wanted during the interviews. Even though the number of women is small, the accounts and stories of women provided me a large amount of data. It is for this reason that prostitution in its relation to "the state" has never been spoken, written or taken up as an issue. Therefore, nearly all the words uttered by women prostitutes turned back to me as vital information about the world of prostitution.

Reasons underlying my choice to conduct interviews with only licensed and unlicensed women sex workers are two-fold. Firstly, and most importantly, women sex workers' narratives seem to be an appealing site to depict the practices between them and "the state". The way women sex workers present their encounters and engagements with the state agencies is central to my research in pursuing specific constructions of the sexual margins of "the state". In that sense, the manners both licensed and unlicensed women sex workers speak through are also my analytical tools in comparing and contrasting different margins of "the state" relating to diverse social worlds of the licensed/unlicensed women sex workers. Secondly, although I have planned to carry out interviews with local state officials, I was not permitted to do any research about prostitution in state institutions. Offers and suggestions by various institutional actors to

conduct another research project different from prostitution, taught me the significance of talking to women sex workers; I found this to be the only way to be informed about the relation between “the state” and prostitution. Apart from conducting interviews, I also focused on written texts and documents related to prostitution and women sex workers. As Ricoeur (1981) states “text is any discourse fixed by writing.”(p. 145) Therefore, the means through which these texts – in this case legal documents – speak have been crucial to my research.

## CHAPTER 2

### A SILENT FIELD

*Silence can be a plan  
rigorously executed  
the blueprint to a life  
It is a presence  
it has a history a form  
Do not confuse it  
with any kind of absence*

*Adrienne Rich, "Cartographies of Silence"*

Every researcher has a different story to tell about the field. The relationship that one establishes with the field often determines the content of the whole research project. During the beginning of this process, many researchers witness the failure of their prepared questions. In every research, it is unavoidable to have some assumptions from the very starting point and to base one's initial questions on those assumptions. However, facing and experiencing the field lead not only to the loss of validity of the initial questions, but also to totally different and new questions and problems. In other words, the fieldwork experience rather than an entry and immersion of the researcher in the field, is often an absorption of the researcher by the field.

My fieldwork experience has also determined my questions, problems and path regarding sex work, and forced me to find new and changing strategies to deal with the problems intrinsic to my research project. For example, when I have a look at the whole process now, I can neither describe a well-defined physical space as the field, nor can I portray a strictly demarcated community I became a part of. Consequently, my field experience just like "my field" is a fragmented, diffused, shattered and unsteady one. It is not a place that I have visited regularly; rather it is a continuously broken, pending and

“lost and found” space. Hence, what I can only do here is to depict the few women I met and the paths that I followed to reach them.

While trying to reach women sex workers, I visited several places that I thought would have ties with women. Among those places, the first one was the hospital where women prostitutes are brought regularly to have health examinations. Other places included institutions responsible for the control of prostitution, brothel streets, various cheap night clubs and bars, houses of prostitution, NGOs working on health issues concerning HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and even some journal offices and publishing houses that have published work about prostitution. The whole process has been a difficult struggle aiming “to catch” suitable women for my research. Nevertheless, for a long period of time, my attempts to reach women have resulted in nothing but disappointment. From the very beginning, I was aware that my field experience was going to be a challenging and tough experience since I didn’t quite possess the suitable language to speak with women sex workers and didn’t know how to behave around them. I had never met a sex worker in my life, and like the majority of people, I had been surrounded and bombarded with only mainstream representations that perceive these women as unchaste, transmitters of sexual diseases or as “fallen” women. I had encountered them in men’s stories either as partners of men’s first sexual experiences, thus as initiators of boys into manhood, or as fulfillers of men’s fantasies that would never be realized by their wives. Indeed, nearly all the information brought to the public about women prostitutes depend on men’s accounts or originate from those accounts.

The main constraint that I faced during my research was related to my gender. By being considered a “proper” woman, I was not allowed to enter places like brothels,

several night clubs and bars. More importantly, even when I succeeded in entering some of these places, what I faced was a determined silence on and by women prostitutes. Consequently, encounters with various types of silence form the core of my research process, and these silences in turn have produced the specific perspective I deployed and the questions I addressed in the following chapters. In other words, the field shook me silently.

In my first encounters, I took silence as a problem and tried to overcome it. It was only slowly that I recognized that this silence is, in fact, the very constitutive element of the answers that I was looking for my research questions. Gal (1991) asserts that “silence, like any linguistic form, gains different meanings and has different material effects within specific institutional and cultural contexts.” (p. 176) Hence, each silence I have encountered, and moreover, the attempts to render me silent have specific meanings in each context. This chapter aims at elaborating these contexts and exploring the meanings attached to them.

### Institutional reticence

When I decided to conduct a study about women sex workers, I began to search for places where I can meet women and interview them. Security was an important issue I was considering because I was entering an environment where totally unknown actors were involved. I was told many dangerous stories about “filthy” businesses going on among the pimps, the police and women in the sex sector. That was the primary reason why I decided to conduct interviews in Istanbul Dermal and Venereal Diseases Hospital,

which women regularly visit for their health checks. I thought that the space of the hospital would keep me away from any possible problems regarding security.

Licensed sex women come to the hospital two times a week, and spend time in the garden of the hospital while they wait for the results of their health controls and numerous tests. On the other hand, unlicensed women sex workers are brought randomly to the hospital by the police force after the raids to unauthorized prostitution places. These unlicensed women sex workers are also wasting their time in the hospital until they are let go if their test results are clean. In addition to my security concerns, the hospital seemed to be good place to conduct interviews since although I could try my chance to meet unlicensed women somewhere else, it was hard to meet licensed ones due to many rules and regulations restricting their exits out of the brothels. With these thoughts on my mind, I made my first visit to the hospital.

The hospital building is located on the city ramparts of old Istanbul. The history of the building dates back to the Ottoman period and it has a huge iron closed door that visibly differentiates it from other hospitals. Indeed no other state hospital has such a door; instead they are all open to public access. Besides doors being closed, a sign warns visitors that if these doors are touched they would be shocked. While I was waiting at the front door thinking of what to do, the sliding door came open and I was greeted by two officials. When I explained my demand to see the head doctor, they directed me to her office.

The head physician welcomed me in a very positive way when I told her about my study. During our conversation I learned that there was a mechanism in the registration process that separates women sex workers. The hospital has two diverse institutional structures: the main hospital building deals with only unlicensed women

and Karaköy Health Control (KHC) (*Karaköy Sağlık Kontrol*) is responsible for the licensed ones. Hence, in the same area, there are two separate buildings conducting the same health controls for each category of sex workers. They are also connected to distinct bureaucratic institutions. KHC that deals with licensed women is connected to the Municipality Health Department, and the other to the Local Health Authority. While the former hospital building has very strict working hours and days (working only on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays up until four o'clock), the latter is open during day and night through the whole week. I was not able to enter KHC the first time I visited since it was closed. Moreover, the head doctor also mentioned that it would be nearly impossible to talk to the head of the KHC even if he had been there, because he was unwilling to talk about the hospital, diseases, sex workers and prostitution. When I attempted to see him later, I had to agree with the head physician's words. However, now let me first describe the meeting with the head doctor in detail:

The head doctor mostly stressed the ignorance and indifference of all women's associations towards women prostitutes and complained that none of them ever visited the hospital or the brothels to find out whether these women were facing any problems. In this initial meeting my aim was to establish a common ground with her so we could have other meetings and so that she would facilitate my interviews with women sex workers. I had not gone there with a well-prepared questionnaire and tape recorder. When I asked her if I would be permitted to talk to the women in the hospital, she gave me an affirmative reply and mentioned her positive thoughts about my project. On the way back home, I had already begun to enthusiastically plan my next visit and felt glad that things had gone so easily. However, during my second visit, I was unpleasantly surprised. The head doctor refused to talk to me unless I had an official letter authorized



by “the state”. I tried to remind her of our previous chat and to reassure her of my intentions. Nevertheless, in response to my insistence, she clearly and formally said: “As a state’s doctor, I can only inform you about sexually transmitted diseases like AIDS or syphilis. You should send your questions that are outside this framework by fax, and then I can see which questions should be replied by me and which ones should be referred to other institutions according to the stated laws and regulations.” In response to all the questions I had already asked in our previous conversation (and she had replied comfortably), she sunk in a deep silence. When I understood that she was not going to speak with me, I asked her if she would let me talk to the women. She answered negatively and again she stressed the necessity of an official permit letter. From that time on, the references to legal permission have increased in correlation with the number of my visits to various institutional settings.

I encountered a similar example of reticence when I met with the head of KHC. This time the silence was stronger and more explicit. He refused my first attempt to talk to him and he wanted me to bring a permission letter from the institution that KHC bureaucratically tied to. So I arranged an appointment with the head of the Municipality Health Department. While I was waiting for him to receive me, I spent sometime talking to his secretary and asked whether the Local Health Department and the Municipality Health Department were working together in relation to prostitution. He claimed that the work in their institution is harder compared to the Local Health Department since the latter is solving all the problems with a “quick signature of the state”. The Municipality Health Department, on the contrary, has to struggle with many bureaucratic procedures.

The head of the Municipality Health Department informed me that he had called the head of KHC, and that the latter was notified of my visit. In other words, he had

given him permission to speak to me. Although I had received the authorization, I was not sure if the head of KHC would allow me tape-record the interview. So I took the risk, turned it on and put the recorder in my bag.

I saw him walking in the garden with an institutional employee and when I explained the reason of my visit, he told me he knew of my coming. However, he did not seem comfortable and wanted to keep the conversation as short as possible. Although I offered to sit somewhere and talk in length (because that was going to be an interview, I said), he insisted that there was no need to. While standing in the middle of the garden, I tried to recall the questions I had prepared, and asked as many questions as I could to keep our conversation going. First, we talked about sexually transmitted diseases and the precautions they take in order to prevent them. He was answering all the questions with very short answers and I was feeling a lot of pressure throughout the interview. When my questions about the diseases were over, I posed questions related to unlicensed and licensed prostitutes. As a result, the following fragments of dialog took place between us:

A: I want to ask you about the difference between women who work on a license and those who don't. What exactly does a license do?

D: (laughs) We've already talked a lot, bring a permit and we'll continue.

A: OK then, let me ask you this; since when are the licensed workers under the control of the municipality?

D: The municipality has always been in charge of it.

A: So it's not controlled by the ministry?

D: It's not controlled by the ministry. They were put in charge by the law, so that's why the municipalities have been taking care of this, they've always done so. The other side was also under the municipality but then parted.

A: When did the other side part?

D: Around 1981. You couldn't call it parting, exactly. It is not because they chose to. It was of necessity. You know, the municipality didn't pay them. When the municipality handed 4 or 5 hospitals over to the state, they handed this place over too.

A: So who pays for the expenses of the patients?

D: No money is taken from the women. The municipality pays all. Nothing at all is taken from the women.

A: How long have you been here?

D: What's it to you?

A: Just curious.

D: Don't be.<sup>5</sup>

I also asked some questions about women and wondered if it would be possible for me to visit the hospital to talk to the women during their visits for health controls. He replied in the following way:

D: It is forbidden to give information about these women, legally forbidden. This is why we're reserved. They have their privacy. I can't give you information and can't force the women to give information. Then their normal lives would be disturbed.

A: My aim is not to out anyone, nor to force the women to talk. I only want to get information regarding your situation. For example, have there been any women in recent years who applied to get registered?

D: (almost inaudibly) Bring a permit and we'll talk!<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> A: Vesikalı ve vesikasız çalışan kadınlar arasındaki farka dair bir şeyler sormak istiyorum. Vesika nasıl bir şey?

D: (gülüyor) Çok konuştuk, kağıt getir de öyle konuşmaya devam edelim

A: Peki o zaman şunu sorayım; vesikalı çalışanlar ne zamandan beri belediyeye bağlı bir şekilde denetleniyorlar?

D: Hep bu konuda belediye görevliyim.

A: Yani bakanlığa bağlı değil?

D: Bakanlığa bağlı değil. Kanun görevlendirmiş onları, o yüzden belediyeler bakıyor bu işe ezelden beri. Ayrıca diğer taraf da belediyeye bağlıymış, sonradan ayrılmış.

A: ne zaman ayrıldı peki diğer taraf?

D: 81'de falan. Yani aslında ayrılma falan da değil. Yani istemezlikten olmadı. Mecburiyetten oldu. İşte belediye para falan verememiş o tarafa. Belediye 4-5 hastaneyi devlete verdiği zaman, burayı da vermişler.

A: Hastaların giderleri peki nasıl karşılanıyor?

D: Hiçbir para alınmaz kadınlardan. Hepsini belediye karşılıyor. Hiçbir şey yok kadınlardan alınan.

A: Siz ne kadar zamandan beri buradasınız?

D: Ne yapacaksın beni?

A: Merak ettim sadece

D: Merak etmeyin

<sup>6</sup> D: Şimdi bu kadınlar hakkında bilgi vermek yasak, kanunen yasak. Onun için böyle, bizim çekimser duruşumuz odur. Bunların gizliliği var. Ben size bilgi veremem, kadını da zorlayamam bilgi ver diye. O zaman onların normal hayatları sarsılıyor.

A: Amacım zaten herhangi bir şeyi deşifre etmek ya da kadınları konuşmaya zorlamak değil. Ben sadece sizle akalı durumlara dair bilgi almak istedim. Mesela son yıllarda kayıtlı olarak çalışmak için başvuran kadınlar var mı?

D: (gayet kısık bir sesle) Yazı getir öyle konuşalım!

On the basis of these encounters with silence, I recognized the fact that the only way for me to have access to the unspoken would be by getting the signature of the state. In the institutions I visited, not only the knowledge that is produced as a result of various institutional practices, but also the knowledge that would be gained by a direct relation with women is considered as an asset of the state. The state renders its actors silent via the force of *his* signature. The ownership of that signature determines who can speak of the matter and who cannot and produces and reproduces institutional hierarchy. On the other hand, constituting “prostitution” as an arena where silence reigns, both transforms women into the state’s own private property and produces an intimacy between them and the state based on secrecy.

The act of producing a realm of secrecy renders certain subjectivities simultaneously intimate and political. “The state” establishes a strategic site for governance by marking certain subjects and information about these subjects intimate. The site of intimacy is very much dependent on the imaginary boundaries drawn between public and private. The ways in which these boundaries are drawn designate historically specific political concerns and contexts, and serve the organization of the whole society.

Sirman (2006) contends that in contrast to the Western definition of the public as a space of maximum public participation and free debate over political issues, the public in Turkey has always been an arena of display of the “modern” face of Turkey. Hence, the quotidian practices of the citizens are strictly regulated according to the state-sponsored ideals of modernity. In the light of this assertion, the public in Turkey emerges as a “site of anxiety” (Sirman, 2006) since there has always been a struggle to

keep the public as “modern” as possible, a struggle which created an attempt for the state actors to displace certain subjectivities that pose a threat to the display of the “modern”, from the public’s domain.

What is displaced from the public is (re)located in the private space and thus becomes part of a site of intimacy. For instance, familial issues related to sexual intercourse such as incest, domestic sexual assault and violence are silenced in the public realm as they are thought to belong to the domain of privacy and marked as too intimate and personal to be publicized. On the other hand, “the state”, too, constructs a space of intimacy for *himself* by turning information about some populations into secrets.<sup>7</sup> These populations are regarded as violators of the image of public as a “modern” display. Further, the motivation behind the construction of “the state’s” intimate sites serves a political aim in the organization of public life. Through its silences, the state protects its intimate sphere from the public gaze and keeps them as its secrets. In so doing, the state prevents its intimate issues from circulating in the public and therefore maintains its power through (re)producing secret intimacies.

Among the secrets of “the state”, prostitution constitutes the most intimate site in the sense that it is nearly impossible to gather institutional information about it, for

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<sup>7</sup>The Turkish state’s sites of intimacy include not only prostitution, but also issues around death and the military. “The state’s” similar silent attitude can be observed in the fieldwork experiences of my friends who made researches about institutions and practices concerning military and death of citizens. In a study about medical inspections regarding gays who are exempted from the obligatory military service if they prove to be homosexuals, the efforts of my friend to gather institutional knowledge about the related medical inspections practiced in specific state institutions failed. For more information see Oyman Basaran (2007). A similar state silence recalling the one I faced in my research took place while a group of friends were conducting a research about “the state’s” positioning towards its citizens after their death. They based their work on two institutions, namely Directorate of Graveyards of Istanbul and Medical Jurisprudence and tried to attain knowledge through institutional actors. However, they, too, were also denied to make interviews. See Seçil Dağtaş, Barış Bekdemir and Tuğçe Oktay (2003). All in all, these examples demonstrate that “the state” establishes its very power by rendering specific bodies and knowledge about them as assets of its own and attributing them a secret value. Hence, “the state” transforms those sites into its own spaces of intimacy.

prostitutes are made physically invisible and silenced through institutional regulations. Silence and invisibility nourish each other in the construction of “the state’s” intimate site. For this reason, I thought it would be more efficient to engage with higher ranks of the institutions in order to shatter this silence and to have access to this domain of intimacy. Therefore, I began to search for an institutional actor who has an upper position in the hierarchical order, and thus, has the right to sign to make the lower ones find their tongues. The main address I was directed to was the Local Health Authority that is responsible for signing a permit letter to do research in hospitals. Accordingly, I wrote a letter explaining my motivation to conduct a study in the hospital. Yet, I did not reveal that the study was going to be about women sex workers. Rather I declared that I was going to do a study on sexually transmitted diseases. Since women prostitutes are considered to be the main risk group for those diseases, I thought, to formulate the content of the letter in that way would facilitate the permission process.

I left the letter to the institution and they told me to wait for their call for a week. However, no one called, and when I called them, they explained that my request had not been discussed yet. After waiting one more week, I decided to visit the institution to talk to them face to face. When I went there, I learned that my letter had been forwarded to the co-director to be evaluated. The people directing me to see the co-director told me that she wanted to talk to me about my research project and the content of the letter. When I went to her room, she greeted me with a dominating and self-confident attitude and started asking me questions about my work. I explained to her that what I wanted to do was to listen to women sex workers’ stories and experiences related to sexually transmitted diseases, and that I regarded the hospital to be the most safe place to conduct such a research. Even though she was only responsible for KHC, which is dealing with

unlicensed prostitutes, she talked to me on behalf of licensed women sex workers and the following dialog has occurred between us:

C: All the women who work here have been educated and informed by the state about diseases. You won't find an infected woman here!.. The women who come here are under the control of the state and as you know a woman who has disease cannot work at the brothel. So, how do you suppose you'll be able to talk to them about their experiences of disease?

A: They live in an environment that is, afterall, very risky in terms of diseases and they are more vulnerable to be infected than anybody else. I wish to speak not only those to who have a disease but also those who live under the threat of infection. Furthermore, there are women who are caught working without a license and brought there for checkups.

C: So if I write a permit for you now, put yourself in that woman's shoes; is she obliged to talk to you?

A: I have no intention to force women, using the permit you will give. I'll just ask for their permission, and it's their decision. I'll try my chance.

C: So then you'll go there and sit, huh? You're not medical staff or anything! How do you suppose you'll talk to them?

A: I just want to talk. If you give me a permit, it'll allow me to talk inside the hospital. I want to have conversations with them in the cafeteria or in the canteen, after they are examined.

C: I cannot give you this permit. You have to go to CFAP, and write an appeal to them also.<sup>8</sup>

I tried to explain to her that various types of research are conducted in several hospitals nowadays and none of the people I knew had faced any difficulty in getting permission. Her answer was direct and without any hesitation: "The difficulties you are

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<sup>8</sup> C: Zaten çalışan kadınların hepsi hastalıklar konusunda eğitilmiş, bilgili devlet tarafından. Hasta bir kadın bulamazsın ki!...buraya gelen kadınlar devlet kontrolünde ve biliyorsun ki hastalık taşıyan bir kadın genelevde çalışmıyor. Sen nasıl hastalık deneyimleri üzerinden kadınlarla konuşacaksın?

A: Sonuçta hastalık riskini taşıyan bir ortamda yaşıyorlar ve herkesten daha fazla açıklar bu hastalıklara. Sadece hasta olanlarla değil, bu risk altında yaşayanlarla da konuşmak istiyorum. Ayrıca kayıtsız olarak yakalanıp, hastalık kontrolü için getirilenler de var oraya.

C: Ben şimdi sana izin yazsam, o kadının yerine koy kendini; senle konuşmak zorunda mı?

A: Vereceğiniz izinle kadınları zorlamak gibi bir amacım yok. Sadece izin isteyeceğim, kendi kişisel tercihlerine kalmış. Ben şansımı deneyeceğim.

C: Sen şimdi gideceksin ve orada öyle oturacaksın, öyle mi? sen herhangi bir sağlık memuru ya da görevlisi değilsin ki! Nasıl konuşacaksın?

A: Ben sadece konuşmak istiyorum. Eğer izin verirsiniz, bu izin bana hastane içerisinde konuşma izni sağlayacak. Yemekhanesinde ya da kafeteryasında muayene sonrası sohbet etmek istiyorum

C: Bu izni ben veremem. Fuhuşla Mücadele Komisyonu'na gitmen lazım, oraya da dilekçe yazman lazım.

facing are due to the subject you have chosen.” Then she forwarded my letter of application to the CFAP and another “waiting for reply period” has begun for me. This commission meets once a week and they discuss the issues that they see as relevant. I called the commission every Thursday for a month since their meetings were on Wednesdays. But every effort turned out to be a disappointment and I received no positive reply. I even asked the vice-chancellor of my university to write another letter with his signature on behalf of my project with the hope that a higher ranked institutional actor could convince the commission. Indeed, his signature enabled me to come face to face with some new and higher positioned officials, and ultimately, they put a protocol sheet in front of me to sign. When I read the items on the contract, I was very surprised. If I signed the protocol, the Local Health Authority was going to get the right to determine the content of my project. It was explained to me that the aim of the protocol was to make all the interviews conform to a certain rule and control. The starting and ending dates were to be strictly defined and there was no option to change those dates. It was forbidden to collect any information outside the framework of the stated content. Moreover, if I wanted to interview the hospital workers, who are dependent upon the Ministry of Health, I would have to apply for another permission letter. There were a number of the articles in the protocol which openly stated that my research would be monitored and controlled by several institutional actors. For instance, one of the articles in the agreement demanded the project to be executed by two subjects; the researcher and an employee of the Municipality Health Department. In addition, before I was to publish it or submit my research as part of thesis, I was to submit all the analysis of the data that is collected during the research to be evaluated by the relevant branch of the Health Department. If the branch thought that there was some



information damaging the institutions' public health concerns, then it would have the right to ban that content from being published. In other words, the agreement was a well-defined mechanism to regulate who can speak and what one can speak in and outside the boundaries of relevant institutions. This legal text assured silence by authorizing only certain speech acts rather than providing a way to interrogate and problematize what is left unspoken. Das and Poole (2004), by referring to Scott, assert that, it is through “documentary practices that the state makes the population legible to itself, creating what has been referred to as a legibility effect.” (p. 15) In this case, the state not only makes some populations legible to itself, but also renders the ones, who dare to gather knowledge about those populations, legible through documentary process. If one does not accept the conditions set by the state for accessing information, one is not allowed to go in its private informational domain. In fact, the state's goal is to establish hegemony over knowledge production. It secures this hegemony both by including the researcher in its private domain through “taking her signature” and yet, by forcing her to operate in the language of secrecy. It is through the signed protocol that the state ensures the researcher to speak in the name of the state. Other ways of speaking are rendered marginal, dangerous and even illegal.

Nevertheless, this protocol is not applicable to all sorts of knowledge produced in institutions of health. A number of my friends had received permission in a short time without signing any document. It was the subject of my project, which needed an authorization of the state. The reason behind this need is that I was entering the very private domain of “the state”. In other words, prostitution represents the sexual face of “the state” which is part of a very intimate space and should be kept in secrecy. Prostitution is like the bedroom of the state; a private room which guests are prevented

from entering and which holds secrets the guests would sometimes rather not discover. .  
When women prostitutes are made visible, given voice or talked about, the state's undressed body, along with *his* sexuality and secret intimacy are violated. Witnessing the state's nakedness, thus, is prevented through the protocol that functioned as an obstacle on my way to gain information and talk about the relationship between the state and the prostitutes.

Of course, I have not signed the protocol. That would be a “research suicide” as “the state” would get involved in and control every aspect of my research. Finally, I was dismayed to discover the impossibility of gathering knowledge about prostitution through institutions and decided to look for other ways to reach the women.

### Speaking through NGOs

After experiencing a failure to access formal institutions, I decided to pursue my research through more informal ways. I was aware of an alternative journal, namely *Hayvan*, and there was a columnist, who had a space called Other Lives (*Öteki Yaşamlar*) in that journal. He had conducted several interviews with people who have no public voice in the mainstream media. Some of his interviews were with women sex workers and he showed a keen interest in my research when I talked to him. My priority was to reach licensed women prostitutes since they were absent in all the places where I had tried to reach prostitutes. The journalist told me that it wouldn't be a problem to arrange some brothel women to interview. He called some of his friends working in the brothels. Two of them accepted to meet me yet, they didn't show up when I went to the

meeting place. Later, I was informed that they were afraid and did not have the courage to talk to me due to the possibility that I might publish the stories they shared with me.

We began to hang out with the journalist and he introduced me to several people whom I would have never met in my everyday life. Among them were hostesses working in underclass bars, regular clients of prostitutes, and some dancers working in night clubs. One day he took me to an old building, which belonged to the most famous brothel owner, Matild Manukyan in Turkey. He had told me that he was going to introduce me to a retired woman sex worker who was living in that building. While we were waiting and wasting our time in a teahouse inside the building, another young woman, Ayşe came in. I learned that she was an unlicensed sex worker and after I told her about my research, she agreed to see me on a later day.

A few days later, we indeed came together and talked for hours. I must say that this was one of the most impressive and touching conversations that I had in my life. She had brought her diary with her and at the end of our interview she wanted me to read some parts from it. There were horrible events written in her notebook. Also, she was in love with a policeman at that moment, and had been pregnant with his baby. A few days before we came together, she had an abortion. She was carrying a letter addressed to that policeman. At the beginning of our conversation, she had shown me the enveloped letter. At the end of our meeting, she wanted me to read that letter and tore up the envelope. After I read the letter, we went together to a stationer's shop to buy a new envelope. On the way to the shop, I promised her to meet again and to spend some more time together. On our way back she told me that she had a very good friend, who would also like to speak with me. Her friend was a married woman and her husband was "selling" her.

I could not call Ayşe for a month due to my intense studying period in the university. However, I could not reach her when I phoned her one month later. Her cell number was no more valid. I went to the place where I had met her to ask people about her, but nobody knew where she was. So, I lost her and never saw her again.

The journalist could not help me anymore as well. He called every person he knew with no avail. Subsequently, I began to look for other people who would have links to women sex workers. My next address was the Human Resource Development Foundation (HRDF) that had recently established a center called Women's Gate (Kadın Kapısı). The center was designed to be a gathering point for all the sex workers living in Istanbul. The goal of Women's Gate was improving the health conditions of women sex workers and to prevent the spread of venereal diseases, specifically AIDS by education. They were planning to set up scheduled educational programs for both unlicensed and licensed sex workers. One of the founders of HRDF was an old transsexual sex worker, and she eagerly welcomed me. She talked about the coming scheduled educational program, which they were planning to realize in the dwellings of sex workers. I said to her that I would voluntarily participate in such a project. She reacted in a positive way, and at the end of our meeting, she promised to call me when they start the program.

At the time I had contacted them, the center was in its forming stages. Instead of waiting for their calls, I called them regularly and visited the office for a few times. However, no one returned back to me and invited me to join their project. Although I was hearing news about their performances and ongoing works, they kept telling me that they did not establish the necessary relations yet, and that they were waiting for the "ripe conditions".

Several months have passed and I still had not succeeded in establishing a contact despite the fact that I had knocked every door and met as many people as I could. I could see many travesties and transsexuals working as prostitutes in the streets and in the places I went. Yet, I had no chance to meet women sex workers. Then, through a friend, I got acquainted with a project director, who was working in the Turkish Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Disease (KLIMIK) and leading a research about sex workers funded by the Ministry of Health. It was again a health project about HIV/AIDS prevention and aimed to reach 500 sex workers. During the project, several groups --each composed of four sex workers-- had been trained periodically to become educators on how to prevent sexually transmitted diseases. It was planned that they would convey the information they learned to other sex workers in their environment. Apart from organizing these training programs, the project workers were distributing bags containing condom, free HIV test coupons, and information about venereal diseases and addresses that individuals may apply in case they were infected.

My volunteer work was met with enthusiasm, and I participated in the project as a research assistant. As a group of four people--one of them a doctor--, we began to arrange visits to several prostitution places. These visits were realized late at night and we often went to pubs and nightclubs that are known to be places of prostitution. We talked to many club and pub owners. They created no problem since the project was funded by the Ministry of Health. However, most of them denied the presence of prostitution in their places. Yet, we knew from several clients that prostitution was being practiced there.

Thanks to this project, I went to places that I would never have had a chance to visit on my own. These places were concentrated in particular districts of Istanbul,

namely Taksim, Elmadağ, Tarlabası, Dolapdere and Aksaray. While Taksim and Aksaray are famous for tourism and prostitution, the other places are known for the poverty of their inhabitants composed predominantly by migrants. Apart from two of them, the places we visited were more often than not underclass clubs. The first thing I noticed in those places was that even though the owners welcomed us without any problem, they never let us speak with women working there. They made us sit on tables, which were far away from women's tables. We explained to the owners that our main concern was about diseases related to women and exclusively emphasized the significance of reaching as many women as we can. They all seemed to affirm our words, but stated that they were going to talk to the women on their own after we left the place. We even could not be able to give the bags to the women; the owners collected the bags to distribute women later. Again women's voice was missing; it had been lost among the many voices belonging to men.

The situation was absolutely different when we visited gay or transsexual clubs. No club owner prevented us from talking to the workers there. On the contrary, many of them called gays or transsexuals to us by themselves without any need for our request. The problem in those places was not about meeting sex workers or whether they would "speak," but rather the impossibility to establish long-term relations. When we first met them and witnessed their attitudes towards us, we assumed that we would be able to have a steady contact with each of them. Nonetheless, it was not the case and the ruptures in fact formed the very characteristics of the relationship we established with gay and transsexual sex workers. We could not perpetuate a long lasting contact and our conversations with them remained limited to what we had talked during our very first meeting.

Given the concerns of my research, the fact that the field never allowed me to sustain long-term relations has been an important obstacle for me. I was involved in this project because I had seen it as a means to make contacts with women sex workers. Although I have been to many places and met many people thanks to this project, I could not carry “my own language” into the field. On the contrary, I have generally felt framed by the language of health. The only way to get closer to the club owners was to speak with a vocabulary of infections or viruses. My own words were silenced. When I tried to ask *my* questions, they not only left them unanswered, but also seemed very suspicious of me. My language was denied legibility and validity not only in the institutions of the state but also in the NGO and the club. While I had planned to establish a familiarity and trust with the sex workers during these encounters and then to speak in my own terms during the subsequent meetings, the discontinuity in the relations prevented me from realizing this strategy.

While the project was going on, I learned that KLIMIK and HRDF had decided to assist each other’s projects and set up a collaborative relationship. They even planned to share some of their research assistants. Accordingly, I again had the chance to become involved with HRDF after months of waiting. This time their attitudes towards me were different, and the center had already become a place regularly visited by many sex workers. Sex workers were coming there not only for educatory or advisory services, but also for spending their spare time and meeting friends. Accordingly, I also started to spend some time with them during my free days. Among the visitors coming to the center, transsexuals and gay sex workers were forming the majority. I had only met four women sex workers there, and two of them were retired licensed women sex workers.

Just like me, the other prostitutes visiting the center were also complaining about not seeing many women there.

Those two retired women sex workers were employed by the project coordinator for helping with the office work and were also expected to find other women to participate in the project. When we met they did not identify themselves as retired sex workers. It was the project coordinator who gave me that information. On my behalf, the project coordinator requested them to make an interview with me. Although they both accepted to talk to me initially, they changed their minds a day later. According to the project coordinator, the reason behind this change of mind was their desire to forget about their previous lives. They did not want to talk to anybody as sex workers. Nevertheless, the project coordinator convinced one of them to make an interview with me. She told her that I didn't know about her past as a sex worker and that I just wanted to talk to her as a researcher in the project. During the entire interview the old sex worker presented herself as an NGO worker, who conducted research in the brothels. She was sometimes forgetting to play her assumed role. Her language switched between "I" as a site of experience and "I" as the witness and culminator of other's experiences. From the beginning till the end of the interview, I did not distort her play and pretended to know her only as an NGO worker. Nevertheless, I could not overcome the feeling that I was encountering another silence even though the subject was speaking this time. She was suppressing her past while she was talking to me in order to construct a new representation of herself that would be validated by my assumed ignorance of her past. The NGO which had given her a new identity "sucked her in and swallowed her up." (Pathak & Rajan, 1992, p. 262)



The discourse that she spoke with constituted her as a proper woman who deserves to be recognized publicly. Gal (1991) asserts that “some linguistic strategies and genres are more highly valued and carry more authority than others(...)These respected linguistic practices are not simply forms; they deliver characteristic cultural definitions of social life that, embodied in divisions of labor and the structure of institutions, serve the interests of some groups better than others.”(p. 177) Indeed, in the context of an NGO with a publicly recognized mission she probably thought that she should address me in the characteristic cultural definitions assumed to be non-dangerous and common to us. Hence she chose the authoritative genre of being a site of witness rather than experience. Maybe for her, I was representing a publicly recognized “proper” woman, who is well educated and who is interested in women sex workers only because she is conducting an academic research. Or, maybe socialized in the ambiguous world of scandals, in her eyes I was a reporter, who would publish all the information she got. I was warned many times that these things happened to many women sex workers in the past when they had dared to speak about their lives. Hence, I was probably addressing a subject, who was both struggling to occupy a space in and who was a producer of dominant discursive placement. Even though I showed my keen interest in listening women sex workers’ own words, she recognized me as one of those hegemonic subjects, who would deny hearing their voice and rather would create her own representation of her “authentic” story. Nonetheless, the fragmentation, inconsistency and incoherence in her speech allowed me to hear her silenced voice that could not be assimilated by the framework of dominant discourses.

## Encountering Silences

The field story I have been telling from the very start is based on distinctive formations of silence as its organizing principle. Each case must be thought of as the interplay of various power relations that shape the limits and the content of the languages spoken about prostitution. In many cases, absence and silence were the nourishing elements of each other. In other words, the reasons behind the failure of my efforts to meet a woman sex worker and of searching for a voice of experience, are in fact addressing the same problem. As a result of the fieldwork experience, I came up with the recognition that “the state” and its regulatory acts play a major role in silencing women sex workers’ voices and rendering their bodies invisible through its various apparatuses. As previously stated, the whole issue is related to the construction of a site of intimacy by “the state” to prevail *his* power and authority.

My bureaucratic “adventure” in the institutions showed me how the state establishes its own sexual private domain by rendering the knowledge of prostitution “secret”. Glenn (2004) points that, “silence can function as a strategic position of strength.” (p. xix) Indeed, my experience of facing institutional muteness helped me to understand the ways in which contextual formations of silence create a space for power to operate. The state, with its bureaucratic means, forecloses the attempts to gather information about prostitution and women prostitutes. Silence of the state renders women unreachable institutionally. However, this situation does not solely apply to the process of gathering information through institutions. During the fieldwork, I witnessed other institutional acts and mechanisms penetrating into the everyday lives of women sex workers, and as a result, making women invisible, silent or unhearable even in cases

when they attempt to talk. To put it simply, the field forced me to search for the practices and mechanisms structuring this silencing process, and the main question for me became how the state constructs itself as a private, intimate yet powerful actor who authorizes speech and silence, revelation and secrecy on its margins. While the state becomes more powerful as it accumulates in itself the authority to speak granted by formal signature, it also exiles women to unhearable and invisible spaces and prevents them from having their own voices. Thus, women are forced to dwell in the edges of public life, where the state exists in almost every mundane detail through its regulations, practices and control mechanisms. The following chapters describe and analyze the penetration of the state into the lives of women prostitutes through its different means. While I elaborate the ways in which this enforced silence on the part of the state operates as a spatial and subjective materiality, I also search for the construction of new languages that speak about and problematize the state which is the most important “owner” and simultaneously the most important source of identity for these women. The next chapter concentrates on the spatial mechanisms of the state that regulates the bodies of sex workers and their belonging. The final chapter is about the role that violence, intimacy, emotions and corruption play in regulating the ways in which the state relates to its sexual margins. The voice of women declare that behind this silence that masks itself as propriety, rationality and protection there are a bunch of irrationality, abuse and illegality hidden. These are as important as the former in establishing the image of the state and in giving it a meaningful content. It is here that power and contestation operates. I hope both of these chapters to contribute, though maybe only a little, to the shattering of silence.

## CHAPTER 2

### WHO OWNS SPACE?: THE PLACES OF PROSTITUTION

*And Polo said: "The inferno of the living is not something that will be; if there is one, it is what is already here, the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together. There are two ways to escape suffering it. The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space."*

*Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities*

In our everyday life we live in, walk around or, just pass by concrete places without even noticing them or those who dwell in them. Many of these places are welcoming thousands of social actors per day who have different subjective attachments to them. Indeed, even though a space seems to present itself as an objective and concrete realm, it is filled with plentiful amount of subjective meanings. The way I see a street that I pass through every day may be totally different from how someone sees it while working in it, or how another sees it while living in it. How many experiences can be imprinted on a space? Does inscription occur in one direction? What about the spaces that organize our behaviors, draw boundaries on our lives, shape our relations with others, fashion our bodies, in short, inscribe themselves on us?

For Lefebvre (1974) space constitutes a social category and a means of production. That is space is "both a *field of action* (offering its extension to the deployment of projects and practical intentions) and a *basis of action* (a set of places whence energies derive and whither energies are directed)." (p. 191) Thus, space is

always relational. It can ideologically be manipulated towards different ends to produce its own sets of relations and subjects, and can embed power relations related to regulatory regimes. What I will try to do in this chapter is to explore several questions about sexuality and space in relation to both licensed and unlicensed women sex workers. By scrutinizing the spatial distribution of prostitution, I aim to depict how the state actors and law collaborate in enacting several spatial strategies to marginalize sex workers. I will also try to elaborate how sex workers experience this very process. Following the previous chapter, I will argue that the absence of women sex workers' voice and their silencing by language is accompanied by the absence of control of their own spaces and their invisibility in public. I will thus show that the sexual margins of the state to which women sex workers are assigned to are constituted not only by verbal, but also by spatial exile.

In Turkey, we can mainly observe two different kinds of spatialities in relation to prostitution; one is the state owned brothels, where licensed women sex workers work, and the other is the street, where not only women but also men and transsexuals participate in an illegal sex market. The relationship between sexuality and space, and their respective meanings for different social actors (i.e. sex workers, pimps, police and clients) vary considerably in constructing two relatively distinct experiences of marginality and embodiment for sex workers. In the first part of this chapter, I will look at the spatial strategies that are used by state actors and law to place women sex workers in particular sites that are considered as legal spaces of prostitution. I will also elaborate the negotiations and contestations that occur between women sex workers and the state actors in the employment of those spatial strategies, and how all these practices produce those spaces legally as marginalized places. Secondly, I will discuss street prostitution to

show how the spatial strategies that are used in illegal sex work are different from the legal one, and how they serve to construct and (re)shape specific spaces as illegal marginal places. Such kind of a differentiation between legal and illegal places of prostitution does not mean that they have nothing in common. On the contrary, both forms of prostitution are spatially marginalized due to culturally dominant norms prevailing in society. Furthermore, women's accounts also show that, irrespective of whether they work as unlicensed sex workers or as licensed ones, they are witnessing and experiencing similar exclusions. Nevertheless as will be clear in the following pages, the spatial experience for licensed and unlicensed women are differentiated in terms of permanence/transitoriness, fixity/fluidity and stable/shifting boundaries which gives rise to different forms of agency in turn. I propose that while licensed women's lives are bounded and their life spaces are "fixed" and made "permanent" in institutional places of prostitution that have "stable" boundaries, unlicensed women usually shift the boundaries of illegal places of prostitution that as a result become "transitory" and "fluid". Accordingly, there occur many contentions, encounters and negotiations among several social actors over these ever changing and unsteady illegal places of prostitution. To put it explicitly, not only women sex workers, but also men and transsexual sex workers claims their right to own and inhabit those areas, and moreover, their respective encounters and practices in relation to other actors, especially the police, change substantially. For the purpose of my thesis, I will leave men and transsexual sex workers out of the picture and concentrate exclusively on women sex workers in order to ascertain the comparison and depiction of sexual margins of the state, because only women are allowed to work in the state owned brothels. Before beginning to canvass these two differently spatialized sexual margins, it would be efficacious to explain and

analyze the common motives behind spatial exclusionary mechanisms that place both licensed and unlicensed women sex workers on the edges of public life, and thus, position them as bodies belonging to marginal spaces.

### Sexual Morality as Cementing Space

“The prostitute” has always been a central figure in the social imagination of proper womanhood, and symbolically plays a significant role in determining which sexual moral standards are socially acceptable. As Jones (2000) mentions, a triad of “virgin/mother/whore” exists in relation to the definition of femininity within modernity and she argues that “‘whore’ is the category which, through difference, guarantees the respectability of the other two.” (p. 127) The situation is very similar in Turkey. A woman can attach herself or be attached to one of the positions that lie on either the “positive” axis or “negative” axis of the line determined by moral codes. Whereas the “positive” axis, which refers to certain moral types of being, is composed of positions like “sanctified mother”, “good woman” or “family girl”, the “negative” axis, which emphasizes the immorality of being, consists of positions such as “bad woman”, “whore” or “street woman”.

Jones (2000) continues by saying that, “perhaps the most significant aspect of that difference is the prostitute’s public identity: the prostitute makes visible and commercial, sexual transactions which are hegemonically defined as private and affective.” (p. 127) Indeed in Turkey, in order to be recognized as respectable, a woman should leave or keep all her sexual characteristics in the very privacy of her home if she attempts to go in the public. For instance, she should not wear short skirts, kiss her boy

friend on the lips or behave in an “excessively relaxed way” –as the saying goes-- like laugh at a high volume or sit in any way she prefers. These are thought to be the codes of prostitute behavior. Therefore, a woman should always control and regulate her body in a specific manner that is apt to the expectations of the society. These expectations that are shaped and constructed by culturally specific gender relations draw the boundaries of being a “good woman” in sexual terms and force women’s bodies to become sexually neutral. Other possible bodily emergings are punished by being stigmatized as “whorelike”. During one of my interviews with a woman sex worker, she told me an interesting example about such kind of a stigmatization. She works illegally and usually makes agreements with her clients in the streets. The police know that she works as a sex worker because sex workers are under continuous police surveillance. The police sometimes gather unlicensed women sex workers to the police station, sometimes take bribes from them or sometimes ignore them. According to many sex workers, it depends on the police’s mood in which way he is going to behave towards prostitutes. They add that in that are no woman can escape police surveillance. Once, while my informant was standing on the street to look for a client, she saw a policeman, who grilled a woman about whether she is a prostitute or not since she was wearing a very short skirt. At the end she was forced to get into the police car to be brought to the police station for investigation. My informant was sure that that woman was not working as a prostitute and the sole reason behind the policeman’s attitude was the woman’s style of dressing.

Another way of punishment concerning the women, who behave or are dressed in an inappropriate manner, is sexual harassment. While sexual investments made by women are punished, men’s sexual acts and performances as in the case of sexual harassments towards those “bad women” are routinized and normalized. To avoid facing



these sorts of conducts, it is the women rather than men, who are expected to set their bodily beings in order with respect to the male gaze. As long as women behave and are regarded to be prostitute-like it is assumed that they risk being accessible to all men and hence deserve their harassment. As Pateman (1997) very well states “prostitution is part of the exercise of the law of male-sex right, one of the ways in which men are ensured access to women’s bodies.” She also adds, “in prostitution, the body of the woman, and sexual access to that body, is the subject of the contract.” (pp. 194-203) Hence, based upon the social imagination of proper/improper womanhood, if a woman “behaves like” a prostitute in terms of her bodily public display, she becomes one party of that sexual contract as she is assumed to be open sexual activity, and thus to be sexually harassed. So the presentation or the practice of female sexual activity in the public is regulated and socially banned by the symbolic functioning of woman prostitute.

Especially the streets are the sites, where spatial ordering and representative mechanisms play a substantial role in producing and reproducing gender, sex and bodily identities of women. The patriarchal norms that are mentioned above can most clearly be observed in the streets, and they construct, shape and organize the spaces and appropriate behaviors belonging to those space. As Duncan (1996) emphasizes, “social relations, including, importantly, gender relations, are constructed and negotiated spatially and are embedded in spatial organization of places.” (p. 5) For example, it is worth mentioning that in Istanbul there a plenty of places where women can indeed display their sexuality without being categorized as “available” women accessible to all men. These places are upper class neighbourhoods where invisible boundaries protect women from open public harassment of lower class men. In other words, in such cases class codes inform and transform patriarchal norms and differentiate these women from

their lower class sisters who have to carefully watch over the meanings their dress and behavior communicate to men. This case is significant in showing that it is not only people who inscribe themselves on places but also places inscribe themselves on and gender bodies differently. Nevertheless, it is rather those places that are open to “public” and hence not “privatized” spaces of upper class but rather of men (hence the meaning of public is as Pateman and others have shown often filled by masculinity) that I focus in this thesis. Prostitution in upper class neighborhoods is also a common phenomenon but they are neither organized under police surveillance nor on the streets and hence would demand other tools of analysis.

To come back to what I have discussed earlier, in Istanbul in most places-- other than those “owned” by upper class-- female sexual identity is tried to be rendered invisible and is compelled to be privatized by domesticating, in accordance with the hegemonic gender roles. But when it comes to the prostitutes the struggle over the visibility and invisibility of female sexuality becomes denser because they are continuously destabilizing and disrupting the “proper” production of space. Through their appearance as sexual beings in the streets, they cause a “panic” (Valentine, 1996) because “images of selves trouble as they cut into spaces where they don’t belong.” (Probyn, 1992, cited in Valentine, 1996, p. 146) By quoting from Jackson, Hubbard (1998) also points out the “threat” of visible prostitute body in the streets and he explains that the “visible eroticization of the public realm through conspicuous vulgarity – and the promise of ‘unfettered sex’ in exchange for money – is seen as a threat to the stability of a patriarchal society in which domesticised, vanilla hetero-sex is constructed as the norm.” (Jackson, 1989, cited in Hubbard, 1998, p. 66) As a result, women sex workers are considered as the social actors, who are breaking from the world of

patriarchy that associates femininity with sexual passivity, and thus causing “male anxiety” in the public (Bondi, 1998, cited in Hubbard, 1998, p. 67).

Apart from being a “threat” or causing “anxiety”, prostitutes are also associated with polluting the image of the city. One of my informants complained about the visibility of prostitutes in the streets and she exactly used the word “pollution” to depict the image of the city with sex workers wandering or standing in the public:

“Right, they’re disturbed by the sight, we too are disturbed. We’re disturbed to see them working here and there, flashing their flesh. So to make things easier, you have to give them an address. The ones who work outside... I said: if you say that you are disturbed by these sights –he was a member of the security forces– you know, he said things like, “when I’m walking around with my children I am shamed in front of my family, they do this and that on the streets, etc.” I, too, am disturbed because it is visual pollution. But they have no choice. So then, I said, give them an address.”<sup>9</sup>

The interesting point about this informant is that she is a retired licensed sex worker. During the whole interview, she never mentioned herself as having worked as a sex worker and kept it as a secret. Throughout the interview she repeatedly stressed the need to clean sex workers out of the central places of the city, where mostly families or “proper” people spend their time, and to push the prostitutes to specific areas in the suburbs. By this way, she claimed, citizens could feel relieved, walk around in the streets with their families without feeling any anxiety or danger, and also the city could be cleansed out of dirt.

Douglas (1969) defines dirt “as a matter out place” and proceeds:

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<sup>9</sup> “Ha tamam, görüntüden rahatsız oluyorlar, biz de rahatsız oluyoruz. Sağda solda çalışmalarından, oralarını buralarını açmalarından illaki biz de rahatsız oluyoruz. Ama o halde bunları kolaylaştırmak için, bunlara bir yer göstermek lazım. Dışarda çalışanlar için... Ben dedim ki: eğer bu görüntülerden rahatsız olduğunuzu söylüyorsunuz – emniyet mensubuydu o- işte ben çocuğumla yürürken ailemden utanıyorum, çocuğumdan utanıyorum, işte bunlar sokakta şöyleler böyleler. Görüntü kirliliği oluyor, ben de rahatsızım. Ama başka çareleri yok. O zaman, dedim, yer gösterin.”

Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt, there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity (p. 35)

In terms of the symbolic system of purity that patriarchy engenders, the body of the prostitute becomes “as the body out place” and is constituted as dirt deserving rejection. Hence it is no wonder that one of the most important strategies to overcome this “threat”, “anxiety” or “dirt” is to implement spatial mechanisms to make women sex workers invisible in the public, and as a result, to reconstruct public as a pure place that is deprived of female sexuality. These contestations over public space are facilitated through the public/private dichotomy that “is frequently employed to construct, control, discipline, confine, exclude and suppress gender and sexual difference preserving traditional patriarchal and heterosexist power structures.” (Duncan, 1996, p. 128) By purifying public space from female active sexuality, the misrecognition of the public space as being dominated by sexually neutral abstract individuals while it is actually inhabited by male sexuality is strengthened. To imagine public space as such, in fact, shows how sexuality intervenes and provides the very basis of public space rather than just belonging to the private space. Specifically, the culture’s gendered values are reproduced precisely through interventions on prostitution, transforming public places into proper spaces turns out to be a performative project that every social actor has a role in accomplishing (i.e. approach of the police towards prostitutes, men’s sexual harassments, men and women’s derogatory gazes etc.). Butler (1990) stresses that “gender is the repeated stylization of the body; a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory framework that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.” (p. 33) In the same way, routine policing deeds of

each individual towards prostitute bodies congeal over time to give the appearance of a “proper” and “normal” production of space, and consequently, create a map of exclusionary mechanisms towards women sex workers’ bodies.

The next question then becomes, how do the means through which prostitutes’ bodies are excluded function? What are the mechanisms that try to make women sex workers invisible in the public life? Who are the principal actors that practice this very process of exclusion? The answers to these questions bring me to the main topic of this chapter: the spatial construction of the state’s sexual margins and marginal bodies belonging to those places.

### Licensed Sexuality

The spatial organization of legal prostitution in Turkey is practiced according to the framework drawn by special codes. The regulation embraces a very detailed picture of spatial arrangements related to the brothels and private houses run by legally determined subjects. According to these rules, legal places of prostitution can only be built or opened on the edges of public life:

(...) these neighborhoods will not be visible from public avenues, and will not be too close to such avenues. A brothel cannot be established outside the specified area.

Article 48 – brothels; excluding venues where sex workers receive medical examination or treatment, cannot be in the vicinity of and visible from official buildings or establishments, venues of religious education, sports grounds, central squares, entertainment and festival venues or close to or within the locations specified under article 178 of *Umumi Hıfzıssıhha Kanunu* (“General Code on Hygiene”).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> (...)bu mahalleler, umumi caddelerden görünecek yerlere veya bu gibi caddelere pek yakın olmayacaklardır. Tespit edilen bölgenin dışında genel ev açılmaz.

As it can be easily seen, a careful attention is paid to where the brothels will be situated and they are legally forced to be placed far away from all the places, which make up the public life. They are permitted to exist in so far as they become invisible in the every day life of the society. The motive behind restricting prostitution to special sites is the desire to protect public morality, to “shelter respectable citizens” from an immoral way of life (Hoigard & Finstad, cited in Tani, 2002, p. 353). By means of this article the state not only organizes the places of prostitution, but also the public places. This situation can fruitfully be explained in reference to Foucault’s theorization of “heterotopias” and “utopias”. While Deshpande (2000) is writing about the nation-space and Hindu communalism in twentieth-century India, he refers to one of Foucault’s unpublished lectures, which provides useful hints about “the ideological practices that link abstract spaces to concrete places in politically productive ways.” (p. 170) According to this theoretical framework, utopias are “sites with no place” or “fundamentally unreal spaces” whereas heterotopias are “real places – places that do exist”. While heterotopias refer to the places that can be lived, experienced and shown on the map, utopias “are abstract spaces with no immediate or necessary reference to any concrete place” and they may represent “society itself in a perfected form” (p. 170). At some point Deshpande (2000) departs from Foucault’s formulation and claims that “heterotopias are very special kinds of places, which mediate between utopias and ideological subjects” and they “incite, compel, invite” people to imagine themselves

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Article 48 – Genel evler; genel kadınları muayene ve tedavi edildiği müesseseler müstesna olmak üzere, resmi daire ve müesseseler, ibadet eğitim yerleri, spor sahaları, genel toplanma, eğlence ve bayram yerleri yakınında bu yerlerden görülebilecek bir mesafede ve Umumi Hıfzıssıhha Kanunu’nun 178inci maddesinde yazılı yerler dahilinde veya yakınında olamaz.

living in realized utopias (p. 171). By functioning as “an ideological hinge”, they tie “social subjects (people) with a possible-moral identity (utopia) that they could assume (inhabit)”. Additionally, he brilliantly points out the necessity of ideological labour to transform a given concrete site into heterotopia, and therefore, suggests thinking spatial strategies “as ideological practices involved in the construction of heterotopias” (Deshpande, 2000, p. 172). The state’s spatial exclusionary mechanisms related to women sex workers can be thought in the framework of this theorization and it can be said that by constructing an isolated prostitution place, the state ideologically invests in the imagination of the public space as a sex neutral, “proper”, “normal” and “decontaminated” realm. These gendered “interpellations” (Althusser, 1994, p. 121) through spatial organization, become one of the basis of an utopia called public space, where people imagine themselves as “proper” and “moral” citizens while they are actually bound to particular identities.

Pushing licensed sex workers in marginal places, moreover, paves the way for the emergence of these places as sexual margins belonging to the state. The relations between institutional actors and women sex workers in the brothels are continuous and unfold in multifarious ways. Supervision of both the space and subjects is tied to the CFAP, which is composed of three branches; namely management, health and execution. It is not necessary to restate all the actors and their relations among themselves since it has been explained in a detailed way in the introductory part of this thesis, but I should nevertheless remind the reader to some of the basic premises of those relationships.

Since the regulation of prostitution is a collaborative process and linked to many institutions, the actors employed by the codes and bylaws are composed of people in

local health authority, vice squad, dispensary of venereal diseases, social service department and police department. The commission arranges regular meetings once a week and discusses the issues related to prostitution. Among the duties of the commission, control of the brothels through scheduled visits is the most crucial one. During these visits, they check the compatibility of those places with the legal criteria. There are incredibly elaborate specifications related to the spatial organization of the brothels in the codes. For instance, the below criteria has been stated in the articles 80 and 81 of the regulation:

Article 80 – It is forbidden to decorate the gates or the facade of venues of prostitution with colourful lights. It is only permitted to use a small and uncoloured electrical lamp or another such instrument in order to illuminate the entrance.

Article 81 – The gates that lead to venues of prostitution should have no glass parts and should be closed at all times, only to be opened when visitors call in. There should be a clearly legible street number sign next to the door bell or door knocker. Frosted or otherwise opacified glass should be installed on all the windows up to two meters high from street-level, and all the shutters up to this height should be nailed closed and allowed to be opened under no circumstances. Windows on the other wings could be kept open but it is forbidden for women sit on the windowsills with improper clothing to exhibit themselves or to call out to the passers-by.<sup>11</sup>

These regulations can be thought of as a wider regulatory regime that aims at controlling sexuality and as Foucault (1979) emphasizes, these regimes are “processes, of different origin and scattered location, regulating the most intimate and minute

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<sup>11</sup> Article 80 – Fuhuş yerlerinin kapısında veya önünde reklam mahiyetinde haiz renkli ışıkların yakılması yasaktır. Ancak kapı önünün aydınlatılması için küçük ve renksiz bir elektrik lambası veya diğer bir aydınlatma vasıtası kullanılmasına müsaade olunur

Article 81 – Fuhuş yerlerinin kapıları camsız ve daima kapalı olacak ve ancak ziyaretçiler tarafından çalındıktan sonra açılacaktır. Kapı zili veya tokmağının yanında evin numarasını gösteren okunaklı bir levha bulunacaktır. Evin bütün pencerelerine yolun seviyesinden itibaren iki metre yüksekliğindeki hizaya kadar buzlu ve sair herhangi bir surette gayri şeffaf kılınmış cam geçirilecek ve birinci katın bu yüksekliğe kadar olan pencere kanatları mihlanarak hiç bir suretle açılmasına müsaade edilmeyecektir. Diğer kanatların pencereleri açılabilirse de kadınların pencere önünde açık saçık oturarak kendilerini teşhir etmeleri ve geçenlere söz atmaları yasaktır.



elements of the construction of space, time, desire and embodiment.” (p. 138) The anxiety of the state led patriarchy strictly orders not only the places, but also the bodies located in those places in a way so that their invisibility is ensured. Rigidity of the regulation turns brothels into worlds like prison. One retired licensed sex worker describes the brother in the following way:

“Yeah it’s closed, it was like an open-air prison. Prisoners have more comfort. At least they have a yard, they walk around. They probably even enjoy chatting to one another in the ward. We don’t even have that. It is closed; we see no sun, we see no shade.”<sup>12</sup>

Butler (1993) explains that the “exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet ‘subjects’, but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject.” (p. 3) These “abject beings” form the “unliveable” and “uninhabitable” zones of social life. Nevertheless, these zones are at the same time “densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject” (Butler, 1993, p. 3). Ahmed (2000) continues with Butler’s formulation and denotes that “such zones are inhabited precisely by those bodies which have failed to materialize in the familiar form (the ‘human body’ whose appearance of being unmarked by strangeness is precisely the mark of its privilege).” (p. 94) I propose that through the process of expulsion, the prostitute body becomes unliveable according to morally drawn limits. Being kept behind the walls and not being permitted to appear even through the window, the bodies of prostitutes are denied any existence in the social arena. On the other hand, this zone of uninhabitability constitutes the “moral” and “proper” woman as the subject.

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<sup>12</sup> “Yaaa kapalı, açık cezaevi gibiydi orası! Ya mahkumlar daha rahat. Mahkumların bahçesi var, geziyor yine. Ne bileyim, koğuştta yine muhabbetleri olur. Bizim o da yok. Kapalı bir yer; güneş görmeyiz, gölge görmeyiz.”

Another important point concerning the spatial discipline of prostitute bodies is the license (*vesika*) that is given to them by the police department in accordance with the decisions taken by the CFAP. As a result of this process, women are legally registered and officially authorized as sex workers. These reports do not only attach women sex workers to the brothels, but also establish relations between these women and various state agencies accredited by the commission. One of those affiliations, for instance, is the enforced consultations with doctors, results of which are recorded on women's reports. Licensed sex workers are obliged to visit the hospital twice a week for their routine health control and take a blood test in every three months. If the doctor diagnoses a venereal disease, s/he sequesters the report and keeps it until the woman recovers. During this period, she is not allowed to work and she can not enter the brothel since she does not have her report. Because at every entry to the brothel, each woman's report is checked; if a woman does not have a report, she is banned from the right to get into the brothel. This rule is valid for not only those women sex workers whose reports are kept, but also all women. The regulation strictly states that:

Article 62 – It is forbidden for brothel owners to allow into their brothels women or girls under twenty-one, or women who have not been approved by the commission.<sup>13</sup>

The same rule applies also to the venereal diseases hospital that women sex workers regularly visit as I explained in the previous chapter. One licensed woman sex worker's account explains these shuttling back and forth between the hospital and the brothels:

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<sup>13</sup> Article – 62 Genel ev sahiplerinin yirmibir yaşını bitirmemiş olan kadın veya kızlarla, komisyonca tescil edilmemiş kadınları her ne suretle olursa olsun evlerine kabul etmeleri yasaktır

“You see, on checkup days, the checkup is over, everybody’s back by midnight or one after midnight. Then the police comes. They say “everybody show their health records”, so all take out their records, they look at it. They see whether you are sick, whether you have a record. You can’t get in there without a record. (workday) It used to go on till very late but now I think it’s only until eleven or so. The same for the ones who sleep-over... They shut it down anyway. The police and staff who work there shut the street down. At the end of the workday, the customers leave and the girls settle their accounts. Those who’ll stay over stay, those who’ll leave.”<sup>14</sup>

So the report is one’s entrance card to go to both the hospital and the brothels.

Like the way the state prevents women sex workers to go in the public freely, all other women are also banned to enter the legal places of prostitution. Thus, the report allows one to pass different check points instituted by the state, and determines whether one belongs to the sexual margin, or to the morally sheltered public. By constructing a border between two spaces that should be experienced differently by different bodies and by setting mechanisms that distribute bodies to their proper place, the state constitutes itself at this very border, or in other words, that border itself is the sexual state.

The state is not left outside once one enters the brothel. On the contrary, it intervenes in and detects the homes of prostitutes. Women working in the brothels in small cities are often obliged to stay in the brothels. Those who are working in the big cities are able to live in their houses, but they need to certificate it. When a licensed prostitute wants to settle in a house, she should go to the police department with her

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<sup>14</sup>“ İşte muayene günleri, muayene biter, işte saat 12’ye kadar, ya da 1’e kadar herkes gelmiş olur. Ondan sonra polisler geliyor. İşte “herkes karnesini çıkartсын” der, herkes karnesini çıkartır, bakar. Hani hasta mısın, değil misin; kimin karnesi var, kimin yok. Karnen olmadan oraya giremiyorsun (paydos) Çok eskiden çok geç saatlere kadar sürerdi ama şimdi herhalde 11e kadar falan sürüyor. Mesela orada yatan için de o şekilde..... Zaten kapanıyor. Orada çalışan memurlar, görevliler zaten sokağı kapatıyorlar. Paydos oluyor. Artık paydos olur, müşteriler gider. Kızlar da hesaplarını görürler. Kalacak olanlar kalır, gidecek olanlar gider.”

place of residency documents to apply for a home card (*evci kartı*). One licensed woman sex worker's accounts detail this process in the following way:

“(from “neighbourhood headman”) you take the, uh, your residence record and a copy of your identity card. Ratified by the muhtar. You take it to, uh, the police. You say “I want a home card” and also you give them a picture. So they write your registered address there. And then they also write your identity details. Then they glue your picture and give it to you as an outside resident card. It's valid for a year. If you change your address, you go and do an address change. You get another home card, again. For instance when you're going out at the end of the day, you show your card and get out. If I am somebody who boards here all the time and doesn't have a home card, at the end of the workday, at night I am not allowed to leave to go out.”<sup>15</sup>

If an “*evci*” woman is going to stay with a man – whether it is her relative or not – she needs to report who that man is going to be. The reason behind this is that women are always under suspicion of engaging in illicit prostitution in their houses. So when they give an account about a specific man who lives at their homes, by this way that man proves not to be their client. The police raid women's houses from time to time, and in the case they catch an unreported man in the dwelling, they start the sanctionary process related to illegal prostitution. It does not matter whether the man in the house is a friend, relative or neighbour; every possible male individual entering the house should be reported to the police while women are applying for their home cards. If they do not and they are caught with a man in the house during the raid, they are brought to the police department for a detailed investigation.

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<sup>15</sup> “Muhtardan şey alıyorsun, ikametgahla nüfus suretini götürüyorsun. Muhtardan tasdikli olarak. Şeye götürüyorsun, Emniyet'e. Evcı kartı istiyorum diyorsun, bir de resim veriyorsun. Senin işte o muhtardaki adresini yazıyorlar oraya. Ondan sonra işte, kimlik dökümanını yazıyorlar. Ondan sonra resmini yapıyorlar, evci kartı diye veriyorlar. Bir seneliktir. İşte yine adres değiştirdinse, adres değişikliğini yapıyorsun. Tekrardan ikinci bir evci kartı alıyorsun. Mesela şeye çıkarken, paydosa çıkarken, evci kartını gösterip de çıkıyorsun. Ben devamlı burada yatan bir insansam ve evci kartım da yok ise, mesela ben gece paydostan sonra dışarı çıkamam.”

The controls of both the licenses and the home cards are practiced by the police located at the entrance of each brothel building. The regulation permits only one door for going inside and outside the building:

Venues of prostitution are entered and exited via one door. There cannot be another door that leads to other houses, streets, shops, cafes, casinos, or hotels. On the map necessitated by Article 51, the additional doors are to be marked clearly and these doors should be sealed shut.<sup>16</sup>

This door is called the “point” (*nokta*) by the prostitutes. Through the existence of this point, possible unbeknown entrances and escapes are foreclosed. For duration of 24 hours, policemen interchangingly keep guarding this point. While a woman is entering the brothel, she is expected to show her license, and when she is leaving the building in the night, she should present her home card. If a woman does not have a home card, she is not permitted to go outside of the building and she is forced to stay in there. The policeman at the point, control not only the women’s entrances and exits, but also those of outsiders. It is forbidden to visit a brothel under the age of eighteen and the police control the clients’ identity cards at the entrance. Moreover, they also prevent non-women sex workers from entering the brothel.

On the other hand, women sex workers are permitted to go outside for their everyday practical needs. But this issue of going outside is also tied to a registration and control mechanism:

“Say you have errands to run. Say I’m somebody who’s boarding there, say I have to go to the bank today. I tell the *vekil*, ‘I’m going out to run errands, will be back in two hours’. So I go for two hours, take care of stuff and come back. That duration is written down at the entrance. Oh... and then

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<sup>16</sup> Article 79 – Fuhuş yerlerine bir kapıdan girilir ve çıkarılır. Diğer ev, sokak, dükkan, kahve, gazino ve otel gibi yerlere ayrı kapı açtırılmaz. 51inci maddede yazılı krokide, evin giriş kapısından başka mevcut olan kapıları da behemehal gösterilir ve bu kapılar kapatılır.

there is... ah... at the entrance everybody has their own name. This is what I mean: say, I go there. I write down my name and last name there, I write down which house I work at, the number of the house. Say, it's number fifteen. So I write down name, last name, number fifteen. The police writes down my time of entry. Say I arrive, and three hours later there is a phonecall for me. I need to go and come back, right? So as I go out, I write down the time, and when I go in again I write down the time again.”<sup>17</sup>

The whole legality of this process ironically testifies how sex workers loose their claims over their bodies and become the properties of the state as a result of the license they officially take. When they become licensed prostitutes, at the same time, their bodies are transformed into the “assets” of the state. They are put under a strict control of authorities through a complex spatial coordination and regulation process and the places where their bodies enter, exit, live and visit are saturated with laws, bylaws and as I will show in the next chapter violence. At this point it is useful to categorize these bodies as belonging to fixed marginal places of the state – “places as absolute location” and “places as stasis” (McDowell, 1996, p. 32) In these margins, as I have tired to state, a great deal of power is concentrated in the hands of state authorities. The patriarchal state, by acting in effect as an institutional pimp, usurps the control that women might have over their bodies. Now, I want to turn my attention to the issue of street prostitution, which mostly comprises of women sex workers, who attempt to evade these control and disciplinary mechanisms. Hence, their relations to place and the resulting

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<sup>17</sup> “Mesela işin vardır. Eğer ben orada yatıp kalkan bir insansam, mesela benim bugün bankada işim vardır. Mesela vekile derim ki ben, ‘ben dışarıya çıkıyorum, benim iki saat işim var.’ İki saat çıkar gider, işini yapıp geri gelir. O zaman da noktada yazıyor zaten. Heee...bir de şey..ee. ..nuktada her girenin kendi ismi vardır. Yani kendi ismi vardır derken şöyle: oraya mesela diyelim ki ben geldim. Oraya ben kendi, adımı soyadımı yazıyorum, oraya hangi evde çalıştığımı – evin numarasını- yazıyorum. Diyelim ki onbeş numara. İşte adım soyadım onbeş numara diye yazıyorum. Hemen polis de oraya geliş saatimi yazıyor. Mesela ben geldim, üç saat sonra bana bir telefon geldi. Gidip tekrardan dönmem gerekiyor, değil mi? Mesela çıkarken, tekrar oraya çıkış saatimi yazıyorum, girdiğim vakit yeniden giriş saatimi yazıyorum.”

spatial strategies that they as well as institutions employ are different compared to case of licensed sex work.

### Fierce Fight: The Street, “the State” and Prostitution

As Elspeth Probyn has argued “we need to think about how space presses upon bodies differently; to realize the singularities of space that are produced as bodies press against space.” (Probyn, cited in Valentine, 1996, p. 149) I argue that while the conduct itself – that is prostitution – remains the same in the case of legal and illegal sex work, the fact that unlicensed women “work” on the street plays a crucial role in shaping their experiences. The street involves a variety of different actors and it becomes often a field of struggle between different bodies encountering each other. Especially the prostitute body lies at the very center of these struggles in terms of not conforming to dominant norms and practices. As I have stated previously, the public visibility of these sex worker bodies creates a feeling of anxiety, dirtiness and sometimes fear for the other individuals, who are using the street for different purposes like walking, passing, waiting for the bus, meeting someone or wandering. However, for unlicensed women sex workers, the same space is their work place, where their bodies are the commodities they sell. For example, to attract the attention of men and to find a client, they emphasize their sexuality through their clothes, bodily gestures or speech. People may witness the bargains among women sex workers and their clients while they are passing the street. Such kind of sexual performances provoke common detest among “normal” citizens of the urban habitat, and therefore, they themselves often contribute to strategies and practices of spatial exclusion along with legal authorities. Nevertheless, in the endeavor

to “purify” the streets, the police remain the chief actor expurgating unlicensed prostitutes.

In Turkey, regulations concerning prostitution affirm that if a woman engages in illicit sex activity as a prostitute, she should perform this job under the control of state institutions. However, according to the accounts of sex workers, there has been no new registration since 2001 and the brothels have already reached their full capacity<sup>18</sup>. Police usually does not go beyond arresting illegal sex workers, bringing them to the police station, and then afterwards to the hospital. After taking them under custody and keeping them for one or two nights in the police station, they set them free. Before the registrations came to a halt, they used to run after unlicensed sex workers in order to catch them and put them into the brothels. Yet the fear of being forced to register as a licensed sex worker is still widespread among illegal women sex workers. One unlicensed woman prostitute tells this fear accordingly:

“(…) actually I did not want to work the bar... A couple of friends pressured me into it actually. Then I figured it was a trap and ran away. They got the police to catch me... in those years you could be caught only a certain number of times... when you filled up your quota, say you got caught four or five times, they gave you a license and so you worked with a license.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> During one of the interviews, one retired licensed sex worker woman told me why the state has stopped to register women as prostitutes. She explained that many brothels were closed down in 2001. These brothels were run by an Armanian woman called Matild Manukyan, who had hit the headlines by being the highest tax payer for several times in the country. In 2001, she died and all her property have passed to her son as her only heir. After her death, a great raid had been organized to the brothels by the state. Her son was told that he needed to re-apply to the police department for running the brothels since operating these enterprises was in the right of his mother, not of him. However, he refused to run the business and, as a result, these brothels were closed. Manukyan had owned the majority of the brothels in Istanbul and when they stopped working, the remaining brothels could not absorb all the prostitutes, now without jobs. Therefore, a huge amount of licensed women sex workers were placed on the street – especially the ones who were very old or not very beautiful and attractive, and since then, the registration of women sex workers has stopped.

<sup>19</sup> “(…)aslında bara takılmak istemedim...bir iki arkadaşımın zoruyla aslında bara teşvik edildim. O da daha sonra tuzak olduğunu anladım ve geri kaçtım. Beni işte polise yakalatıp...bir kaç yakalatma süresi varmış o senelerde...o yakalatma süresini doldurduktan sonra, dört beş sefer yakalandıktan sonra eline şey veriyorlarmış, karne veriyorlarmış ve artık karneli çalışıyormuşsun.”



There is always an ongoing chase between the police and women sex workers. Women very often change their places, and accordingly, are not stable residents of one specific area. Obligated to continuous displacement by the police force, attachments of women's bodies to space gain a fluid characteristic.

Women's relations with space are not determined only by the police, but also by other unlicensed sex workers like men and transsexuals. In Turkey, the legal framework does not allow men and transsexuals to be registered as licensed sex workers. Being deprived of the right to work in the brothels, these out-law actors develop strong claims over the streets. Consequently, there occur severe contestations among sex workers about space to determine to whom those places rightly belong. For instance, one woman complained about not being able to work in the district of Harbiye, which is mostly occupied by transsexual sex workers in the night. If a woman sex worker tries to enter the area, there is the risk of being physically attacked. So sex workers turn some places into their "temporal homes" and this situation creates a fragmented map of different sexualities. While doing my research on women, I had the chance to observe the different strategies and sexual performances that different groups of sex workers employed in relation to actors like police, clients and pimps for securing their "temporal homes". However, for the aim of this thesis, I will exclusively concentrate on women sex workers.

Compared to men and transsexual sex workers, women prostitutes are less visible in the streets. According to the interviews I conducted, the geographical map of women prostitutes' work areas typically comprises of the districts of Taksim, Aksaray, Şirinevler, Avcılar, Beylikdüzü. The ways women use the space change considerably

due to their working styles. Some of them are using specific streets, some continuously change the streets they wait on, some are finding their clients through telephone calls and others are working in pavilions. During my fieldwork, I had the chance to visit several pavilions, cheap nightclubs and two private houses with a project group that makes research on AIDS. Few of these places were in Aksaray and the others were located in the area around Taksim. I have not been able to visit the districts of Şirinevler, Avcılar and Beylikdüzü for practical reasons. But the visits to Taksim and Aksaray have been fruitful enough to have a picture of how prostitution operates in Istanbul.

One can see unlicensed women sex workers not only in the street, but also in cheap nightclubs and pavilions. These places are often located under the ground. All of them were illuminated with colored soft lights and it is impossible to see people's faces apparently unless one is very close to them. One cannot see any other women apart from the ones who are working in these places. We, as the project members, were welcomed not during the working hours, but before the business had begun. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the owners who accepted to talk to us refused to introduce us to women sex workers. While we were talking with those men, I could observe the women sitting only a few tables far away from us. With their heavy make-ups, dressing style and overt sexual displays, they were either sitting together on the tables or dancing on the square. Most of these pavilions have contracted hotels nearby or rooms on the upper floors of the same building. Apart from these places, I visited two private houses that are in Taksim. These places were under very poor conditions and were being rented to sex workers who did not stay there. Usually the ones, who find clients in the street can use these houses and pay a commission to the house owner. These places are called *koli* houses. *Koli* means package in Turkish language. *Kolilemek* --that is a verb produced

from *koli*-- is used to refer to the act of sexual intercourse. This word is one element of a more general language that sex workers have developed in order to communicate with each other in their everyday lives. Street prostitutes use many *koli* houses located in various parts of the city. The time they spend in these houses is incredibly short. For example, when I was in one of them to meet some women and to make an interview, three women came in the duration of one and a half hour and each spent approximately just ten minutes with their clients in the rooms. Then they left the house to find another client.

Indeed, women sex workers use most places only temporarily. They have a complex network that provides them with places where they can bring their clients. These places are ranked in economical terms. The woman I talked to in the *koli* house expressed this condition in the following way:

“(...) mostly upper class, middle class. I have no lower class clients. We bring the lower classes here. Take the upper classes elsewhere. We go to five star hotels with the upper class guys.... the guy reserves a room. Gets his man to call me. Some of the hotels around Aksaray Laleli have deals... they call me to their rooms and I go. I’ve stayed at the Marmara. I stay at all the hotels. There is no hotel I haven’t stayed at. Nowhere I haven’t set foot in.”<sup>20</sup>

All these places are known by the police and they are under constant surveillance. Policemen organize regular raids especially to the poor areas where prostitution occurs. The police, pimps, hotel owners and women sex workers contest, negotiate and collaborate around the practice of these raids. Accordingly, illegal

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<sup>20</sup> “(...) genelde üst sınıf, orta sınıf. Alt sınıf yok bende. Alt sınıfları buraya getiriyoruz. Üst sınıfları başka yerlere götürüyoruz. Beş yıldızlı otellere gidiyoruz üst sınıflarla....adam yer ayırtıyor. Adama beni çağırıyor. Ama Aksaray Laleli taraflarındaki otellerde anlaşmalılar oluyor....odalarına çağırıyorlar işte gidiyorum. Marmara’da kaldığım oldu. Yani bütün otellerde kalıyorum ben. Kalmadığım hiç bir otel yok. Girip çıkmadığım hiç bir yer yok yani.”

prostitution generates an extensive economy of exchange and corruption not only in monetary terms, but also as I will show in terms of violence and intimacy. Women sex workers are forced to develop various strategies to deal with this environment.

As opposed to the all encompassing regulatory mechanisms structuring the spatiality of brothels, the places of illegal prostitution are open to fragmentary regulations. That is to say, while the police strictly observe and detect these places, they apply the codes and bylaws arbitrarily and sometimes ignore both the places and the women working there in return for substantial bribes. The different interests of police, pimps and sex workers and their different strategies to pursue those interests shift in time. In this fluid and changing economy, the re(de)construction of various areas as temporal places of prostitution become the name of the game. The displacements of women sex workers can be understood as a performative struggle over the space and over who will be recognized as the controller and producers of those places. The police try to control prostitute bodies by breaking the attachments that women sex workers establish between their bodies and several places. Hence, the play between the police as an institutional actor and the women prostitutes represents another constitutive process and contribute differently to the production of prostitution as the sexualized margins of the state. Contrary to the fixed and very well organized sexual margins of the state in the case of the legal prostitution, the margin emerging through the relationship between the police and the unlicensed sex workers' bodies is a fluid, ever-changing and performative one. This, in fact, designates the power of the state in constructing temporal and instantaneous margins in the public and in assigning marked bodies to those spaces.

## CHAPTER 3

### VIOLENCE, INTIMACY AND CORRUPTION

While I was thinking how to begin to write this chapter, I was struck by a piece of news that appeared in one of the Turkish mainstream newspapers' website. The event took place in Yozgat, which is one of the most conservative cities in Turkey and the newspaper was reporting a sudden attack of the public to the sex work places in the city. According to the news, the event began with an assault to a man, who was claimed to swear to the town people and was practicing sex trade in the city. This created a great reaction among public and a group of people tried to lynch this man. It was only after the police came that he was rescued. However, this did not stop the anger of the crowd. The group of people, who gathered to lynch the man, ended up setting fire to the four houses, in which prostitution was suspected to be practiced. The most direful thing about this event was that none of the attackers had been accused for their acts. On the contrary, the city governor, together with the police chief, made a declaration regarding prostitutes and promised to send those "kinds" of people away from the town.<sup>21</sup> Although this event might represent one of the harshest reactions towards women sex workers in Turkey, it nevertheless gives us a good entry point for understanding the violence that shapes women sex workers' lives.

Indeed, working as a woman sex worker in Turkey means living a life exposed to and surrounded by all kinds of violence. This violence includes both direct and indirect acts towards the bodies and lives of women, and forms an integral component of sex

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<sup>21</sup> Milliyet Gazetesi, 21 May 2007

work culture. While being beaten, raped or murdered can be counted among direct ways of violence that all women want to avoid, the more intricate and subtle manners of violence are seen to be “part of the job” by them and often go unnoticed. As I will argue in this chapter, these forms of violence are produced in the intersection of law, media representations of those women and their variegated interactions with the police, pimps, customers and other people in the public. Specifically, I will claim that the legal codes related to prostitution and the regulations they give rise to, create a space for the persistence of violence in the lives of women sex workers in indirect ways. “The state” that produces this legal realm, is the main actor in paving ways to these violent acts.

In the previous chapters, I have shown that sex work in Turkey is legally regulated and that women sex workers’ lives are managed by and subjected to legal authority. I also mentioned that state actors often implement extralegal disciplinary mechanisms to organize sex work, and both legal and extralegal mechanisms deprive women from many of their citizenship rights. I will explain in this chapter how as a result of limiting women’s citizenship, a domain, in which women are more prone to violence, is engendered. One of the reasons for this is the fact that the codes that regulate prostitution contribute to the strengthening of patriarchal values that are dominant in the society that in turn lead to more discrimination for prostitutes. Yet, another reason is that legality itself put women at the margins of society and state, and makes them and their bodies available to all kinds of abuse within this secret and yet official bedroom—as I noted in Chapter 2.

The practices, acts, discourses and representations that produce social violence are crucial to analyze for they procure the circulation of certain emotions both among the public and women sex workers. Das and Kleinman (2000) underline the blurring line

between collective and individual experiences of social violence, and they speak about the intermingling of moral processes and emotional conditions in producing violence. “Violence creates, sustains, and transforms” the interaction of moral processes and emotional conditions, and thereby “it actualizes the inner worlds of lived values as well as the outer world of contested meanings. Neither are social violence and its consequences only of one kind. Multiple forms and dynamics of social violence animate local worlds and the individual lives in them.” (Das & Kleinman, 2000, p. 5) In other words, Das and Kleinmann highlight the role of social violence in constituting and organizing normality and public order. Because of this characteristic social violence is often ignored by the public. For example, in the case of women sex workers, a humiliating gaze of the public or several discriminatory practices directed to them are mostly regarded as normal behaviors towards prostitutes who are breaking the sexual norm regulating women.

What is more, the dominancy of cultural codes towards women sex workers in the public, could sometimes lead to the justification of physical violence that is done to those women. Indeed, concurrent existence of social and physical violence is very much shaping the lives of women sex workers whom I made interviews with. Women describe a life that which is the product of multiple forms of violence that are interpellating a variety of subjects to become vindicated violent actors. These actors are as diverse as the police, doctors, pimps, customers, neighbours of women, passer bys or even the co-workers of women.

For the purpose of this chapter, I will look at a range of encounters, interactions and negotiations of the women sex workers with state actors in their lives, whose artery is violence. In accordance with this context, I aim to analyze how “the state”, as being

concretized in the bodies of policemen and other state actors, immerse in the everyday lives of women sex workers and construct its own sexual margins through the functioning of violence. Although there exists many commonalities, the interactions of licensed and unlicensed women sex workers with “the state” differ in certain respects. The driving force behind this difference is the actualization (or the potential threat of actualization) of the law, which draws a strict border between legal and illegal sex work. Therefore, the same actors when interacting, for example, with licensed women sex workers, may play totally different roles than in their contacts with unlicensed women sex workers, or vice versa. These sorts of shifts on the basis of legal criteria also open a space for constructing two peculiar types of sexual margins of “the state”, whose formations depend not only on violence, but also on particular forms of intimacy, emotions and corruptive mechanisms. Rather than taking all these constitutive instruments separately, I suggest to understand the construction of “the state’s” sexual margins in the articulation of violence, intimacy, emotions and corruption all at once, for which boundaries cannot be drawn clearly since their driving forces have their roots in the same culturally specific gendered relations of power. On the contrary, they make up the multifaceted face of the process of margin formation together, and inscribe this particular marginality in women’s lives. This inscription can be considered as a specific form of performance through which “the state” makes itself exist and visible, and bases its presence on a particular mode of violence employment and management.

“Violence needs a space”, Sanchez (1998, p. 576) says. In the case of women sex workers in Istanbul, the construction of “the state’s” violent space has its roots in two different contexts; first, cultural, and second, legal. One should keep in mind that these contexts cannot be understood in isolation from each other, but rather they should be



thought of as (re)shaping and constituting each other's very presence. Thus, as a starting point, I want to describe these cultural and legal spaces, which are enabling the performative violent acts of state's institutional actors. To do this, first it is worth explaining how "the state" can be understood in a specific social context rather than taking it for granted as a total entity, and how violence plays a significant role in formation of the state at the everyday level.

In his analysis of the modern state, Foucault (1982) talks about the close link between forms of power and processes of subjectification, and he coins the concept of "governmentality" to analyze the broader field of the government of conduct. According to him, "'government' does not refer only to the political structures or to the management of states; rather it designates the ways in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed: the government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick." (p. 221) Bio-politics is one of the most important components of governmentality transforming every possible or actual human practice to an object of knowledge, regulation and discipline, and creating "populations". These populations are regulated through mundane institutional practices such as registering and recording, all of which attach individuals to new kinds of administrative and "epistemological spaces, turning them into 'cases', elements in series, that could be rank-ordered and subjected to practices of 'optimization'." (Curtis, 2002, p. 510)

Governmentality enables the life of an individual to become the dwelling point of power, and sovereign power that rules over death leaves its place to "bio-power" that dominates over life. In other words, sovereign power, which is defined as the right to decide on life and death, loses its importance in Foucault's conceptualization of modern state power. In the final chapter of *History of Sexuality Part I*, Foucault (1998)

contends that “power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body.” (pp. 142-43) Therefore, rather than seeing the modern state as a center of power which is dictating its sovereign authority on the society, he proposes to understand “the state” as an ensemble of institutional forms of disciplinary mechanisms formed by “the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life.” (p. 140)

Although Foucault brilliantly shows us the operative functions of the modern state power, whose central object is various categories of populations, this analysis leaves many central constitutive elements of modern state formation in both developed and developing countries non-addressed. In many of the (non-)Western countries, rather than sovereignty being perished, it continues to exist as strongly as before in simultaneity with governmentality as a fundamental defining characteristic of “the state”. While, on the one hand, there is a wide range of normalized populations under the regime of governmentality; on the other hand, there is sovereign rule operating over some other populations, which are considered as exception by staying outside of the norm. These populations are deemed to remain unchanged, be incapable of being normalized, and thus, constitute a threat for the future. In modern societies, this dual structure of governmentality and sovereignty goes ahead, and “sovereignty and its traces are ubiquitous and important”, as “always appearing under the sign of something excessive, or exceptional” (Hansen & Stepputat, 2005, p. 16). As Dean (2001) very well puts it, the arts of governing and sovereignty cannot be considered as replacing each other but both as acting as a condition of each other. Whereas, “the existence of

nominally independent sovereign states is a condition of forcing open those geopolitical spaces on which the arts of government can operate”, at the same time, “a set of supranational agreements and regulations of populations is a necessary condition of the world inhabited by these sovereign states.” (Dean, 2001, p. 50)

What is worth to mention here is that, as Wadiwel (2005) argues, “biopolitics shifts the ground upon which political discourse occurs”, and hence the dominion of violence. In an economical sense, the modern state power places the “living bodies” in its domain to make continuous profit by optimizing their energies. In that sense, “violence directs itself towards a *care* for life.” (Wadiwel, 2005, p. 54) The main purpose of the violence is ensuring a continuous relationship with the living, rather than killing. So, instead of talking about the disappearance of sovereign violence, we can state that it is rather contributing to the exercise of bio-power. One can find sovereign violence everywhere: police, prisons law inscribing social spaces and regulating everyday behavior of people. In fact, what we face is the wide spread embeddedness of sovereign violence in every mundane detail and its growth into a more complex mechanism that is connected with human conduct, and thus it has a devastating influence upon the lives of various populations living at the margins. Through its fruitful capacity of diffusion, expansion and regulation, bio-power organizes the investments of sovereign power in its management of populations. Within this domain, by regulating the everyday life in its most intricate level and legitimizing violence, law represents the most fundamental characteristic of sovereign power.

While exemplifying the close relationship between sovereignty and violence, Benjamin (1996) stresses, “all violence as a means is either lawmaking or law-preserving.” (p. 243) Modern state owes its very foundation to the oscillation between

these two functions of violence. Especially lawmaking violence gains a great importance in deciphering the grounds of “the state’s” sovereign character. Benjamin introduces the concept of “mere life” as a subject of lawmaking violence, in other words, as being specifically connected to sovereign violence. This “mere life” can be expressed as a bare existence, over which command is exercised. Agamben’s (1998) term “bare life” originates in this concept of “mere life” and he conceptualizes it as a subject of modern sovereignty. “Bare life” is not only subjected to the violence of the law, but also it constructs and occupies a space over which an exceptional violence of the modern sovereign power exerts itself. According to Agamben, it is this very capability of creating an exception that formulates the structure of modern sovereignty. He states, “at once excluding bare life from and capturing it within the political order, the state of exception actually constituted, in its very separateness, the hidden foundation on which the entire political system rested” (Agamben, 1998, p. 9) In fact it is this constituted vulnerable position of the “bare life” where sovereign violence rests upon. Agamben designates this posem as an “inclusive exclusion”. It is inclusive in the sense that sovereign rule first suspends itself and opens a space for exception, and then maintains itself in relation to this exception. The capability of creating a state of exception is the very force of sovereign rule. It marks borders in social life as inside and outside and assigns specified rules to these specified territories where power can be effectuated. The moment of exception is the point at which both the “law-making” and “law preserving” functions of law are simultaneously actualized. By establishing an exception, the legal code is generated, and additionally ascribed a role to maintain the existing power of sovereignty as the unique founder of legality. Moreover, it is also the point at which the decision to use violence is performed. Hence, as Agamben (1998) also very well

emphasizes sovereignty presents itself “as a state of indistinction between violence and law, and this very indistinction constitutes specifically sovereign violence.” (p. 35)

At this juncture of law and violence constituting an exceptional space, I want to clarify the operative function of sovereignty not merely by its traditional power to condemn death or by its power to make life. I rather want to direct attention to sovereignty’s capacity of capturing and subjecting life to a governed violence. In that sort of life, we can talk about the diffusion of sovereign violence as being capable of penetrating in the very little details of everyday life through biopolitical techniques and practices. Furthermore, owing to Agamben’s (1998) proposition, it should be always kept in mind that even “the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power” and so “biopolitics is at least as old as the sovereign exception.” (p. 6)

In the light of this discussion I propose that the lives of women sex workers are continuously rendered exceptional and bare by the mutually constitutive forces of law and violence. In their work, Hansen and Stepputat (2005) talk about the emergence of the exception through three different processes:

First, as ideologies and institutions of improvement of “the people” – always haunted by connotations of being poor, undisciplined and plebeian – seeking to produce good citizens and thus constitute proper life of the community and “the state”. Second, the exception appears as decisions on the status of life and death as new medical technologies blur and dissolve erstwhile definitions death and as genetic engineering undermine definitions of biological life... Third, the exception is to be found in the camps of asylum seekers and refugees in many parts of the world. In this space, the displaced, the poor and the disenfranchised are governed as life outside the community while they are prepared for orderly entry into the *polis*. (p. 18)

What I am proposing is that women sex workers’ exceptional condition in Istanbul oscillates between the first and the third forms of exception both of which are crucial to apprehend the performance of violence in constituting and shaping the sexual

margins of “the state” and its belonging subjects. First, I aim to put forth a detailed analysis and description of the violent interactions between women sex workers and several institutional actors of “the state”. But before that, it is worth to elucidate the social and cultural setting where this occurs and which owes its existence to the intermingling of various power relations that are both producing violence and being produced by violence. For the purpose of this chapter, I particularly focus on gendered and sexual violence, and their cultural and social aspects. Agamben’s notion of “bare life” is gender neutral. By ignoring the role of gender relations, he fails to theorize specific forms of sovereign violence that are shaped by these relations.

In Turkey’s cultural, social and political context, patriarchal power relations are playing a considerable role in setting up a precise “sex-gender system” that is “both a sociocultural construct and a semiotic apparatus, a system of representation which assigns meaning (identity, value, prestige, location in kinship, status in the social hierarchy, etc.) to individuals within the society.” (de Lauretis, 1987, p. 5) In the specific case of Turkey, the most substantial component of the “sex-gender system” is the honor code, and with regards to this code, various strategies are put into practice to regulate the bodies and behaviors of individuals. As Sirman (2004) states the term “honor” (*namus*) “connotes the ability of the person to live up to the standards of masculinity and femininity as set by the society.” (p. 44) These standards are mostly related to sexual behaviours of individuals. Therefore, performance and display of sexuality work as a norm in the organization of the whole society. According to this norm, while some sexualities and sexual practices are deemed to be proper, others are rendered as improper in the social context where honor functions. In the center of such mentality, protection of familial order rather than of individual rights plays a determining factor in the

organization of political order that shapes the sexual behaviours of people through legal institutional practices.<sup>22</sup> (Sirman, 2002, 2004) At this point, it is essential to think of state institutions and their actors not only as sharing those social gendered norms, but also as reproducers of them.

In this framework, an honorable woman is expected to be a woman who is usually thought of in conjugal terms like being a wife of a man, a mother, or a virgin in the case of unmarried women. That is to say, these women are denied to display or show their sexual force and are anticipated to strictly control their sexual drives. Apart from these, an honorable woman is an expert in self-sacrificing and should devote herself to the wellbeing of her children, husband, in other words of her family. Most importantly, this effort gains a noteworthy aim and meaning when it is regarded in broader communal terms, because those women are in fact responsible for being mothers of the nation. Hence, the most striking point about the realization of proper feminine identity is only represented through familial terms and honorable women are always situated in a position to furnish healthy families both in physical and moral terms.

When the exceptional case of women sex workers is considered, the distinction between honorable and dishonorable feminine identity and its very effects are concretized. Women sex workers are considered to be lacking moral values to establish

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<sup>22</sup>Categories of properness and impropriety have their roots in specific imaginaries of community and Turkish nation-state. Sirman (2004) points out the specificities of kin-ship based societies in reproducing social standings in reference to real or imagined kinship bonds, and in these kinds of societies, honor appears to be the identities of people and honor is closely linked to communally based norms and controls about sexuality. In her articles, Sirman also brilliantly explains how governmentality functions through emotions to construct an imaginary of nation as a community and the nation-state in the particular case of Turkey's patriarchal gender regime. In this context, especially love, working together with honor code, is paid a special attention in its constitutive role to protect the familial order and to imagine the nation through kin-ship bonds. By illustrating the centrality of the honor code in establishing norms and controls regarding sexual behaviours, she importantly stresses the close relationship between love and the modern state power. See Sirman (2004, 2002) for a more detailed account.

a family life and they are also regarded as posing a threat to the moral familial order of the whole society. What interests me at this point is the creation of a ground that contains multiple actors who will fight against this threat, and the practices that are carried out to prevent and repress it. It is this very gendered context saturated by codes of honor that provides a space for the continuous existence and enactment of violence in the everyday lives of women sex workers. Both indirect ways of violence like exclusionary mechanisms, and more direct ways such as beating, raping or humiliating are mostly justified by the public when they are put into practice towards women sex workers. Broadly speaking, all these practices are accepted as reasonable sanctions to punish the subjects who deviate from the norm, and consequently, who carry a risk to break the rule (i.e. in this case proper womanhood). This environment consisting of various social and institutional actors, who get into relations with women sex workers, provides me with an opportunity to analyze the interplay of sovereign and bio-power that are nourished by gendered types of violence mechanisms.

From now on, I will try to shed light on the violent practices that are constituted by the interactions between women sex workers and several institutions and institutional actors such as the police, brothel owners, and doctors responsible for their health checks. Furthermore, I also want to briefly dwell on other violent acts carried out by several social actors like customers, public people, women's neighbours and even friends. But since my thesis aims to reveal the construction of "the state's" sexual margins, I will mainly focus on the role that institutional acts and actors play in investing their violent mechanisms to create the exceptional lives of women sex workers. Hence, as a starting point, I endeavor to put the legal framework concerning sex work into the center of the picture and explore the gendered violence embedded in this framework. Then, I will turn



back to women's accounts about what kind of relations they are involved in when encountering institutional actors and how they experience those involvements.

### Freezing Female Body: Legal Orders Concerning Prostitution

Up until nearly two decades ago, the Turkish Penal Code reduced the punishment of the rapist if the victim was proved to be a prostitute. Thanks to the struggles of the feminist movement, this article of the Penal Code is changed in favor of the sex worker and the Turkish state accepted her equal position in front of the law with other women in the case of an assault. The punishment reduction took its legal basis from what is called "grievous unjust provocation". That is to say, only to exist as a woman sex worker in the public was enough to provoke men's desire, and therefore, a rapist deserved a reduction in his penalty. The logic behind this regulation was linked to the honor code functioning throughout the society. Women sex workers were not deemed to face the same value as other women in front of the law. The law was actually sentencing being dishonorable rather than the rape itself. Although legal regulations concerning assaults towards women sex workers are more just compared to the past, the honor code is still strongly prevalent on regulations and bylaws regarding prostitution.

First of all, Turkish law categorizes women prostitutes as "common women" (*genel kadin*), which indicates that women prostitutes are accessible to all men. The report (*karne*) given to licensed women sex workers under various legal calculations is the most crucial constitutive element of prostitute identity and links women to many state institutions and control mechanisms. *Karne* represents a prostitute identity that is constructed by "the state" and women are stigmatized as state prostitutes by the

signature of legality. From the moment women are given reports, prostitute identity is imposed upon them as the major component of their social existence in the public.

Being a prostitute sticks as an identity on the bodies of women so that their access to full citizenship is blocked through many ways in their everyday lives. The report itself constructs a specific type of citizenship with its belonging legal codes. Sanchez (1998) points out, “the law displaces these women spatially.” (p. 550) In the previous chapter, I have tried to explain various spatial mechanisms that place women sex workers in the edges of public life. Through those exclusionary mechanisms, these women are constantly “displaced”. Not only displacement, but also various practices related to sex work specific regulations shape the lives of women in an intense way. These practices mostly do violence to women or can be manipulated towards violent acts by several actors. Specifically, isolating licensed women sex workers in particular places like the brothels and private houses, keeps those acts invisible behind the walls, and moreover, constructs those spaces as conducive to violence.

Apart from licensed women sex workers, I have also talked about the temporal marginal spaces, where unlicensed women sex workers are exiled in their everyday lives. I do not want to retell all these practices, but what I aim to highlight is the role of law in determining the boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate sex work places. While doing this, the law also produces socio-spatial zones in which violence is the major cementing element. To establish such exceptional zones, law refers to the categories of honorable and dishonorable woman. The actual goal of the legal process is, in fact, to diminish the risk of interaction between the chaste and unchaste since the latter one is always a threat to pervert the former one. By dividing women into the categories of honorable and dishonorable, the law organizes the public visibility of

sexual female body. While the law justifies the public presence of non-sexual female bodies, at the same time, it serves for the conditions of disappearance of sex worker's sexual body from the public. By quoting from Derrida, Grosz (2003) lays emphasis on the function of law that “is never exercised without a decision that *cuts*, that divides” and she adds “this indeed is the very paradox of the law: that while it orders and regulates, while it binds and harmonizes, it must do so only through a cut, a hurt that is no longer, if ever, calculable as violence or a cut.” (p. 140)

Regulations about prostitution make the distinction between honorable and dishonorable women most explicit in the articles below:

A woman who has intercourse with many men repeatedly is suspected to be occupied with prostitution and if she is proven to have the attributes of a sex-worker as defined by Article 15 following accurate evidence gathered via confidential and comprehensive investigation, first, the causes of this woman's drift into prostitution are to be inspected by the commission, and later precautions that would allow her to return to an honorable living are to be deliberated upon (Article 20).  
(Among the duties of Commission of Fight against Prostitution, there lies) detecting those who incite honorable persons to prostitution and immoral behaviour (Article 13-c).<sup>23</sup>

First of all, the article establishes only a tiny difference between a prostitute and a woman, who prefers having affiliations with more than one man rather than leading a monogamous life. If a woman is observed to be repeatedly having relations with many men, then she can easily be suspected to be a prostitute. The number of men she has relations with is also a determining element in placing her in the categories of honorable

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<sup>23</sup> Mükerreren ve bir çok erkeklerle münasebette bulunulması dolayısıyla bir kadının fuhşu edindiğinden şüphe edilir ve hakkında gizli ve etraflıca yapılan inceleme ile elde edilen müspet delillerle kendisinin 15inci maddede yazılı genel kadınlar vasıflarını haiz olduğunu meydana çıkarılırsa evvela bu kadını fuhşa sürükleyen sebepler komisyonca araştırılır ve kendisinin tekrar namuslu bir hayata dönmesini sağlayacak tedbirler düşünülür. (madde 20)  
(Fuhşla Mücadele Komisyonu'nun görevleri arasında) namuslu kimseleri fuhşa ve ahlaksızlığa tahrik edenleri tesbit etme (yer almaktadır) (madde 13 – c)

or dishonorable. In case a woman is not following an honored path of life, she is put under secret surveillance. In other words, if a woman's sexuality or sexual behaviours gain public attention, all the responsible actors are alarmed to search for the exact category to place her in relation to chaste. The law represents all women as honored subjects at the very beginning unless there is no sexual display in the public. But as soon as women become visible with their sexual identity, they compose a threat to the norm functioning in the public order and necessary legal tools are deployed to identify and categorize women.

Further, a woman sex worker is not presented as someone who is dangerous by herself, but rather by her capacity to invade and consequently to untie the very familial bonds of social order. The extraordinary concern about the protection of family appears in the following regulations:

In brothels and in individual prostitution houses married women cannot be employed as sex-workers (additional clause - 7/5786 – 31.1.1973). Women who want to establish a brothel should present a document approved by the notary to prove their husbands' consent and endorsement (Article 51 – f).<sup>24</sup>

These articles are very good examples for decoding the norms and values according to which the society is organized. A prostitute and a married woman are the subjects, who cannot be considered under the same categories of womanhood. To accept a married woman practicing sex work would mean already to break the norm that must be unbreakable. An additional legal proscription can be found in Çokar's (1997) report,

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<sup>24</sup> Genelevlerde ve tek başına fuhuş yapılan evlerde, Genel kadın olarak evli kadın çalıştırılmaz. (ek madde – 7/5786 – 31.1.1973)  
Genelev açmak isteyen kadınların kocalarının rıza ve muvafakatları olduğuna dair noterlikçe onalı belge... (Madde 51 – f)

which illustrates exclusionary and depriving legal regulations regarding women sex workers. For example, according to this report although it is obligatory to keep the registered details about women sex workers in secret, their children are allowed to be neither an army officer nor a policeman. Both an army officer and a policeman represent state's core actors in the sense that they work for the continuation of its very existence by fighting the inside and outside enemies. Such kind of a duty also carries those actors to the most privileged stately given status. Since women sex workers are regarded as breakers of the social norm that army and the police try to keep stand, their children lose their right to dwell in the privileged sites of "the state". In other words, children lose stately respect since they have "whore" mothers and "the state" constructs itself as honorable through *his* security forces.

Thus, all these examples show that women sex workers are deemed to be a threat to the moral and social fabric of society. The effects of this legal mentality working together with social and cultural values establishes a sexual margin where sovereign power and bio-power operate and inscribe themselves on women sex workers. Occupying this margin means not only lacking many social and individual rights, but also to be constantly subject to violence which in turn contributes to the production of the places where women sex workers are as marginal. Now I want to turn to various regulations that create violence in the lives of licensed and unlicensed sex workers. First, I will describe the case of licensed women sex workers whose lives are strongly ruled by "the state". Then I will shed light on to the lives of unlicensed women sex workers who might be regarded as more "free" compared to the licensed women.

## Performance of Law, Suspension of Lives

As I have told in the previous parts of this thesis, when a woman is registered as a sex worker, she is given a report linking her to various state institutions and practices. These practices involve regulations about spatial organization, regular health checks, and most importantly, very detailed control of women's everyday deeds. The preceding chapter portrayed how spatial mechanisms are playing a crucial role in creating the sexual margins of "the state". Through these mechanisms, women are kept behind the walls and rendered more prone to violence. In the narratives of women, the brothels that are both isolating and isolated places inhabiting only licensed women sex workers, are the centers where gendered violence works in its harshest way. In these places, violence has no witness or the witnesses should stay in silence. Remember that although women sex workers have the right to stay in separate houses apart from the brothel, most of them are forced to dwell in the brothels. To move to one's own house necessitates a process of detailed investigation, and proofs are needed to show that she is not going to practice sex work in her flat. So not only the brothels are under very strict surveillance, but also are women's own houses. Police raids to these houses reconstruct these dwellings as state owned zones rather than private areas belonging to women's individual lives.

In the brothels, women's every single step is bounded to particular rules. For instance, she can go outside only for limited hours, she must be exposed to routine checks during every entrance and exit, and she is obliged to work continuously. Their working hours begin at nine in the morning and last until midnight. They are not allowed to go out till the knocking-off time unless they have an emergency situation. Mbembe

(2003) talks about the “the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations” (p. 14) Under these conditions, by deploying disciplinary techniques, sovereign violence diffuses its constitutive presence over a sexually determined territory, and via constructing a specific life form, sovereign power inscribes itself onto the bodies of women. Following account depicts the cruelty of circumstances through which women’s workdays are shaped:

“I said let me have a day off every month, or every week. You know, I am not made of stone! Working from nine in the morning till midnight every day. Even a stone would tire, even stones break and corrode. No sitting down! You stand from nine in the morning till twelve at night. My feet would be swollen like a baloon, two meters wide. Your employer doesn’t let you sit down, it’s forbidden! I’m telling you, it’s as if you are a slave. They made me work even when I had my period!! I told the state, at least give me my period days off. I have my period, blood runs down my legs and they’re making me work! And they’re supposed to be “my state”! They make me work when I have my period!! ...Why? Cos they make money. You starve while working there; you work hand to mouth.”<sup>25</sup>

Licensed women sex workers typically compare their situation to that of the slaves. Theirs is a life as “a form of death-in-life”. Mbembe (2003) points out that “as an instrument of labor, the slave has a price. As a property, he or she has a value. His or her labor is needed and used. The slave is therefore kept alive but in a state of injury, in a phantomlike world of horrors and intense cruelty and profanity.” (p. 21) To be more precise, brothel women are forced to loose their most important right – namely their right over their bodies – become the property of another subject, that is to say, of “the state”. In other words, these women can be identified as what Butler (2004) calls

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<sup>25</sup> “Benim, dedim, ayda bir iznim olsun, veya haftada bir iznim olsun. E ben taş değilim ki! Her gün saat dokuzda git, gece onikiye kadar çalış. Taş bile yorulur ya, taş bile kırılıyor, paslanıyor. Oturmak yok! Sabah saat dokuzdan, ondan gece onikiye kadar ayaktasın. Ayaklarım böyle şişiyor, davul gibi, iki metre. İşveren oturtmuyor ki seni, yasak! Ya diyorum ya, orada köle gibi!... adet oluyordum, adetli bile çalıştırıyorlar yaa!! Hiç olmazsa adet günlerinde izinli yap, dedim devlete. Adet günü kanlar paçalarımдан, bacaklarımдан akıyor, öyle çalıştırıyorlar. İşte gel de “devletim” de! Adetli çalıştırıyorlar yaa!!..neden? para kazanıyorlar çünkü. Aç orada; yarı aç, yarı tok çalışıyorsun.”

“unreal”. Becoming unreal necessitates the priority of suffering the violence of derealization and the “derealization of the ‘Other’ means that it is neither alive nor dead, but interminably spectral.” (Butler, 2004, p. 34) One of the old brothel women talked about their “derealized” situation with specific descriptions to the broken relation to her body. She said:

“You know, you load up the donkey, whip it, the donkey struggles to move. I was a donkey... My groins were callused. Only when I retired could I feel my bones again.”<sup>26</sup>

Ahmed (2004) highlights “emotions create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside in the first place.” (p. 10) However, as the above account shows the boundary between the inside and outside worlds of the woman has already been destroyed due to the harsh and intense conditions of a life regulated and shaped by sexual violence. The body has lost its bond with emotionality, thus has been broken as a mediator between internal and external, or inside and outside. There is neither inside, nor outside anymore. Body has lost its capability to “materialize” as an effect of boundary, fixity and surface (Butler, 1993, p. 9) Sexual sovereign violence devastates the surface of the body, or turns it to a corned surface, which lacks the capacity of feeling. As a result, the body is converted to only a ghost.

Apart from the conditions imposing themselves directly to the souls and bodies of women, there are also other spatial difficulties that put women under harsh living conditions. Some accounts of women demonstrate that they are trying to live in cramped rooms as well. One woman gave the example of allowing thirty or forty women

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<sup>26</sup> “Böyle eşeğe yüklüyorsun, eşeği kamçılıyorsun, eşek zor gidiyor. Ben bir eşektim yani...kasıklarım artık nasırlaştı. Ne zaman emekli oldum, kemiğim olduğunu hissettim.”



to work in the same brothel even though the capacity is ten. But this was basically the situation till the beginnings of the 2000s. Brothel owners were employing also unlicensed women sex workers illegally and at the end of the working day, they were permitting women to go. Some informants' accounts reveal that there were teachers, bankers and civil servants among them and they were entering the brothel after their work during the day. However, after the big raid to the brothels in 2001, they were kicked out. According to women's claims, most of them can still be found as working illegally around the main square in Taksim.

Brothels are open to the frequent visits of institutional actors, mainly the doctors and the police. These actors organize their actions in line with the procedures dictated by CFAP. When I talked to the surgeon general, who is practicing the regular health checks of licensed sex workers and who is a member of CFAP, she told me that they arrange meetings every Tuesday and have routine control visits to brothels to check the conditions and problems of licensed prostitutes. Once the health and hygiene controls of the buildings and the rooms are finished, they ask women if they have any problems. While doing this, they let the *vekils* go out of the room in order to provide women more comfort for their speech because they might be afraid of explaining their problems in front of the *vekils*. Doctors believe that women have no problems because none of them complain about anything even when they are alone with the doctors and the police officers. However, women's accounts contradict the optimism prevailing in the head physician's statements. Women, whom I talked to, often mention that they are not able to find any address to lodge their complaints when they encounter difficulties. Although CFAP members are regularly asking women if they have any problems, women keep silent since they have a great fear of their patrons. Women know that some policemen

are in collaboration with the brothel owners and do nothing to help women even if they attempt to complain. Therefore, they refrain from expressing themselves even when *vekils* are not present in the room. Indeed, they pointed out that often as a result of their complaints, *vekils* treat them violently and shout, beat and threaten them. In her book *Fear as a Way of Life*, Linda Green (1999) splendidly explains how fear operates as a chronic condition rather than being solely a reaction in Guatemala. She explains that “fear is inseparable from the reality in which the people live. It is a hidden ‘state of emergency’ – individual and social – that is factored into the choices women and men make.” (p. 56) In the brothels, fear also becomes a factor in regulating women’s exceptional situation and silences even their basic claims over their lives and bodies. Ahmed (2004) indicates that “the language of fear involves the intensification of ‘threats’, which works to create a distinction between those who are ‘under threat’ and those who threaten.” (p. 72) In the case of women sex workers, “under threat” position is first attributed to the whole society since women sex workers are regarded as polluters of the public order. They are the ones to be feared from. However, that sort of fear legitimizes exercising power over women sex workers which in turn make them live under a constant condition of threat and fear. By means of violence, fear is employed as a managing mechanism to make women’s bodies continue to serve as an instrument over which domination may be exercised by the state’s institutional and their collaborative actors.

## Corrupting Bodily Economics

Violence in brothels is closely related to monetary relations. *Vekils* collect huge amounts of money from women using water bills, electricity and taxes as an excuse. Besides, brothel owners through *vekils* usurp women's money. Women's earnings through their bodies become the defining parameter of their relationship to the brothel owners and workers, and they are perceived as resources from which the maximum profit should be realized. There is a great struggle over the money that women earn through their bodies.

The sexual economy in the brothel runs like this: First, the client passes the point, where a policeman does the regular controls. If he is under the age of eighteen, he is not allowed to go inside the brothel. Once entered, the visitor faces the *vekil* in the building and he pays for the fee to get a *marka* (voucher) in return. Next he gives that *marka* back to the woman and these *markas* are collected by women until the end of the day. After that they get into a room and have sexual intercourse in a limited time of around ten minutes. If the staying time exceeds this determined time, there occur some problems among the *vekils*, clients and the women sex workers. Because normally when a client stays inside the room longer, it means he is enjoying too much from the *vekil's* point of view and demands more sexual intercourse from the woman. This has a monetary meaning on the minds of the *vekils*. The more a client stays, the more money he should be paying. On the other hand, women being aware of the possible reactions of the *vekils*, feel pressure when they are practicing their works in the rooms of the brothels. The following account very well explains the squeezed position of women between the clients and the *vekils*:

“Let me put it this way, to satisfy the customer, you need to stay longer with him. If you stay longer it means you get more money. The ones downstairs see it and say not ‘look he stayed longer cos she wanted him to’, but rather, ‘look he stayed half an hour’ and they ask for the fee for half an hour. It usually takes about ten minutes. If we look at it, if we consider the physiological and biological constitution of a normal person, what could happen in ten minutes? I mean both have to undress, the guy has to get an erection, etc., all of this done in ten minutes. But then some... ok, they, too, come for their need but some are easily affected, a sound, a move or their surroundings can throw them off. He’s not aroused. If he’s not aroused, how is it supposed to be over in ten minutes? So then there is trouble, there is fight. The woman says, ‘come on already!’ Because she’s being delayed. So when she’s delayed, what’s on her mind is downstairs, her mind is downstairs. Because she’s losing time. The guy is either not aroused yet, or is aroused but can’t come. So she says ‘come on, come on’. And in the end she says ‘enough already’, ‘that’s it from me’. So he replies ‘I paid you, you have to stay with me’. She says ‘I fucked with you. It was up to you to come or be aroused’. So he says ‘I did not come, so give me back my money’. So she says ‘You stuck it in and out. Did I lie under you? I did. Did you penetrate me? You did. You failed to come! What am I supposed to give you money for?!’ Thus begins the argument. First the *vekils* get involved. Or if it comes to blows, they call the police.”<sup>27</sup>

Women earn a certain amount of money from each sexual intercourse with their clients. On the other hand, there are many cases where the client tips the women as a reward for the sexual service he gets. Hence, their income increases in correlation with the number of men they make sex with. *Vekils* blame women for keeping tips to

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<sup>27</sup> “Şimdi şöyle söyleyeyim, müşterinin memnun kalabilmesi için senin süre olarak fazla kalman gerekiyor. Ee fazla kaldığın zaman, fazla para aldın demektir. O zaman aşağıdakiler, ‘aa bak o istedi de kaldı’ demiyorlar. ‘Aa bu yarım saat kaldı’ diyorlar, o zaman yarım saatlik ücreti istiyorlar. Ya işte, normali bir on dakika falandır. Şeye bakacak olursak, normal bir insanın fizyolojik biyolojik yapısına baktığımız vakit, on dakikada ne olabilir! Yani soyunacaksın, adam ereksiyon haline gelecek, yani bu işlerini bitirmiş olması lazım. Ama bazı insan...tamam ihtiyacı için geliyor ama, ama bazıları da etkileniyor bir sestem, bir hareketten veya bulunduğu ortamdan tedirgin oluyor. Bedeni uyanmıyor. Ee uyanmadığı vakit o on dakikada nasıl olacak yani? İşte o zaman problem çıkıyor, kavga çıkıyor. Kadın diyor ki, ‘ee hadi!’. Oyalanmış oluyor. Ee oyalanmış olunca kadının beyni aşağıda. Aşağıda kadının beyni. Zaman geçiyor çünkü. Ee adamın ya bedeni uyanmamıştır, ya da uyanmıştır boşalamıyordur. Ee kadın “hadi hadi!!” diyor. Ee en sonunda kadın ‘eee yeter artık’ diyor. ‘Bu iş benden bu kadar’. E bu sefer de adam diyor ki, ‘ee ben sana paramı ödedim, benimle kalmak zorundasın’ diyor. Kadın da diyor ki, ‘ee ben senle yattım. Boşalsaydın ya da nefsin uyanıydu’. Adam da diyor ki, ‘madem ben boşalamadım, ver paramı’. Kadın da diyor ki, ‘Ee soktun çıkarttın. Ee ben senin altına yattım mı? Yattım. Sen bedenime girdin mi? Girdin. Ee boşalamadın! Benden ne parası istiyorsun?!’. Kavga çıkıyor böylece. İlk önce vekiller devreye giriyor. Veya orada itişme kakışma olursa polis çağırılıyor.”

themselves. Indeed, to control the monetary exchange tightly, they invented a system with *markas*. To illustrate, the number of the clients that each woman has been together throughout the day is determined by the number of the *markas* that women have in their hands when the work is off. There is an average number of clients that a woman is expected to have in the brothels. Although women gave no specific detail about that number, one woman said that if a woman is together, for example, with only three men during the day, then she is considered under average. In the case women stay below or reach the average number, everything goes normal. However, when they exceed the average number, they are believed to gain too much money and are demanded to share their earnings with the *vekils*. The amount of money a woman gives to the *vekils* is calculated in terms of *markas*. Depending on the number of the clients that she is together with throughout the day, she is forced to pay an amount of money that equals to a certain number of *markas*. In fact, she is forced to behave as if she is buying *markas*. But *markas* stay in *vekils*' hands. *Marka* only becomes a calculator in expropriating money from women.

In addition to this, *vekils* are also in a continuous effort to steal women's extra money earned through tips. However, women invented several tactics to keep this money for themselves. For example, they hide their money under their wigs, in their underwears or they make agreements with their hairdressers in return for some payment so that these take the money out the brothels. But *vekils* are aware of these tricks and they also deploy their own tactics to uncover the places where women hide that money. This hide and seek has no limits and becomes a violent means by which *vekils* find in themselves the right to enter even the bodies of women. One of the retired licensed women sex workers describes this situation in the following way:

“Women find and devise ways to steal those tips. It’s actually their own money. So they steal their own money. Some hide it in their cigarettes, some wear wigs so they put it under their wigs, some hide it in their shoes. And I’ve witnessed this, some *vekils* –there are women who’re there as workers, they wash the floors, do the laundry- would get these women to wear gloves and search the sex-workers’ vaginas. So that the money would not be stolen. Say they get the money. Do they buy *markas* with that money? Say the girls today have collected a total of 500 *markas*. Would the boss get all of the 500 *markas*? No, they wouldn’t. The reps pocket 100-150 of the *markas*. The rest goes to the boss. That’s why there is a struggle to not let the women keep the tips, but to get *markas*.”<sup>28</sup>

This account shows the detachment of sex workers’ bodies from themselves becoming merely a means of transaction between *vekils* and clients. While women attempt to maintain control over their money, the very privacy of their bodies is destroyed. Thus, even the most fundamental right of property – ownership of the body – is contested for women in these spaces. What Feldman (1991) stresses about the role of torture in detaching the body from the self, is very much applicable to the case of women sex workers in this case. He designates that “the body is transcribed into imaginary space through the magic of torture which defaces the body as a singularity and constructs it as an abstract value form of a spatial referent. In this process, the body emerges as a political construct and the self as a political residue, an excess left over from the process that transforms the body into a political form.” (p. 64) Circumstances in the brothels demonstrate that the relation between the bodies and the selves of women

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<sup>28</sup> “Kadınlar kendi buldukları, biçimlendirdikleri yöntemlerle o bahşişleri çalmaya kalkışıyorlar. Aslında kendi paraları. Kendi paralarının hırsızlığı oluyor yani. Yani kimisi sigaralarının içersine koyar, kimisi peruk takıyordu, peruğunun içine koyar, kimisi ayakkabısının içine sokar. Ki ben şuna da şahit oldum, bazı vekiller – işçi olarak çalışan bayanlar vardır, yerleri falan silerler, çamaşır falan yıkarlar - işte o kadınlara eldiven aldırtıp, kadınların vajinalarını yoklatırlardı. Para çalınmasın diye. Diyelim ki para haspel kader çıktı. He bu çıkan paralardan marka mı alınıyor? Diyelim ki marka alındı. Diyelim ki bugün çalışan kızların marka toplamı 500 tane. Peki o 500 tane markanın hesabı patrona mı gidiyordu? Hayır, değil. Orada 100-150 tane marka da vekilin cebine gidiyor. Geri kalanı patronun cebine gidiyor. Onun için bahşişlerin bayanlarda kalmasın, marka alınsın mücadelesi var.”

are under continuous threat of being broken down through several interferences. Rather than seeing that intrusion as an individual issue between the *vekils* and the women, I propose it to be a political matter to understand to what limits the state authority can reach. By being expropriated through legal procedures and institutional acts, licensed women's bodies lose their very privacy once they are put in the brothels and become prone to the violent acts of several actors. The motive behind the *vekils'* deeds takes its power – not directly, but indirectly – from their legally authorized position. Although *vekils* are employed by the private owners of the brothels, they are the main actors responsible for the coordination of the relations between institutional actors, brothel owners and women. Furthermore, they have a state given authority for supervising and controlling women. In that sense, being responsible for managing the brothels on behalf of “the state” opens a space for directing these rights towards different ends for their own benefits. Hence, the above example represents the politicization of women's bodies through spoiling a stately driven right to denude and enter into the bodies of women that are considered as state owned commodities rather than belonging to the women themselves.

These violent acts faced by licensed women sex workers are generally explained with reference to their denied position of having access to many citizenship rights. Women sometimes call themselves non-citizens. Once women enter the brothels, they leave many rights outside the brothel and fall in a life that is run by a totally different sort of law. Among the violation of these women's rights, there are divesting women of traveling freely or dwelling wherever they want, and moreover, obliging them to work forcefully. In constitution it is implied that nobody could be forced to work (article 18). Hence, these regulations that lie simultaneously outside and inside the law can be

thought as condemning women to an exceptional state. According to the accounts of some women, once they are registered as licensed sex workers, they are not allowed to quit working as a prostitute. Furthermore, they can not utilize their social security rights in line with the citizenship benefits that are meant to be available in general. For instance, although they should be insured by “the state” as a condition of working in the brothels, there are only a few number of retired sex workers in Turkey.

In the light of these experiences, one of the most outstanding characteristic in the narratives of licensed women sex workers is their disappointment with the state. Many accounts indicate that by working as a women sex workers felt that they were already dealing and struggling with many discriminatory and exclusionary relations in the public. Hence they decided to do this job under the wings of the state and its protection. But things did not go the way they expected. Many women’s hopes have failed when they understood that “the state” is playing an active role in creating a space of violence by delegating them to the brothel workers and owners, and moreover, by collaborating with these actors through the police. The following statement belongs to a retired woman sex worker, who has struggled for her pension right for a long time despite the threats of brothel owners and state’s institutional actors. Her words explain her feelings and situation:

“The state is not looking after me anyway! The state gives you the license and then it’s “Fuck off, go wherever! Work for whomever!” At the back of our licenses there is the state’s signature. A license this size... So you stamp me, you, the state, stamp me, and then withhold from me what I deserve ... I said, you know it’s dangerous out on the streets, and this is my job, so I thought I should get a license from the state, I thought the state would look after me. I could at least work under the wing of the government. But I didn’t know it would turn out this way, how could I know? I’d rather sleep out on the streets than get a license. At least I would keep the little money I make to myself (...) (when I was struggling for my retirement) my friends did not stand by me. They were scared of the employer. The laws are not on our side, so the



employer can torture you for all I know, and the laws could not care less about it. See, I was stabbed by the employer; neither the Turkish police, nor the laws ever protected me.”<sup>29</sup>

Aretxaga (2000) states that “narratives of state violence have the effect of embodying the state by endowing it with agency and feeling.” (p. 46) This woman’s expectation from “the state” – it should have protected her – turned out to be a disappointment. “The state” has left her disowned. She told a narrative of deception, exploitation and being left alone throughout the whole interview. Her confrontation with “the real face of the state” results in a great animosity towards “the state”. In the interview she marked “the state” as a prostitute: “The state itself is a licensed prostitute!”<sup>30</sup> As previously stated, by signifying one’s prostitute identity, the report functions as a constutive element of various social meanings related to being dishonorable. Being a prostitute means being unchaste. Through her words, Mehtap re-establishes the meaning of being dishonorable not in terms of sexuality, but in terms of cheating and not keeping one’s words. She blames “the state” for condemning her to a degrading position through giving her a report and attributes that stately signed dishonorable identity back to the state itself.

This woman has a different position compared to the other women working in the brothels because she is the first woman to retire as a sex worker. She tells her entire

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<sup>29</sup> “Devlet zaten bana sahip çıkmıyor ki! Devlet vermiş sana karneyi: siktir git, nereye gidersen git! Kimin yanında çalışırsan çalış! Zaten devletin imzası var bizim karnelerin arkasında. Şu kadar bir karne... hem sen bana damgayı vuruyorsun, damgayı vuruyorsun sen bana, devlet, hem de benim hakkımı vermiyorsun... ben derim ki sokaklarda tehlike var biliyorsun, ben bu işi yapıyorum dedim, devletten karne alayım dedim, devlet bana sahip çıkar dedim. Hiç olmazsa hükümetin kanadının altında yapayım dedim yani. Bilemem ki böyle olacağını, nereden bileyim? Hiç olmazsa sokakta yatardım, karne almazdım. Olan para da cebime kalırdı (...) (emeklilik mücadelesi sırasında) arkadaşlarım yandaşlık yapmadılar bana. İşverenden korktular. Yasalar çünkü hep bizim yanımızda olmadığı için, işveren işkence de yapsa yasaların hiç umrunda değil. Ya beni bıçakladı işveren, türk polisi, yasalar beni hiç korumadı.”

<sup>30</sup> “Devlet vesikalı aslında!”

story of accessing pension right as a victory that is won against “the state”. By this way, she forced “the state” to recognize her as a citizen – a status for which she was not deemed worthy. Hence, according to her, retirement signifies the moment of her recognition by “the state” as an ordinary citizen rather than as a marginal or outraged one.

Realization of their pension rights is very important for licensed women sex workers, because nearly all the accounts point out that there is no way to get out of the brothel once a woman enters it. It is commonly stated that brothel owners pay insurance premiums for only half amount of the days women work. By this way, it becomes impossible for women to fulfill the necessary length of working days to retire and they become dependent on working in the brothels throughout their lives. In the case they want to quit their jobs, the debiting system run by the brothel owners do not allow them to do it. Through payments of taxes, water and electricity bills and expropriation of tips by the brothel owners, women are left with little amount of money and most of them are borrowing money from the owners for their personal needs. Owners apply high interest rates for the money they lend, and as a result, prevent women from leaving the brothel unless they pay their debts back. On the other hand, some women’s accounts assert that even though they were able to get rid of their debts and quit as a sex worker, their reports have not been canceled by the police and kept as valid. When they apply for canceling their reports, the policemen reject to delete their records and declare that they are sure they will restart working as a prostitute. Therefore, women are complaining about a life-long stigma stuck on them and despite the fact that they try to begin a totally different life, they cannot succeed due to the traces of their official history as a sex worker.

Considering the whole picture regarding licensed women sex workers, their lives in the brothels are similar to Agamben's (1998) example of the camp that constitutes "the state of exception as a rule". He indicates that "the camp is a hybrid of law and fact in which the two terms have become indistinguishable" and adds "whoever entered the camp moved in a zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exception and rule, licit and illicit, in which the very concept of subjective right and juridical protection no longer made any sense." (p. 170) All the examples told by women depict an exceptional form of life where a totally different sort of law is operating, and represent a space where the questions concerning the legality or illegality of what is happening no more makes any sense. We witness the sovereign face of "the state" in a particular context, where sexuality is deployed in establishing and practicing specific regulations concerning prostitution. Drawing upon these acts, "the state" performs its power in constructing his sexual margins and their belonging subjects in a specific way. In those margins, articulation of violence, intimacy, emotions and corruption are the main constitutive elements.

At the very beginning of this chapter, I have explained the role that the honor code plays in representing women sex workers as a threat to the social order and cementing the whole enclosing mechanisms that put licensed women in the middle of a degrading life. So what about the ones who cannot be confined behind closed doors? How does "the state" establish its relation in respect to the prostitute bodies, which it cannot possess? What kinds of forms does violence take in that environment and how do those forms shape the lives of women? To find answers to these questions, I will continue with the case of unlicensed women sex workers.

## Fugitive Lives

Due to their more public visibility, unlicensed prostitutes are in the middle of a chamber embracing more diversified actors in comparison with the case of licensed prostitutes. Not only the state's institutional actors like the police take different acts towards them, but also they confront more violence from the public. My aim in this part is first, to explore the relations of violence with the police as the major institutional actor in women's lives, and then, to analyze the other encounters shaped by violence in the case women confront with non-institutional subjects. In fact in both cases the motivating factor behind the violence is the general performance of honor code.

Everyday encounters of unlicensed women sex workers with the police are composed of processes of contestation, negotiation and collaboration. These processes are informed by legal criteria mentioned before. But as opposed to the case of licensed women sex workers, the practices of the legal criteria can be manipulated towards different ends by the police in their interactions with illegal women sex workers. Unlicensed women have a wider space of mobilization to do their activities compared to licensed women. However, as I have indicated in the second chapter, the police's surveillance mechanisms determine their use of the city map. The process of drawing this map, in which both the police and the women are major actors, is composed of corruptive and intimate mechanisms. Compared to the brothels, a wider space is opened in the streets, where most of the unlicensed women sex workers try to earn money. While the police's acts are bounded and controlled in the brothels of "the state", they become much more arbitrary in the streets since only the police are legally employed to trace and catch the illegal sex activity in there. By deploying run and hide strategies,

women try to avoid arrest and police raids. This means that they are forced to take their activities to isolated spaces where they are more prone to violent acts from the clients and the public.

The relations between the police and unlicensed women sex workers are quite different from the official sanctions of the codes and bylaws about prostitution. Corruption which consists of bribery, bargains with pimps and spying on of policemen characterize the mundane everyday of the interaction between the police and illegal women sex workers. Hence, corruption provides an important analytical tool for understanding the construction of state's margins with respect to the particular context of illegal sex work.

The police, by practicing its legal force in a discretionary way, create an economy of corruption for its own benefits. According to the formerly described legal criteria, prostitution places should be put under the strict control of "the state" and be bounded by several regulations. Haunting and revealing these places are the responsibility of the police. Since the police are well aware of their legal power, they use this authority to arrest as a threat towards both women and the owners of illegal prostitution places like hotels, bars and houses. Feldman (1991) underlines that, "arrest and interrogation are both symbolic and instrumental modes of hierarchization. The analysis of arrest and interrogation forces one to read state not only as instrumental and rationalized edifice but as a ritual for the constitution of power." (p. 86) While the police are continuously practicing their power to arrest, they produce the authority of "the state" and establish a hierarchy between themselves and the women. However, this authority is also used for their own profits. The following account of one unlicensed

woman prostitute shows how the state-given authority is transformed into monetary returns:

“The police actually collaborates with the hotels who are in the business... they are bribed, you see. If you fail to bribe them... say, you are the hotel owner, you’re doing something illegal. And say, I am the police, I let you do what you are doing, and come and take money from you. I take money and let you do this. And I come back to you.. you don’t give me money; you say to me, business has been slow today, I can’t give you money. Also there are complaints from around. And you’re no longer paying me so I start following your moves. I place another cop inside, someone you don’t know or I follow you from a distance. I watch who goes in and out. And you have no clue when Bam! I raid you.”<sup>31</sup>

One other example for the act of the police as lying both inside and outside the law can be observed when women are spied on in order to be caught and registered as licensed sex workers. Women’s narratives show that the police use his legal authority to collect bribery from the pimps. By coacting together, the police and the pimps fall women into traps to prevent them from working independently, and hence, to have a share in the money women earn through their bodies. The stories that they hear about the brothels are strong in shaping their imagination of those places as hell-like worlds. Thus the fear of being given a report constitutes a big threat among unlicensed women, and they would do anything to avoid such a situation. An unlicensed woman sex worker portrays the situation in the following way:

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<sup>31</sup> “Polis zaten o işi yapan otellerle işbirliği içersinde ee...rüşvet alıyorlar. O rüşveti vermediğin takdirde...işte sen otel sahibisin mesela, yasal olmayan bir şey yapıyorsun. İşte ben de polisim, buna göz yumuyorum, gelip senden para alıyorum. Para alıyorum ve göz yumuyorum bu olaya. Ve ben sana bir iki defa daha gidip geliyorum..para vermiyorsun sen: bugün iyi iş yapmadık, diyorsun. Para veremem, diyorsun. Bir de etrafın şikayetçi. Artı bir de para vermediğin zaman ben seni uzaktan takip ediyorum. Başka tanımadığımı bir polis koyarak içeri veya uzaktan seni takip ediyorum. İçeri giren çıkanları izliyorum. Ve o arada hiç haberin olmadan, Ramp! Diye baskın yapıyorum yani.”

“(The pimps) have contacts inside. They bribe them. They say ‘We want to get this woman licensed, can you help?’ They say it to the police. They collaborate with the police or with the police chiefs, they say ‘we want to work this woman, we’ll pay this much money.’ Of course they don’t say how much money they take but they take a modest amount from the mamas. They bribe the police too and get the woman registered on themselves.”<sup>32</sup>

If a woman is caught by the police, for example, for four or five times while involved in an illicit sex activity, then the police starts the process of giving that woman a report. Therefore, pimps give money to the police for catching unlicensed women and registering them as licensed sex workers. What should be noted in this context is the role of illegality in the construction of legality since corruption is practiced to make women work in the brothels, or in other words, under the control of “the state”.

While I was inquiring other cases, through which legality is employed for illegal ends, one of the unlicensed women sex workers also told me about the arbitrary actions of policemen when they catch illegal sex workers. According to her, policemen sometimes gather women together in Taksim and bring them to the police station. But most of the time they either take bribes from them or force women to make sex with them, and then, let them go:

“When I was working the street on the other side, I got caught by the police twice. One time I gave them money. I had money on me, thankfully. I never forget, it was twenty million. And the second time I copulated with him. Often when we’re caught by the police... you know there many policemen don’t get enough! We copulate and get by. You know, the usual... close your eyes and serve... it’ll be over... So there.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> “(Pezevenklerin)İçerde bir takım dostları var. İşte onlara para yediriyorlar. İşte ‘şu kadına vesika vermek istiyoruz, yardımcı olur musunuz?’ diyorlar. Polise diyorlar. Polisle işbirliği yapıp, ya da komiserlerle işbirliği yapıp, işte ‘şu kadını çalıştırmak istiyoruz, şu kadar da para vereceğiz.’ Onlar tabi ne kadar para aldıklarını söylemiyorlar tabi ama yine cüzi bir miktarda para alıyorlar mamalardan. Polise de belli bir miktar para yedirerek kadını üzerine alıyorlar.”

<sup>33</sup> “Ben polise karşıda takılırken iki kere yakalandım. Bir defasında para verdim. İyi ki üstümde vardı da verdim. yirmi milyon, hiç unutmam. Bir keresinde de beraber oldum. Çoğunlukla polise yakalandığımızda..genelde hani abaza polisler çoktur ya! Birlikte oluyoruz, kurtarıyoruz. Yani...gözünü kapat, işini yap...bitsin şeyi.. böyle.”

This illustration demonstrates that it is crucial to think of corruption not only in monetary terms, but also in terms of forced “intimacy”. Aretxaga (2003) points out that “there is a strange intimacy between the state and the people” (p. 403) and continues by quoting from Das (2003) “at the margins of the polity and at the local level, encounters with “the state” are often experienced in an intimate way where power is experienced close to skin, embodied in well-known local officials, through practices of everyday life.” (quoted in Aretxaga, 2003, p. 396) In this context, the intimacy between the police and the unlicensed women sex workers helps to conceptualize the construction of “the state” as a sexualized body rather than a neutral one.

It should by now be clear that the categorization of sex workers as licensed and unlicensed endows the police with an immense power. That is, the authority they gain from being the protectors of law is easily converted into an extra-legal, arbitrary force exercised over women in everyday encounters. Bribery, forced sexual interaction or scams to trap women become mundane activities characterizing police’s control over sex work. Moreover, both legal procedures (control of brothels and bodies through discourses of health and hygiene) and illegal ones (looking for money in the vaginas of women or forcing them to have sex in return for preventing arrest) are felt intimately and bodily. Remember the disappointment that the retired sex worker expressed in previous pages. This is an emotionally, intimately felt disappointment of the state. Similar things can be detected from the narratives of unlicensed women sex workers. Indeed, many of them have police lovers that they highly value and highly detest at the same time just like those working in the brothels hate the state and see it as a protector simultaneously.

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## Emotional Economy

Notwithstanding their direct violent acts, the police also contribute to the creation of a violent environment in which women are forced to live and deal with many non-institutional actors. “The trace and catch” strategy of the police exiles women to isolated spaces to perform their work that are more open to violence. During this process, specific emotions constitute the very characteristics of the margins that women sex workers are exiled to live in.

Not only women, but also “the state”, *his* institutional actors, and the public are the subjects of this emotional economy. More precisely, hate and fear from women sex workers as polluters and destroyers of public order justify many violent acts realized by both the police and the public. The following citation from the interviews indicates how both the public and the police operate collaboratively in the process since the former sees women prostitutes as “dirt” to get rid of:

“We have this in normal life too. If you are a little casual, say you show a little cleavage, even though you may be very modest inside, even though you have not dressed to arouse any ideas, if you’re showing cleavage, they look at you with suspicion: ‘is she of that kind?’”

“(…) they say that they’re are disturbed by these sights –he was a member of the security forces– you know, he said things like, ‘when I’m walking around with my children I am shamed in front of my family, they do this and that on the streets,’ etc.”

“(…) when you are a sex worker, you have to disguise yourself so that you’re not excluded. It’s the same problem. Doesn’t make a difference if you are registered or not. If you are a sex-worker, you have to camouflage yourself. For instance, when you rent a house, when you’re asked ‘what do you do?’, I can’t say ‘I work at a brothel’ or ‘I work the streets as a sex worker’. I say things like I work at a textile factory, I am a caregiver, a babysitter, or a servant, etc.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> “Bu kendi normal yaşantımızda da var. Biraz rahat bir insansan, biraz dekolte giyiniyorsan ve için çok temiz de olsa, her hangi bir şeyleri çağrıştırmak amaçlı giyinmesen bile, dekolte giymişsin, hep şüphyle bakarlar. ‘acaba bu o yollu mudur?’”

One other woman tells why she has left her child to the institution for the Protection of Children in her following words:

“I say, may my son forget me. If he remembers me in the future, he’ll find me for sure. But then, he’ll remember me for sure, because he’s a seven year old kid. But I don’t want my son to know what kind of a mother he has. My son doesn’t know what I do. If one day he asks me ‘Mom what do you do?’, how am I going to answer? Or when he’s twenty, has done his military service and is back, they tell him ‘Your mother was a prostitute, she was so and so’... he’s a boy... he’s got pride... you know, I am... the unwanted... I’ve always been that. When my son finds out in the future, he won’t want me either.”<sup>35</sup>

Women themselves often internalize the anxiety of the public over their behavior in the form of shame. Ahmed (2004) brilliantly explicates the social aspects of emotions in forming bodily traits and shaping what bodies can do. She stresses that, “emotionality as a claim about a subject or a collective is clearly dependent on relations of power, which endow ‘others’ with meaning and value” and adds that “we need to consider how emotions operate to ‘make’ and ‘shape’ bodies as forms of action, which also involve orientations towards others... (E)motions shape the very surfaces of bodies, which take shape through repetition of actions over time, as well as through orientations towards and away from others.” (p. 4) The above accounts prove that shame is the prevailing

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“(…) eğer bu görüntülerden rahatsız olduğunuzu söylüyor – emniyet mensubuydu o- işte ‘ben çocuğumla yürürken ailemden utanıyorum, çocuğumdan utanıyorum, işte bunlar sokakta şöyleler böyleler’, diyor”  
“(…) seks işçisi olduğun vakit kendini saklamak zorundasın, dışlanmamak adına. Bütün sorun aynı sorun. Kayıtlı veya kayıtsız, fark etmiyor. Sen seks işçisiysen, kendini kamufle etmek durumundasın Mesela bir ev tuttuğun vakit, ‘ne iş yapıyorsun’ dendiğinde, hiçkimse kalkıp ‘ben genelevinde çalışıyorum’ veya ki ‘dışarda seks işçiliği yapıyorum’ diyemiyorum. İşte konfeksiyonda çalışıyorum, hasta bakıyorum, çocuk bakıyorum veya hizmetçilik yapıyorum, falan filan.”

<sup>35</sup> “Unutsun beni diyorum. İlerde eğer hatırlarsa, mutlaka hatırlar bulur. Ama mutlaka hatırlar, çünkü yedi yaşında bir çocuk. Ama böyle bir annesi olduğunu oğlumun bilmesini istemiyorum yani. Açıkcası bilmiyor oğlum ne iş yaptığımı. İlerde bir gün, ‘Anne ne iş yapıyorsun?’ dediğinde, ne cevap vereceğim? Veya yirmi yaşına geldiğinde, askerliğini tamamlayıp geldiğinde, ‘Yaa annen senin hayat kadımıydı, şöyleydi, böyleydi2 dediklerinde... bir erkek çocuğudur... onun neticede bir gururu var... yani ben şeyim... istenmeyen kişi oldum. Hep böyle oldu ama. İlerde oğlum da öğrendiğinde istemeyecektir beni.”

emotion that circulates between the bodies of women sex workers and the public, and determines where they will be located. All the actions, such as telling lies to people about their jobs for renting a house, masking their identities in nearly every social case, or even leaving one's child to the Institution for the Protection of Children, are in fact examples shaped by the contact they have with the public through the emotion of shame. This very feeling of shame constructs a boundary between 'we' as a familial community belonging to the public space, and 'others' as women sex workers who should be removed from these places, or should dispose of or hide their sexual identities if they insist to stay.

Not only shame, but also hate circulates as a strong emotion in the constructions of 'inside' and 'outside' whose belonging subjects are 'we' and 'others' respectively. The emotion of hate, as opposed to shame, brings forth the actualization of violence to clean the 'inside' from the 'outsiders.'

"We face violence everywhere. Even a gaze is enough, eventually even a gaze becomes enough. You know, there is normal gaze and then there is piercing gaze. There are gazes filled with hate, gazes that say 'This is what you are'. So it's all violence."

"Folks get onto the E5 highway. Why? So many people have died there. Isn't it a shame? There were some cases where people drove over them on purpose. They killed them, they terrorized them. But no, in our society all is violence. And because of the police violence and whatnot the people get agitated. Even when people got agitated so many people continued to die under cars on the E5. They disguised all these cases as accidents. But that person is also a human being, that person is also human!"

"For instance, a group of people work in Okmeydanı. The police know that group, because they don't work elsewhere. The police chases after them. But they know them, say, as they would know you or me, say, as someone who works... say, they know Filiz. Don't they? You work, and I work. We're here all the time. So they see us working here everyday. But then he comes and strikes you. You know what that strike means. It means 'you are unwanted, get lost!' They don't come to you as decent human beings and say, 'my friend, watch your behaviour, you're standing out too much, get your act together,

mind your manners when you're out shopping for customers.' So why don't you try all this like a human being, and see what you'll get in return. Have you ever tried? No! You raise the baton, 'get lost!!'»<sup>36</sup>

Ahmed (2004) points out that, “the emotion of hate works to animate the ordinary subject, to bring that fantasy to life, precisely by constituting the ordinary as in crisis, and the ordinary person as the *real victim*. The ordinary becomes that which is already under threat by the imagined others whose proximity becomes a crime against person as well as place.” (p. 43) Women’s sexual presences are essentially taken as a threat for the supposed possessors of the public space and appearance of their bodies results in an injury of the public order. Hence, spreading them out or even letting them to be killed, would allow the clearance of the space from possible dangerous bodies and granting it back to its real owners. To be more precise, violence aligns women’s bodies as a mass and prevents them from having a space to exist and demand their disappearance from the society. During the interviews it appeared that women prostitutes recently prefer moving to the housing

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<sup>36</sup> “Şiddeti her yerde görüyoruz. Bir bakış bile yetiyor, bir bakış bile zaman içerisinde yetiyor. Öyle bir normal bakış vardır, bir de delici bakış vardır. ‘Sen busun!’ diyen nefret dolu bakışlar vardır. Yani şiddet her türlü.”

“Millet E5’lere çıkıyor. Niye çıkıyor? Bir sürü insanlar öldü oralarda. Günah değil mi yani? Özellikle arabayla gelip onlara vuranlar oldu. Öldürdüler, terör estirdiler.. Ama yok, bizim toplumumuzda yok. Herşey şiddet. Ve o polisin o şiddetinden bilmem neyinden dolayı, halk galeyana geldi. Halk galeyana geldikçe, o E5’te araba sürerek kaç tane insan öldü. Kaza süsü verdiler. Ama o da insan, o da insan!”

Mesela bizim Okmeydanı’nda çalışan bir grup kitlemiz vardır. Mesela o kitleyi tanır polis. Çünkü onlar başka yerde çalışmıyorlar. Onları kovalar polis. Mesela seni beni nasıl tanıyor, misal bir çalışan insan olarak diyelim... mesela Filiz’i tanıyor. Tanımıyor mu? Sen de çalışıyorsun, ben de çalışıyorum. Ama hep burdayız. Ee her gün bizi görüyor burda çalışırken. Bunun haricinde, gelip patt diye vuruyor. O vurmanın ne demek olduğunu sen anlıyorsun. Yani, ‘istenmiyorsun, yok ol!’ . İnsan gibi gelip de, ‘arkadaşım, biraz hareketlerinize dikkat edin, fazla göze batıyorsunuz, müşteri alışverişinizi yaparken biraz daha çeki düzen verin kendinize’ de! Bunları bir insan gibi bir dene bakayım. Karşılığında ne alcaksın? Denedin mi? Hayır! Hemen kaldırıyorsun copu, ‘kaybol!!’.”

estates in the suburbs since they feel more secure and find it easy there to hide their identities as prostitutes.

Obligated to live in the middle of such a violence culture, unlicensed women sex workers are mostly deprived of their rights to make claims about their victimization even when the violent actor is a non-institutional subject. Legal practices and the fear of the police, frame their claims about protection. Although many of them come face to face with the most grievous sorts of violent deeds like being assaulted or hardly beaten, they cannot seek their rights as most of the ordinary citizens do. One significant problem about this issue is the consideration of their accounts as uncountable or unworthy of credit by the state representatives. In addition, most of these cases occur in “private” or isolated places, which lack third-party witnesses. More crucially, in the case women try to seek their rights, the first institutional actor they should apply is generally a policeman. Hence, already existing fear of the police prevents them from making claims about the abuses. The following report of a woman sex worker describes this situation vividly:

“I’ve had horrible days. Three people raped me. Took me to the forest. One month after that other incident. And it’s someone I know who did it. I get into the car. Someone with one bad hand is driving, he says ‘this is my friend’. He says, ‘Later another friend of mine will come’. He says, ‘We’ll drop him off at Halicioğlu’. I am well-meaning, I know him so I wouldn’t even think of doing anything. They drive me off to Kemberburgaz, I say, ‘where the hell are we going?’, he says, ‘shut up, we’re going’. I ask to get off. He drives faster. In the end... it was evening anyway, around eight. It was dark. No choice... They took me back but only cos I was well-meaning. Had I been rough with them... But even though I was well-meaning they could have killed me there. See... I was almost dead, several times.”

“This woman I know told me this. They get into the car, two of them. I mean my female friend has another friend with her, another woman. They can’t agree on a deal. The guy starts talking shit. Takes it out and cuts her friend’s face. With a utility knife, he cuts the face in two. Terrifying stuff. And when the woman’s telling me this story it’s as if she’s living it over again, you know?”

She always warns me: ‘Look, never mistreat a guy. This happened in front of my eyes. Never ever. You never know, you may come across a rough guy. He may ruin your face or something. He may throw you out, kill you’. You go to the police and tell them what? Tell them I don’t have a license but this is what I do... What’s the police gonna say? I have nothing... You can complain. But what will you say? Ok, he’s given you a face job, but excuse me, are you gonna say ‘I couldn’t agree on a deal with the customer, the customer cut my face.’ It’s a funny situation. They’ll say, ‘You deserved it. You couldn’t agree with the guy, you probably fought and that’s why he cut you.’ Of course, it is still a crime. But it is an extenuating crime [sic]. Cos you do this job, this job is also a crime... For example I couldn’t agree with a guy, he threw me out of the car. I could’ve died. In bright daylight. A customer I know. I get into his car. We fight, we can’t agree. I ask to get off, he doesn’t let me and whatnot. I open the door while the car is moving, the guy pushes me out. I fall out. Thankfully, the car didn’t run me over. And there’s nothing you can do.”<sup>37</sup>

Another striking point in these cases is that perpetrators of violence have little reason to be afraid of legal and social consequences because they have superior rights derived from the gender specific power relations shaped by patriarchy. To put it in other words, despite the fact that they are physical and sexual abusers of women, they are

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<sup>37</sup> “Çok kötü günler yaşadım. Üç kişi tecavüz etti bana. Ormana getirdi. O olaydan bir ay sonra. Ve tanıdığım kişi yapıyor bunu. Arabaya biniyorum. Eli sakatlı bir kişi arabayı kullanıyor, ‘bu benim arkadaşım’ diyor. ‘Sonra bir arkadaşım daha gelecek’ diyor. ‘İşte onu Halıcıoğlu’na bırakacağız’ diyor. Ben iyi niyetliyim, tanıyorum ya bir şey yapmayı nerden düşüncem. Bunlar basıyorlar Kemerburgaz’a. Ben diyorum, ‘nereye gidiyoruz ya?’ diyor. ‘yürü gidiyoruz’ diyor. Ben inmek istiyorum. O zaman gaza daha çok basıyor. En sonunda, akşamı zaten, yine saat sekiz suları. Karanlıkta hava. Mecbur... Götürdüler beni ama iyi niyetli davrandığım için. Eğer sert davransaydım... Ama iyi niyetli de olsa beni öldürebilirlerdi orada yine. İşte... Ölümünden çok döndüm ben.”

“Benim tanıdığım bir kadın anlattı. Bunlar arabaya biniyorlar, iki kişi. Yani o bayan arkadaşımın bir arkadaşı var. Adamla anlaşamıyorlar. Adam ters cevap veriyor. Adam çıkartıyor, sürüyor, suratını kesiyor. Falçatayla, ikiye ayrılıyor suratı. Dehşet yani. Ve kadın bunu bana anlatırken hala o anı yaşıyor gibi, anladın mı? Beni de her zaman uyarıyor: ‘bak sakın bir erkeğe ters davranma. Benim gözümün önünde böyle bir olay oldu. Sakın yani, ters bir adam denk gelirsin. Adam suratını dağıtır, bir şey yapar. Seni atar öldürür.’...Polise gitsen ne diyeceksin ki? Vesikam yok. Ben bu işi yapıyorum desen.. Ne diyecek ki polis? Elimde bir şey yok...Şikayet edebilirsin. Ama ne diyeceksin? Tamam, yapmış yüzünü ama affedersin, ‘ben müşteriyiyle anlaşamadım, müşteri benim yüzümü kesti’ mi diyeceksin? Öyle de komik bir durum oluyor yani. Hak etmişsin sen, der. ‘adamla sen anlaşamadın, kavga etmişsin, ondan kesmiştir’ der. Ama suç tabi, bu da suç. Ama haffletici bir suç olur o zaman. Çünkü bu işi yaptığın için, bu iş de suç zaten...Adamla anlaşamadık, adam beni arabadan attı mesela. Ölümünden döndüm ben. Güpegündüz. Tanıdığım bir müşteri. Arabasına biniyorum. Kavga ediyoruz, anlaşamıyoruz. Ben inmek istiyorum, indirmiyor, bilmem ne. Ben kapıyı hareket halinde açarken, adam beni bir itiriyor. Ben yuvarlanıyorum tabi. Araba üzerimden iyi ki geçmemiş. Ve hiçbir şey yapamıyorsun yani.”

treated as “private enforces of public morality” (Danielson & Engle, 1995, quoted in Sanchez) and “their violence has the law’s sanction.” (p. 551)

Each of these conclusions reveals the magnitude of how material and discursive power relations are organized in a sex-gender system and how their embodiment in sexual interactions paves the way for violence. In the case of the unlicensed women sex workers, violence mostly is in less need for bio-power techniques – I compared to the one operating in the brothels – and serves shaping women’s lives via fluid and floating exceptional spaces. This volatility and floating condition also creates constant potential and anticipation of violence even in cases when there is no danger. Das and Poole (2004) contend “potentiality, anticipation, and shadows – categories capture the experience of margins actualized in the spaces of exception. Our imagination of the margins shows them not as inert spaces and populations that simply have to be managed but rather as bristling with life that is certainly managed and controlled but that also flows outside this control.” (p. 30) Hence incessant threat of the police compels women to shift their localities in a nonstop way, and therefore, also persistently swings the sexual margins of the state.

### Violence in Everywhere

Both licensed and unlicensed women sex workers testify lives that are held in discrete exceptional spaces where law ensures suspension of rights and openness to violence. The border established between legal and illegal prostitution constructs different sexual margins of “the state”, in each of which practicing and governing of violence differ. Throughout this chapter, I tried to present an analysis of sovereign

power that is still dominant in state. I furthermore showed that “the terrifying force of the management of bodies and people that characterizes the modern state, coupled with the intimacies that invest it, is not unrelated to the power of the law as it has come to represent the sovereign power of the state.” (Aretxaga, 2003, p. 404) Women experience the law as well as the corruption of the state through actors that enforce and insert themselves on their bodies and take possession over them. In their experience and imagination “the state” is a sexualized body to be feared and a prostitute to be detested. The body of the prostitute is made into a political body, giving meaning to who has power and how that power will be exercised and a means by which different actors can pursue their interests through increased violation. Meanwhile, to the women themselves their bodies become detached, ghostly and unlivable.

Before concluding this chapter, some words are worth to say about the common aspects forming the lives of both licensed and unlicensed women in this violence culture. As I have discussed women find themselves in an emotional economy of hatred, fear, disgust and shame. Added to these is a mistrust both towards state institutions and non-institutional actors including other women prostitutes. As Green (1999) asserts, “fear destabilizes social relations by driving a wedge of distrust between family members, neighbours, and friends. Fear divides communities by creating suspicion and apprehension not only of strangers but of each other. Fear thrives on ambiguities (...) No one can be sure who is who.” (p. 55) Under the relentless threat of being violated, women cannot trust to anybody and speak about their loneliness in coping with the circumstances they face to anyone. Collaboration with the police and the pimps, stealing each other’s clients, denigrating and falling each other into traps are common examples that shape women’s attitudes towards each other. These acts might be difficult to



comprehend since women are already living in an environment of violence, thus there is no one else apart from the women themselves to act together. However, what I propose is that rather than these practices to be taken as failures of women in creating solidarity, they should be contemplated as tactics in a life shattered by an unyielding existence of violence in every single mundane detail. Nonetheless, this issue needs for further research concerning the subjectivities of women sex workers. But if there is something worth to say about it; violence begets violent actors as well, and perhaps this is the most vital trait of violence in continuing its performance in structuring and constructing the social.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

In this study, I explored the construction of sexual margins of “the state” by looking at the everyday relations between “the state” and prostitution. My aim was not to embrace all the sex workers including male, transsexual, and travesties. Rather, I aimed to shed a light on the matter by focusing only on the specific case of women sex workers. Moreover, these women were consisting of neither the trafficked women, nor the other foreign women who work as prostitutes in Turkey. I purposefully limited the scope of my research to the local women prostitutes with the aim of scrutinizing a specific relation that the Turkish “state” constructs with women sex workers who are Turkish citizens. Here, I argued that “the state”, through the law, discriminatory practices, and sexual violent acts, establishes exceptional realms for women sex workers. I conceptualized those realms as sexual margins of “the state” and claimed that “the state” constructs two different margins in their respective relation to legal and illegal prostitution. Hence, this thesis has been a comparative study of those margins in which “the state” operates sexually and constructs itself as a masculine body.

The reason why the thesis research went further into the question of different sexual margins of “the state” was the remarkably dissimilar ways in which “the state” penetrates into the lives of licensed and unlicensed women sex workers. Nonetheless, despite their differences, throughout the whole thesis, I refrained from taking these margins to be completely separated from each other. Rather, I also tried to show the similarities between them in reference to the social and cultural codes that shape the

lives of both the licensed and unlicensed women sex workers. However, for the purpose of this thesis, the differences gained more significance, particularly in the ways that they draw a strict border between legal and illegal prostitution.

To realize the central mission of this thesis, I deployed three analytical tools to demonstrate and evaluate the comparative constructions of “the state’s” sexual margins: silence, space, and violence in its articulation with emotions, intimacy, and corruption. Each analytical chapter revealed one side of the story, and they all together described how “the state” performs *himself* in a gendered, sexual, and emotional way through *his* margins in contrast to its commonsense comprehension as a rationalized and sexually neutral administrative form of political organization.

In the first chapter, I described the story of my field experience to illustrate how the world of prostitution consists of multi-faceted forms of silence. It has been a difficult task to obtain knowledge regarding both licensed and unlicensed prostitutes. Among those silences, the institutional one has been the most dominant one and the strongest to break. Indeed, I could find no way to attain institutional knowledge about women sex workers. I claimed that the information about prostitution is too private to be publicized by “the state”, and as a result, “the state” keeps this knowledge in secret, more precisely, in silence. Behind this secrecy and silence, there lies a specific performance of “the state” power that constructs an intimate space for *himself*. In so doing, “the state” prevents the circulation of information about prostitution in the public, serves for the marginalization of women sex workers, pushes them to the edges of the public life, and finally establishes *himself* as the most effective actor in the lives of these women. In other words, by attributing secrecy to prostitution, “the state” constructs women

prostitutes as intimate and political subjects at once and creates a strategic sexual site for *his* governance.

On the other hand, when it came to speaking with women, most of them rejected to talk to me, thus preferring to stay in silence or opted for speaking in a discourse that is publicly recognized. Therefore, I proposed that another face of this prevalence of silence is about the institutional deeds and mechanisms that continuously render women in silence and fade women's voices out even when they attempt to speak as prostitutes. Moreover, the issue is not only about silencing, but also about rendering these women invisible in the public. Reticence and absence nourish each other and women prostitutes are made both unseen and unheard through institutional practices that organize exclusionary spatial mechanisms and enact violence.

For the purpose of describing these institutional practices, as a second step, I analyzed the spatial mechanisms of "the state" concerning both legal and illegal prostitution. Both cases proved that the spaces of prostitution are ideologically manipulated towards different ends to produce their own sets of relations and subjects, and they embed power relations regarding the regulatory regimes of "the state". Especially law plays a major role in the spatial distribution of prostitution and several institutional actors are involved in (dis)placing women using legality as a criterion.

"The state" through *his* institutional actors constantly renders women prostitutes' bodies "out of place" and invisible by enclosing them to the designated spaces where "the state" has full authority and power away from any public scrutiny. Therefore, in parallel to the properties of the spaces of prostitution, the margins of "the state" take also the forms of permanence, fixity and stability in the case of legal prostitution. When I considered the illegal prostitution, I found that the margins gain

mobility, and as a result of the police raids, the struggle between the women and the institutional actors over the space renders the margins of “the state” as a fluid, ever-changing and performative one.

Without doubt, the construction of the margins and their comparison are not only restricted to the spatial mechanisms deployed by “the state”. For that reason, I have also looked at the other forms of practices and regulations that exist in those spaces. I argued that “the state” makes *himself* visible and establishes his own presence in the lives of both the licensed and unlicensed women through a specific form of performance based on a particular mode of violence employment and management. By leveraging *his* power through the specific conventions about prostitution, “the state” implements extralegal practices and disciplinary mechanisms to organize sex work and deprives women sex workers of some basic citizenship rights. In this very process, the logics of governmentality and sovereignty simultaneously operate and act as conditions of each other in establishing the exceptional situation of women sex workers through sexuality.

The part of my study about the licensed women prostitutes illustrated that, once women are registered as prostitutes, a stately signed life-long prostitute identity sticks on them by turning their bodies into the “assets” of “the state”, and hence, they lose the most fundamental right to the ownership of their own bodies. Their lives are managed and subjected to the full scope of legal authority in terms health controls and regulations in the brothels. Several institutional actors like policemen, and especially *vekils*, constantly construct the women’s bodies as a transaction among various social and institutional actors. More precisely, “the state”, concretized directly in the bodies of the policemen, and indirectly, of *vekils*, immerses *himself* in the everyday lives of the licensed prostitutes through his violent acts and corruptive practices, and thus, subject

women to the position of “bare life”. This study showed the role of the embeddedness of sovereign violence (operating sometimes through bio-power techniques and sometimes through naked and brute force) in every mundane detail in brothels and its devastating influence upon the lives of the licensed women sex workers in inscribing a particular marginality in women’s lives. Hence, I claimed that through these very practices “the state” constructs an exceptional space, thus a margin, where *he* can act and constitute *himself* in a sexual manner.

On the other hand, the case of the unlicensed women sex workers demonstrated that violence operates less through bio-power compared to the one functioning in the brothels and it can take the forms of sovereign violence. Especially, the strict border between legal and illegal prostitution endows the police with a power of protecting the law. However, the policemen manipulate that stately driven power to their own benefits and constantly convert it into extralegal and arbitrary violent acts. In other words, the police’s control over sex work is very much shaped by bribery, forced sexual interaction, and scams to trap women. Even in cases where there is no violent deed, the constant threat of police surveillance endows the women with a fear of facing instantaneous violence.

As an exploration of the construction of a specific kind of relation between “the state” and women sex workers in both legal and illegal spaces of prostitution, this thesis is one among a very few number of studies that deals with the subject matter. No doubt, it is necessarily incomplete and partial. . In order to overcome the limitations and shortcomings of my study, the institutions should be persuaded to share their knowledge and to allow researchers to meet women sex workers rather than enforcing silence and standing as barriers between the social researchers and women sex workers. I believe

that the debates and the research on these issues would benefit enormously if these problems will be surmounted.

I see this thesis as a feminist contribution to create a political space where prostitution is spoken of with a new language that rejects the mainstream discourses that stigmatize women prostitutes as immoral, evil, or notorious. However, what this study lacks is an account of the everyday resistances of women against the sexual sovereign power of “the state” and a discussion of how they constitute their very subjectivities. I could not gather fruitful data about this matter as I was able to speak with only a limited number of women prostitutes. Hence, this study should be supported by others that will approach the same subject from different perspectives. Finally, from very early on, my motivating factor has been to introduce the issue of prostitution to the feminist agenda. The fact that nearly none of the feminist organizations in Turkey deals with this subject and that the voice of female sex workers remains unarticulated within feminist politics makes this a very pressing concern. I hope this study would contribute to shattering of both the silence and the ignorance of feminists in Turkey in some minor way.

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