

# Introduction: Blurring Boundaries. Uncanny Collusions, Overlaps, and Convergences in the Discursive Field of ‘Gender’

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The political visibility of anti-gender movements in the European landscape and the analytical attention they received over the last two decades are, by now, *faits accomplis*. Obviously, Europe is not the only or privileged location where these movements unfold, and their history—as well as the history of their interpretations—spans through the last decades of the previous century. Similar mobilizations in other parts of the world such as campaigns of the Christian Right in the United States against abortion, sex education, and LGBTIQ+<sup>1</sup> rights emerged since the 1980s and have been studied either as anti-feminist counter movements (Saltzman Chafetz and Dworkin 1987), or as a backlash against women (Faludi 1991), or, more broadly, as ‘culture wars’ between conservative and progressive forces (Hunter 1991). In this scenario, what emerged as anti-genderism was a latecomer and Europe seemed to be its cradle. The fundamental features of the specific anti-gender phenomenon can be traced back to the mid-1990s, when reactionary circles inside the Vatican started to build a counterstrategy against the recognition of sexual and reproductive rights (Garbagnoli 2016; Korolczuk 2016; Datta 2018). However, anti-genderism went largely unnoticed by the broader public until the rise of populist conservative and far-right political actors who used it to mobilize a spectrum of ideologically diverse and transnationally connected networks. Eszter Kováts and Maari Põim (2015) consider Germany and Hungary to be the forerunners of this development. In Germany, anti-gender debates in the public media first peaked in 2006; in Hungary, controversies over gender equality education intensified in 2008. Other cases in point are Poland, Slovakia, Italy, and—famously—France, where Catholic-inspired activists organized the *Manif pour tous* and took the streets in 2012 to demonstrate against same-sex marriage, skillfully packaged in the term ‘gender’ followed by ‘ideology’ or ‘theory’, to their liking. From that moment on, anti-gender mobilizations began to discursively, ideologically, and politically conquer large parts of the continent and the globe.

1 In this introduction, we use the acronym LGBTIQ+ to signify the galaxy of progressive sexual politics. In the upcoming chapters, the contributors use the acronyms and signifiers that are more suited to their theoretical and political projects and contexts.

Today, one cannot say that “there has been very limited research” on anti-gender movements, like David Paternotte and Roman Kuhar (2017:3) wrote merely six years ago, if only because Kuhar and Paternotte’s seminal *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe* has been a milestone in order for that research to blossom. Works on ‘gender’ as “symbolic glue” (Kováts and Pöim 2015) and “empty signifier” (Mayer and Sauer 2017) are high on today’s scholarly radar. Research has widely shown that ‘gender’ as it is understood by anti-gender actors is a catch-all term for a number of issues including sexual, trans, and women’s rights, gender-sensitive education in schools, the use of gender-inclusive language, gender mainstreaming, Gender Studies, and critical knowledges. In order not to overreference the myriad works on anti-gender mobilizations as they unfold in their specific geo-historical locations, let us mention Paternotte’s recent “Victor Frankenstein and his creature” (2023:82), which critically reviews the existing literature on the topic and detects “four scenes that are crucial to contemporary anti-gender politics: churches, social movements, political parties, and states.” From our work, we would like to add media and academia as two additional—and important—scenes where anti-gender discourses pop up (Beck 2020; Näser-Lather 2020). Each and every scene has produced its own set of political struggles as well as a specific scholarship aimed at analyzing it. This scholarship, in turn, “has not only documented recent developments in Europe, Latin America and the rest of the world, offering detailed empirical accounts of anti-gender politics in specific locations, but it has also suggested different approaches to look at and make sense of anti-gender campaigns” (Paternotte 2023:82). Thus, we have witnessed a proliferation of scholarly production around anti-genderism in the last decade, and anti-genderism itself has now—and by far—exceeded the Catholic domain in which it first emerged.

Interestingly, next to the burgeoning literature on anti-gender movements and politics, researchers increasingly investigated the responses and reactions to them, often carried out in the name of feminism, LGBTIQ+ rights, and anti-capitalism. At the end of their *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Moment*, Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk (2022:137–63) discuss a variety of women’s activism across the world and their capacity to counter today’s anti-gender populisms, with an emphasis on the women’s mass mobilizations in Poland that began in 2016. Along similar lines, Sanja Bojanic, Mónica Cano Abadía, and Valentina Moro’s special issue on the *European Journal of English Studies* titled “Feminist responses to populist politics” (2021) showcases a collection of (Southern European) struggles against anti-genderism, ranging from the Catalan ‘feminist-nationalist’ project to the *Non Una Di Meno* trans-feminist movement in Italy—itsself an adaptation of the wider *Ni Una Menos* mobilizations that first emerged in Argentina. As Julia Roth argues (2020:260), the reasons for the success of these and other feminist mobilizations countering

right-wing narratives on ‘gender’ lies precisely in their capacity to ‘intersectionally’ keep together struggles against gender-based violence with anti-racism and an “open critique of capitalism”. Even such a dramatic event as the ban on Gender Studies and the attack on academic freedom in Hungary by the illiberal government of Viktor Orbán between 2017 and 2018 can provide the occasion “to oppose neoliberalism”, according to Andrea Pető (2021:35).

In these discussions, two poles—say, the anti-gender and the feminist/LGBTIQ+/left-wing one—are juxtaposed and pitted against each other. The goal of this book is slightly different. We are interested in the collusions, overlaps, bridges, and convergences between those poles. In other words, this book aims to explore the *blurring boundaries* between the discourses and politics of those who campaign *against* and those who campaign *for* gender and sexual equality. We purposefully use such terms as ‘blurring boundaries’ as well as ‘collusions’, ‘overlaps’, ‘bridges’, and ‘convergences’, because we do not aim at providing an overarching theory or explanation about their nature. This does not mean that the contributors to this volume restrain themselves from hinting at a few roads we may take. Gadea Méndez Grueso, for instance, gathers anti-gender and so-called ‘gender critical’ (or TERF) discourses—one of the most striking encounters between feminism and anti-feminism nowadays, as we are soon going to explain—under the banner of populism. In his chapter, Christopher Fritzsche claims that there is something inherently authoritarian in today’s political field which, minimally, calls for a revival of a social-psychological approach to the study of politics. Concepts such as ‘populism’, ‘authoritarianism’, and others can help us analyze the blurring boundaries between certain forms of anti-genderism and certain instances of their politically progressive and sexually emancipatory counterparts.

If the very attempts at finding a common denominator for all anti-gender politics fail to include each and every instance of the phenomenon, we are wary that the quest for a common denominator between (some) anti-gender and (some) feminist and queer discourses is equally bound to fail. To say, for instance, that both parties at stake are rooted in (far-)right ideologies misrecognizes not only that many of those feminists and queers who are uncannily aligned with anti-genderists do not identify with the political right, but also that anti-genderists themselves can be located on the left. Similarly, any attempt to cluster the two parties under the banner of ‘backlash’ disavows the “conceptually flawed, empirically weak, and politically problematic” nature of the latter (Paternotte 2020). Far from conceptualizing everything that is populist, authoritarian, and anti-gender as a right-wing reaction (or, for that matter, everything that is anti-populist, democratic, and anti-anti-gender as a leftist counter-reaction), this book looks at the specific instances where all such terms materialize—political groups, newspapers, academic literature—and tries to dissect them as scrupulously as it can. To understand the relation between ‘anti-gender’ and feminist/LGBTIQ+ discourses as ‘blurring boundaries’ allows us to

detect a political and theoretical impasse for which no ready-made solution is yet available. This book does not intend to provide grand theories and new, all-encompassing paradigms. To paraphrase the title of one of Joan W. Scott's (1996) major works, what we have is only 'paradoxes to offer'.

Much as we and the other contributors to this volume are interested in contemporary configurations, the blurring boundaries between anti-genderists and some feminist and LGBTIQ+ constituencies are not new. An eminent example of their *longue durée* are the so-called 'sex wars' of the 1980s, when some US feminists were "shocked" to find themselves defending their "activist communities—of sex workers, of butch-fem dykes, of lesbian sadomasochists—against political attacks, launched *by feminists*" (Duggan 2006:5). Closer to us (at least geographically), the Italian case can help illuminating the eminently anti-gender reverberations of some feminist and LGBTIQ+ discourses. In her piece "Italy as a lighthouse", Sara Garbagnoli (2017) thoroughly scrutinizes the—by now well-known—role of Catholicism in shaping anti-gender protests. Concomitantly, she emphasizes two key factors that have turned Italy into a "fertile ground" (2017:165) for anti-gender sentiments. The first one lays in the predominance of sexual difference feminism in the Italian public sphere since the 1970s. This feminist strand, Garbagnoli writes (2017:166) refuses to work with the idea of 'gender', which is aimed at "denaturalizing the sexual order". Next to it, a number of influent leftist intellectuals expresses their worries about an alleged "anthropological emergency" that needs to be tackled by upholding "non-negotiable values" that are uncannily similar to those of Catholics (ibid.). The conjoint work of (some) sexual-difference feminists and (some) leftists is crucial in spreading anti-genderism (see also Cossutta and Habed 2021:142–43). This signals that the sliding of (segments of) feminism and the political left into a peculiar kind of gender and sexual conservatism has been in the making for some time.

In the face of the longer history of the phenomenon under scrutiny, our goal is not to cleanse all feminist, LGBTIQ+, and left-wing politics of their anti-gender complicities. We agree with Serena Bassi and Greta LaFleur (2022:311) that "the simplistic vignette of a clash of progressive feminist versus conservative anti-feminist ideas fails to capture the complexities of our current cultural moment [...] in which much of what is under contestation is the meaning attributed to feminism itself." If some feminist, LGBTIQ+, and left-wing strands align with their illiberal counterparts, our business is to dissect rather than undo that alignment. Let us linger a bit longer on the Italian case. *Arcilesbica*, the largest lesbian association in the country, exemplifies the connivance of lesbian/feminist actors with the anti-gender cause—what, especially in English-speaking contexts, goes under the name of 'gender critical' or 'trans exclusionary' feminism (TERF). Recently, this Italian lesbian association has been centering its political claims around two issues: the alleged (and paranoid) threat that trans people embody for lesbians and the equally alleged

(and equally paranoid) dangers of surrogacy for women at large (Villa 2020; Cossutta 2021). Not incidentally, *Fratelli d'Italia* (FdI)—the far-right party currently in power—is particularly hostile toward trans rights and surrogacy. The latter is not just illegal in Italy, but it has now been criminalized even when carried out abroad (Giuffrida 2023). Additionally, trans rights are repeatedly challenged by FdI politicians committed to countering the possibility for trans students to enroll with their chosen identity (Serino 2023). Clearly, this national case is just one instance of a wider trend. Making a plea for analytically connecting the “attacks on gender studies and feminism” to the “transphobic attacks on trans people in the name of feminism”, Alyosxa Tudor (2021:241) explores the specific configuration of present-day lesbian/feminist transphobia in the United Kingdom. Tudor focuses on the discursive production of trans women as sexual predators by self-appointed ‘gender critical’ feminists, who are as invested in the alignment of sex and gender as far-right groups, thus concluding that “feminist transphobia can be seen as a specific conjuncture of anti-genderism” (ibid.:242). Cilia Willem, R. Lucas Platero, and Jolanda Tortajada (2023) recount how the opposition to LGBTIQ+ and trans issues in Spain has developed in the past years, especially on social media. Since 2019, a number of feminist actors have been countering trans and queer rights on the ground that they allegedly jeopardize women’s rights. Their positions “are sadly very much in tune with the discourses by the Spanish far-right party Vox and other ultra-conservative organizations”, the authors point out, “thus making TERFs and far-right organizations strange bedfellows” (ibid.:186). In the pages that follow, several contributors focus on similar occurrences. Christine M. Klapeer and Inga Nüthen dive into the attacks on trans constituencies in the name of feminism in the German and British contexts. In relation to Turkey, Funda Hülügü explores the unexpected points of contact between anti-feminist and feminist mobilizations. Gadea Méndez Grueso takes the discursive bridges between ‘gender critical’ and anti-gender discourses as the entry point into the present workings of populist politics.

In showcasing these examples, our point is not that ‘gender critical’ (or TERF) and anti-gender positions are one and the same thing. What we suggest is that, today, the battles against queer, trans, and reproductive rights that are conducted in some feminist and LGBTIQ+ quarters overlap with the views held by anti-genderists—when they are not explicitly exploited and capitalized by them. This does not mean that we believe in a subject position or political stance that is free from alignment, assimilation, and co-optation. Key contributions to this volume focus on the participation of gay, lesbian, and trans people themselves in right-wing and far-right parties, particularly in Germany and Austria. Their participation contributes to the emergence of political formations that go under the names of “homonationalism”, as coined by Jasbir K. Puar (2007) and reformulated by Patrick Wielowiejski in his contribution to this volume, or “trans-chauvinism”, as Judith Goetz aptly puts it in her chapter.

Our point is that the articulation of queer, feminist, left-wing, and anti-racist politics needs to be carefully crafted and attended to at a historical moment in which something more than ‘gender’ is at stake, in Europe and worldwide: namely, the option for a further democratization of liberal democracies. More than ever do we need new forms of coalitional politics to counter the illiberal tendencies that we are witnessing—and we need them now.

Even though there is much fuzz around ‘gender critical’ (or TERF) stances and their anti-gender resonances, the ‘blurring boundaries’ that this book is committed to unpack are not limited to them. Take, for instance, those discourses that are considered moderate and yet are affected by the ideological elements that the detractors of gender and sexual equality—be they anti-gender, TERF, or plainly far-right actors—have spread. An Italian instance of this phenomenon lies in the news outlets *Corriere della sera* and *Il Foglio*, both of which are highly regarded among liberals and centrists. The former regularly updates its readers on the perils of ‘cancel culture’ and ‘political correctness’, while the latter makes ample room, in its columns, for ‘gender critical’ opinions. In Germany, something similar is staged on key liberal outlets waging a war against ‘gender-inclusive language’, as Dorothee Beck analyses in her contribution to this volume. These examples show that the boundaries between right-wing/anti-gender discourses and moderate/liberal segments of society are increasingly blurred. Equally blurred are the boundaries between the national and the supranational scale as they play out in such a geopolitical hotspot as Ukraine. Beyond any easy understanding of the status of LGBTIQ+ rights in the country as being (only) determined by international actors—notably, the European Union and Russia—Maryna Shevtsova’s chapter accounts for the complex and changing position that the Ukrainian LGBTIQ+ movement negotiated, between 2012 and 2022, both at the margins and at the core of the nation.

Even when attending to the blurring boundaries between anti-gender and queer/feminist discourses, we cannot eschew the fundamental question about the role that ‘our’ (i.e., Gender Studies scholars’) conceptual and political tools play in the phenomenon. To clarify this point, let us resort to an (Italian, again!) anecdote. Back in 2014, in a small town called Gambarara, one of the editors attended a talk at the local parish where the concept of ‘gender’ was discussed. The anti-gender movement was blooming back then and public talks and conferences were rather common in the Italian landscape (Avanza 2015). What was most surprising was that this talk looked like a (bad) lecture on feminist scholarship. Names such as Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler, which most people in the audience were unfamiliar with, were dropped. While it is true that anti-genderists largely mystify and demonize the field of Gender Studies—not least, in a violent outburst of homophobia, by physically attacking Butler themselves at the airport of São Paulo in 2017 and burning their effigy in the streets of the city (Sexuality Policy Watch 2018; 2019)—it is equally true that they

do not fully misunderstand what ‘gender’ means. Already in 2015, Sabine Hark and Paula-Irene Villa (7–8) argued that ‘gender’ critics correctly assume that the term stands for a non-natural, and post-essentialist version of gender and sexuality. Villa herself (2017) sees the loss of ‘natural’ subjects and identities, which until now have been the implicit basis for the political sphere, as the central cause of current contestations against ‘gender’, and Garbagnoli (2016) understands the Vatican discourse as a reaction to the denaturalization of the sexual order carried out by feminist and queer actors. Thus, the opponents of ‘gender’ are quite right in understanding the term as an anti-essentialist, denaturalizing, emancipatory force with a complex, intersectional, socially constructed, precarious nature. In this sense, as David Paternotte (2023:82) contends, anti-genderists “discuss—and combat—the same academic concept” that we, feminist and queer scholars, deploy.

While an interpretation of anti-genderism as a defensive strategy against the loss of ‘natural’ or ‘normal’ gender-related assumptions is plausible, its limits lie in the reduction of the meaning of gender to (gender) identity. This perspective does not fully do justice to the complexity of gender relations and omits the possibility of de-thematizations or discursive shifts in the ways social change is addressed: namely, that complex social problems are dealt with in (often personalized) discourses on ‘culture’ and ‘identity’.<sup>2</sup> Annette Henninger, Ferdinand Backöfer, Christopher Fritzsche, and Marion Näser-Lather (2020) argue that current anti-feminist discourses react to a perceived loss of ‘natural’ subjects as well as to an erosion of traditional forms of family that are perceived as a threat, along with discourses on gender equality that have supposedly ‘gone too far’ and a scandalization of gendered violence and child abuse. However, while debates in Gender Studies point to the structural roots of these problems—crises in social reproduction, gendered violence as a pervasive problem in (neo-)patriarchal societies, a deeply ingrained homonormativity, persistent patterns of gendered inequalities, struggles for rights and redistribution that arise from contestations of (cis-male, white, heteronormative) privileges, etc.—anti-feminist and anti-gender discourses simplify and personalize these problems, thus turning them into ‘threats’. The latter take the shape of migrant ‘others’ (read: Muslims), the perversion of the ‘innocent child’, and the dismantling of the ‘traditional’ family values by a (supposedly) powerful ‘homosexual lobby’ or ‘feminist elite’. When combined, these elements form one all-encompassing threat to the social order or—in discourses leaning to the extreme right—the German *Volk* (Henninger et al. 2020). The racist projection of persisting problems in gender relations onto cultural ‘others’ together with

2 The ideological blueprint for such a discursive shift in dealing with complex social problems is modern anti-Semitism. The latter is based on a contorted interpretation of capitalist exploitation combined with the incapability to understand the abstract power structures and institutions of modern societies, and it takes Jews as scapegoats for these (and other) complex social problems (Stögner 2020:2).

the scapegoating of (some) feminists and LGBTIQ+ activists shifts the attention onto culture and identity, thereby offering the possibility of externalizing those problems and concealing the structural power relations at their roots (ibid.). When dealing with instances of ‘blurring boundaries’ between feminist, LGBTIQ+, and anti-gender discourses and mobilizations, we should thus ask how social problems are framed, which political strategies result from these frames, and which (or whose) problems are omitted in this framing.

The purpose of this book is to caution against too clear-cut and Manichean distinctions between ‘good’ movements and politics and their ‘bad’—conservative or right-wing—counterparts. Along with Conny Roggeband (2018:19), we focus on the ‘ugly ducklings’ “who may appear to be foes while acting as friends, or vice versa.” In other words, we aim at understanding the dynamics as well as the collusions, overlaps, and convergences between the discourses and politics, both of those who explicitly oppose and of those who support (or, at least, who should support) gender and sexual equality. When and why are the boundaries between anti-gender and feminist or queer discourses blurred, and what happens exactly in those conjunctures? By dissecting some key instances of blurring boundaries, we would like to contribute to the formation of new coalitions that can overcome problematic forms of identity politics in the feminist and queer camp by drawing on the intersectional and power-critical strands of political as well as academic endeavors.

The FIRST SECTION of the book, TRANSPHOBIA, highlights the blurring boundaries between anti-gender, ‘gender critical’ (or TERF), and transgender discourses—an arena of intensified contestations in the wake of recent attempts to reform the law around gender reassignment in countries such as the United Kingdom and Germany. Inga Nüthen and Christine Klapeer conduct a critical frame analysis of current discursive strategies adopted by TERF actors. Focusing on data from prominent lesbian (or lesbian-led) ‘gender critical’ groups in the United Kingdom and Germany, the authors argue that, in these discourses, trans bodies are conceived as security threats to lesbian bodies, thereby turning issues of political contention into existential problems that require ‘urgent’ and ‘extraordinary’ countermeasures. Nüthen and Klapeer interpret this discursive shift as a process of securitization of trans bodies which draws on biological arguments as well as on supposedly fixed identities and entails the rejection of trans rights in order to promote a “(re-)purification and cis-gendering of lesbian bodies, identities, and histories.” Thus, the authors unpack the punctual frame alignments between ‘gender critical’ and conservative or right-wing anti-gender mobilizations. In her chapter, Judith Goetz tackles transphobia from the opposite angle by analyzing the far-right German party *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) with a short excursion into Austrian politics. Goetz introduces the concept of trans-chauvinism as a variation on femo- and homonationalism, arguing that the involvement of trans people in right-wing politics

has not been researched sufficiently. Through a critical discourse analysis, the chapter investigates the strategies that trans militants of the AfD adopt to bridge the obvious contradictions they face, as well as the reasons why the AfD itself accepts trans people in its ranks. On the one hand, the actors' individual strategies include the denial of hostility, the privatization (if not rejection) of transness, the externalization of discrimination onto Muslims, and the instrumentalization of one's own identity to reject criticisms. On the other hand, the AfD gives leeway to its trans members and champions their presence against a common—and allegedly intolerant—enemy. In the end, the trans identities that are integrated in the German 'we' are those that comply with (hetero)normativity: Goetz regards this precarious inclusion as, indeed, a form of transchauvinism.

The SECOND SECTION is titled FEMONATIONALISM AND ETHNOSEXISM—two concepts that have been coined by Sarah Farris (2017) and Gabriele Dietze (2016; 2017), respectively. Through a critical frame analysis, Edma Ajanović reconstructs the normalization of right-wing populist and illiberal discourses in two Austrian governments led by the Christian-conservative 'Austrian People's Party' (ÖVP) since 2017. The broader goal is to show how a process of de-democratization goes hand-in-hand with struggles over gender and sexuality. Analyzing the interviews of two ministers of women's affairs—Juliane Bogner-Strauß (2017–2019) and Susanne Raab (2020–present)—Ajanović unearths the femonationalist and anti-feminist tendencies that their statements activate. While equality in Austria is depicted as almost achieved, the problem of gender-based violence is externalized onto racialized 'Others'. Additionally, the reconciliation of work and family life is considered to be an individual task for women, and anti-violence measures are funded at the expense of feminist programs and initiatives. In ÖVP discourses, Ajanović concludes, women's inclusion is shaped according to nationalistic, neoliberal, and privatized criteria. Patrick Wielowiejski's chapter presents an ethnographic case study of the homonationalist politics of the German right-wing party *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), exploring the ways it combines a 'pro-gay' discourse with anti-Muslim racism. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci, Wielowiejski identifies an "ethnosexist common sense" in the German far right. Based on empirical data, he shows how and why the AfD ideology "can appear attractive to some white gays [...] in spite of its constitutive heteronormativity." The blurring boundaries between the allegedly progressive gay community and the far right are not the outcome of some individuals' 'self-hatred' or 'false consciousness'; rather, they are the constitutive feature of an ongoing battle for political hegemony.

The THIRD SECTION of the book tackles the highly contested issue of representing gender diversity and equality linguistically—or, as the title reads, GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE. In her chapter, Dorothee Beck draws on an investigation on 'genderism' in German news outlets such as *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Die Welt*, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, and *Spiegel online*, which she

conducted between 2006 and 2016. Beck updates these findings and analyses recent discourses around ‘political correctness’, ‘wokeness’, and ‘cancel culture’ as they appear on German public media. She argues that the current ‘crusade’ against gender-inclusive language in the media as well as in the political sphere serves as a discursive bridge between far-right political mobilizations against ‘gender’ and conservative/liberal circles in society, thus blurring the ideological boundaries between the two groups.

In the FOURTH SECTION, we shift our focus to LGBTIQ+ and feminist communities that are MOBILIZING AND RESISTING vis-à-vis anti-gender discourses and politics. Maryna Shevtsova’s chapter centers on LGBTIQ+ politics in Ukraine—a context whose geopolitical location involves a plethora of actors (notably, the European Union and Russia) that blur the boundaries between the national and the transnational scale, left and right, and the different subject-positions at the core of the nation. Through a framing and counter-framing methodology, Shevtsova analyses the data collected between 2013 and 2022 and detects three discourses (or, indeed, frames/counter-frames) in relation to the recent trajectory of Ukrainian LGBTIQ+ politics. The first one (2013–2015) reacts to the discourse on the protection of traditional values largely influenced by the Russian law against ‘gay propaganda’. The second one (2015–2020) unfolds in a different, post-Euromaidan scenario marked by the war in Eastern Ukraine, responding to the trope that LGBTIQ+ people do not defend their country. The third and last one (2020–2022) is built on the alleged threat that ‘gender ideology’ casts on children. How future discursive frames/counter-frames will look like is difficult to predict, because the question remains as to whether, in post-war Ukraine, LGBTIQ+ rights will be expanded or restricted. Funda Hülägü’s chapter focuses on the discourse around ‘men in crisis’, highly popular in today’s Turkey. Hülägü analyses two seemingly contrasting interpretations of gendered harm: one promoted by the increasingly organized Turkish anti-feminist movement and one advocated by the popular feminism of urban knowledge workers. Drawing on a Gramscian framework, her chapter shows that, to solve the perceived crisis of masculinity, anti-feminists aim at re-establishing a divine gender order by calling on individuals to live in accordance with the Islamic idea of *fitrat* (nature/creation). By contrast, popular feminism interprets men’s crisis as a matter of psychological maladaptation. Hülägü argues that these two positions, in spite of being seemingly opposed, overlap in their individualized treatment of the issue at stake, either by moralizing or by psychologizing the ‘men-in-crisis’ trope. Both discourses, Hülägü concludes, are instances of anti-politics, as they de-politicize the complex social transformations in Turkey as well as the power relations underlying them.

The FIFTH AND LAST SECTION of this book aims at RETHINKING CRITICAL TOOLS, as its title reads, in order for ‘us’—researchers in the fields of Gender

Studies, Queer Studies, and beyond—to reflect on the conceptual tools we deploy to analyze anti-gender mobilizations and their discursive and ideological bridges with some feminist and LGBTIQ+ constituencies. Gadea Méndez Grueso's chapter starts by registering the similarities and overlaps between anti-gender and so-called 'gender critical' (or TERF) discourses, interpreting them through the lens of populism. More exactly, populism understood as a political ideology sheds light on the common tropes that conservative anti-genderists and 'gender critical' feminists share. Such tropes include: the partition of society between 'normal' people and malicious (pro-'gender') elites; the upholding of (a specific version of what counts as) science, biology, and nature; the nostalgia for an idealized past when the gender and sexual order was uncontested; and the ambivalent attitude toward politics, which materializes in the figure of the defenseless child. Grueso argues that key ideas developed within Populism Studies can help us to analyze the blurring of the ideological and discursive divide between anti-gender and 'gender critical' groups. The chapter closes by imagining what a feminist and trans-inclusive response to these populisms can be. Christopher Fritzsche enriches and enlarges Birgit Sauer's affective theoretical approach from a social-psychological perspective. Sauer regards anti-feminism as a form of masculist identity politics, locating its breeding ground in neoliberal and affective governmentality. Based on a critical update of authoritarianism as theorized by the Frankfurt School, Fritzsche questions Sauer's focus on neoliberalism, showing that inner-subjective fears and insecurities are basic features of capitalist socialization in general. Additionally, he argues that heteronormativity contributes to pacify inner-subjective conflicts with one's gender identity, thus fostering anti-feminism and making it attractive for women as much as for men. A revised theory of authoritarianism, Fritzsche argues, helps us to understand the linkages between anti-feminism and other phenomena like racism and anti-Semitism.

The CONCLUDING CHAPTER summarizes a roundtable discussion organized by Dorothee Beck and Adriano José Habed on the very idea of 'blurring boundaries' that the book puts forward. Taking the polarization between the political left and the political right as well as between feminism and anti-feminism as their starting point, Hanna L. Mühlhoff, Koen Sloomackers, and Annette Henninger reflect on the analytical suitability of such binaries, in the attempt to move beyond the belief that 'we'—feminist, queer, left-leaning scholars—are on the 'good' side of history while 'they'—anti-feminist, anti-gender, right-leaning actors—are not. Concurring that the convergences between the two camps are not new and that the phrasing itself—'blurring boundaries'—is not an analytical concept and should not be pinned down as such, the discussants suggests that we ought to think of the blurring boundaries between anti-gender and LGBTIQ+ discourses, or between right and left, as a metaphor or methodology that can help to identify 'our' own blind spots and thus look at the uncanny continuities and similarities close to home.

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