



## Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory

Volume 10, Issue 1

July 2024

### **CFP: POST-/ANTI-FEMINISM, DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING AND FEMINIST AESTHETICS ACROSS POSTSOCIALIST EUROPE**

Issue editors: Mihaela Ursa, Ana Țăranu, Teona Farmatu

**Proposal deadline** (abstract 150 words, 5-7 keywords, bionote 150 words): **10 February 2024**

**Acceptance notice:** **20 February 2024**

**Deadline for full papers** (5,000-7,000 words for articles, 2,000-3,000 words for book reviews, 150-word abstract, 5-7 keywords, 3-5 theoretical references, 150-word bioprofile): **15 April 2024**

**Contact:** metacriticjournal@gmail.com

**Website:** <http://metacriticjournal.com>

-----

**Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory** is an open-access, peer-review, online publication for academic research, published twice a year by the Faculty of Letters, Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj, Romania. It promotes free-access for academic work and it welcomes authors who want to share their research and resources with their peers. It encourages, recognizes and rewards intellectual excellence in interdisciplinary and intermedial approaches of literary culture, visual culture and theory. The journal welcomes papers in English (or, for regionally oriented topics, Romanian) from the following domains: comparative studies, including digital and posthuman studies; literary studies, cultural studies, including social and gender studies; media and film studies, literary criticism and theory, cultural poetics.

-----

Increasingly articulate forms of anti-feminist mobilisation have gained mainstream exposure over recent years (Goetz and Mayer 2023, Krizsan and Roggeband 2019). They prompt a form of political regression which, if read against the enmeshed emancipatory projects of western liberal democracy and transnational feminism, might lead one to proclaim, much like Claire Hemmings does in the title of her 2022 essay: ““But I thought we’d already won that argument!””. A regular site of contestation for right-leaning political actors, the issue of gender justice has gained acute relevance in the late 2010s and the early 2020s, within a global conjuncture shaped by the global rise of illiberalism and the COVID-19 pandemic. As recent research demonstrates (Mooi-Reci and Risman, 2021), the gendered impact of the latter has

been far-reaching. Higher levels of unemployment in female-dominated sectors, as well as greater loads of house- and care work performed by women during lockdown periods (Kabeer, Razavi and Rodgers 2021) have encouraged the rehabilitation of traditional gender roles (Boring and Moroni 2023). Moreover, the pandemic catalysed an inflation of right-wing populist discourse (Thiele, 2022), prompting the rushed return to illiberal and nationalist policies across the globe (Malcolm and Valluvan, 2020; Mudde 2020; Resende and Reinke de Buitrago, 2023). Read as a symptom of latent authoritarianism (Art 2018), contemporary populism efficiently delivers its core narratives of ethnonational homogeneity and popular sovereignty through charismatic leaders, the very embodiments of hegemonic masculinity (Donald Trump, Jair Bolsonaro, Viktor Orban or the recently elected Javier Milei are text-book examples). Thus, the employment and commodification of anti-feminist stances (often amplified within reactionary masculinist discourses disseminated across digital media) enhance the electoral appeal of right-wing actors. Their increased executive power is blatantly obvious across what North American media terms the “post-Roe v Wade world,” leading Eastern European researchers to identify “gendered processes of de-democratization” (Kriszan, 2019).

We argue that the regional iterations of this global phenomenon are worth further critical attention, due to the striking examples of anti-feminist fervor and feminist pushback that post-socialist democracies have recently witnessed. Ranging from the pronatalist rhetoric of Hungarian president Katalin Novák to the restriction of reproductive rights in Poland and the impressive mobilisation of civil society in the ensuing protests, they showcase the culturally embedded positions of both contestors and contested. Often conflated by the regional far-right with “gender ideology”, feminism is framed as an artificial import of post-materialist ideology, a type of “cultural marxism” which necessitates societal rejection on two grounds. Firstly, as an intrusive narrative of Western hegemony, which threatens the body politic by dismantling its core unit, the traditional family. Secondly, as an uncomfortable reminder of the socialist past and its partial commitments to gender equality and female emancipation. By this logic, the women of post-socialist democracies become “the scapegoats for weak economies and demographic collapses” (Ghodsee, 2021). It is under these rising pressures of local right-wing activities, post-pandemic social unrest, and violent global conflicts that feminism continues to engage patriarchal, discriminatory and colonial social politics.

Robust work has been done to embed the frameworks of transnational feminism in regional reality. Such efforts are broadly exemplified within academia (by the likes of Katharina Bluhm, Ewa Majeska, Krassimira Daskalova, or Ankica Čakardić, among others), by activist collectives (such as the Romanian E-Romnja), or by consistent editorial initiatives such as *AnAlize*, a pioneer Romanian journal of feminist studies, coordinated by professor Mihaela Miroiu. Volumes such as *The Romani Women’s Movement*.

*Struggles and Debates in Central and Eastern Europe* (edited by Zentai Kóczé et al., 2019) or the upcoming *Texts and Contexts from the History of Feminism and Women's Rights* (edited by Zsófia Lóránd et al., 2024) are eloquent examples. Conceived from beyond the postfeminist turn (which emphasises the historicity of feminism, while also softening its claims and mitigating its radicalism), the specific dynamics of postsocialist feminism become more obvious. Since postfeminism inherently implies a certain level of socio-economic and cultural achievement in the struggle against patriarchal structures (Genz, Brabon 2009), its theoretical coherence within semiperipheral, most specifically postsocialist, contexts entails further critical reflection. Local cultures, artistic and theoretical alike, disseminate and challenge core feminist ideology and practice (as the uneven employment of the #MeToo movement has demonstrated, Chandra, Erlingsdóttir 2021). The comeback of the natural 'pragmatic orientation' (Felski 1989) of feminism has, alongside work on intersectionality and socialist feminism, increasingly questioned the frameworks of western feminism –broadly understood as a homogenous, hegemonic, and universalist discourse prone to effacing socio-political specificity and advancing an exclusionary and neoliberal stance. Conceived as a praxis of granting agency to non-binary, vulnerable, racialized, historically excluded people, contemporary feminism reevaluates its conceptual boundaries (encompassing, for example, strands of queer studies, animal studies and environmental humanities).

How this expansion is culturally and aesthetically refracted within postsocialist cultures, and how regional feminisms might engage it in the face of democratic backsliding, are the core concerns of the present issue. Thus, we welcome contributions related to:

- feminist approaches to postsocialist literature and literary cultures, cinema, performance and visual arts;
- socialist feminism and its legacy in postsocialist Europe;
- the transition to neoliberalism as a gendered phenomenon and how it is documented within literature, media, and the arts;
- feminist cultural strategies in the face of democratic backsliding;
- cultural reactions of regional feminisms to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- the cultural components of anti-feminist discourse as employed by the local far-right in its media discourse;
- issues of gender roles within conservative discourse, media, and cultural narratives;
- the cultural objects of authorship/literary institutions and their recent interrogations in postsocialist cultures (e.g. the Sofia Nădejde literary prize);

- comparative approaches to semi-peripheral feminism;
- proposals of new critical vocabularies for the enmeshment of feminism and its aesthetic expressions;
- case studies on specific forms of feminism: queer-feminism, posthumanist feminism, Roma feminism, socialist feminism, liberal feminism etc.

Please submit a 150-word original proposal that clearly explains how it will contribute to, revise, or depart from existing debates. Both proposals and final texts should be in English and should observe our guidelines as they appear on our website: <http://metacriticjournal.com> for-authors. The final submission should include: a 5,000-7,000-word article, including a 150-word abstract, 5-7 keywords, a list of references (only cited works), 150-word author's bio and the author's photo-portrait (jpg, separate file). Proposals and final submissions should be formatted as Word documents and sent to [metacriticjournal@gmail.com](mailto:metacriticjournal@gmail.com).

#### **Further Reading:**

BECK, Dorothee et al. (eds.) *Blurring Boundaries – ‘Anti-Gender’ Ideology Meets Feminist and LGBTIQ+ Discourses*. Columbia University Press, 2023.

BRAIDOTTI, Rosi, *Posthuman Feminism*. Polity Press, 2022.

CHANDRA, Giti and Irma Erlingsdottir. *The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of the #MeToo Movement*. Routledge, 2021.

DASKALOVA, Krassimira, et al. *Gendering Transition. Studies of Changing Gender Perspectives from Eastern Europe*. Publishing House LIT Verlag, 2012.

DAVIS, Angela Y. et al. *Abolition. Feminism. Now*. Penguin Books, 2022.

FELSKI, Rita. *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*. Harvard University Press, 1989.

GENZ, Stéphanie and Benjamin A. Brabon (eds.), *Postfeminism. Cultural Texts and Theories*. Edinburgh University Press, 2009.

GHODSEE, Kristen R. “The Enemy of My Enemy Is My Friend: The Curious Tale of Feminism and Capitalism in Eastern Europe.” *Gender and Power in Eastern Europe. Societies and Political Orders in Transition*, edited by Katarina Bluhm et al. Springer, 2021, pp. 15-24, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53130-0\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53130-0_2).

HEMMINGS, Clare. “‘But I thought we'd already won that argument!’: ‘Anti-gender’ Mobilizations,

- Affect, and Temporality.” *Feminist Studies*, vol. 48 no. 3, 2022, pp. 594-615.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/fem.2022.0042>.
- KABEER, Naila et al. “Feminist Economic Perspectives on the COVID-19 Pandemic.” *Feminist Economics*, vol. 27, no. 1-2, 2021, pp. 1-29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13545701.2021.1876906>.
- MIROIU, Mihaela. “On women, feminism and democracy.” *Post-Communist Romania at Twenty-Five. Linking Past, Present and Future*, edited by Lavina Stan and Diane Vancea, Lexington Books, 2015, pp. 87-106.
- MOOI-RICI, Irma and Barbara J. Risman, “The Gendered Impacts of COVID-19: Lessons and Reflections”, *Gender & Society*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2021, pp. 161-167, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08912432211001305>.
- NAPLES, Nancy A. (ed.) *Companion to Women’s and Gender Studies*. Wiley Blackwell, 2020.
- NOROCEL, Cristian Ov. “Antifeminist and ‘Truly Liberated’: Conservative Performances of Gender by Women Politicians in Hungary and Romania”. *Politics and Governance*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2018, pp. 43-54, <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v6i3.1417>.
- PATERNOTTE, David and Roman Kuhar, “Disentangling and Locating the ‘Global Right’: Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe”, *Politics and Governance*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2018, pp. 6-19, <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v6i3.1557>.
- VLASE, Ionela and Andrei Terian “The production of gender-specific scholarly literature in Romania: the weak institutionalisation of Gender Studies in higher education”, *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 48, no. 12, 2023, pp. 1825-1840, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2023.2215813.