



# DiGeSt

Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies

## Editorial

An Van Raemdonck, Louise Benson James, Chloé Janssen

*DiGeSt Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies, Volume 12, Issue 1*

<https://doi.org/10.21825/digest.95452>

Print ISSN: 2593-0273. Online ISSN: 2593-0281

Content is licensed under a Creative Commons BY

DiGeSt is hosted by Ghent University Website: <https://www.digest.ugent.be/>

Writing an editorial for a journal specialised in Gender and Diversity Studies has become extremely challenging in the contemporary moment. We continue witnessing Israel's ongoing genocidal violence against Palestinians, while painfully attempting to deflect global mass protests by starting another war, with Iran. U.S. elections led to a second Trump administration which has decisively geared up its policies against ethnic, cultural diversity principles and gender equality values. Trump's attacks on Diversity, Equality and Equity (DEI) policies domestically and internationally, accompanied by a ruthless human deportation politics in violation of human rights, have left many of us breathless. We witness a time of escalating military actions, rising government military expenses globally, and the normalisation of war disguised as safeguarding peace. The effects of these broader political-economic developments on academia continue to be disastrous. Entire university departments in the Netherlands have been threatened with closure due to ideological budget cuts, decided upon by the right-wing dominated Schoofs-government. Academics and students speaking out against the genocide in Palestine, continue being at risk of sanctions, cancelling and censorship. Those resorting to protests risk being arrested and physically harmed.

A few bright spots deserve our attention, too. The EU and member states (e.g. France, Belgium) resisted U.S. pressure to roll back corporate DEI efforts, affirming that inclusion is essential to their values and rejecting Trump's executive order's influence. In May 2025 Brussels hosted its first-ever Dyke March —a landmark for queer women's visibility – one of many cultural events around the world which have played a vital role in resisting systematic rolling back of rights and showing alliance and support in the face of this new wave of repression of gender and diversity. At Ghent University, Petra De Sutter was this year elected as the new rector, being the first trans rector in its history. As overwhelming as our current global political implosion may seem, people have been resisting and continue to do so by taking to the streets and speaking out in other creative ways.

DiGeSt hopes to contribute in its own modest way to envisioning a world that defeats authoritarianism and embraces social, gender and reproductive justice, while continuing to emphasize the connections between both. Current affairs demonstrate more than ever the vital role of gender and diversity values for a society that is democratic, open and respecting of human rights. We are therefore very pleased to report that this year, DiGeSt has received a record number of article submissions from a diverse range of disciplines and from all over the world. This shows the journal going from strength to strength, and to us suggests that gender and diversity studies has a strong voice, growing louder and more urgent during this difficult time globally. We are proud to present the current issue that includes strong contributions on topics as various as self-advocacy by people with physical disabilities in Belgium; adult queer book clubs in Ecuador; postfeminist humour on a Chinese social media platform; Dalit literature; and an experimental horror film in relation to gender transition.

In her contribution, **Cato Denissen** explores how language contributes to the social exclusion of people with physical disabilities on environmental, interpersonal, and intrapersonal levels, emphasising how negative linguistic attitudes and ableist communication hinder participation. She further proposes language awareness and self-advocacy as powerful tools for fostering social inclusion and empowering individuals with physical disabilities to engage more fully in society.

A piece by **Nestor David Polo-Rojas** combines queer theory and phenomenology to explore how queer subjectivities are formed through lived experience, cultural practices, and shared narratives within adult queer book clubs in Quito, Ecuador. It argues that queer identity transcends fixed categories like homosexuality and transsexuality, instead emerging through complex life trajectories, local contexts, and intersectional relationships—culminating in the concept of a distinct *marica* experience.

**Qi Wu's** article examines how postfeminist humour is used by radical feminist communities on Chinese social media platform *Weibo* to expose contradictions in postfeminist discourse while reactivating feminist radicalism. Through thematic analysis, it

reveals how humour serves as both a subversive and polarising tool—challenging depoliticised narratives but also sparking backlash and internal tensions—ultimately highlighting the need for more nuanced, inclusive feminist dialogue in China’s digital landscape.

We are also really pleased to be publishing two articles on literature and film in this issue. **Sharanya Devasya Ganesh** argues that Dalit feminist fiction functions as a powerful form of literary resistance against caste and gender oppression, using innovative narrative techniques to challenge traditional literary and political structures. Through close analysis of works by P. Sivakami and Meena Kandasamy, the author demonstrates how these texts not only represent the lived experiences of Dalit women but also reshape the aesthetic and political terrain of contemporary Indian literature and activism.

**Jubilee Walker Finnegan** critically examines the 2024 psychological horror drama film *I Saw the TV Glow* as an exploration of the emotional and psychological violence of gender transition, using the horror genre to express the alienation and rebirth involved in realising one’s trans identity. The article argues that the film’s unapologetically queer perspective, shaped by director Jane Schoenbrun’s own experiences, presents a radical and deeply personal narrative that challenges traditional understandings of selfhood, discomfort, and identity through experimental horror.

The excellent *DiGeSt* intern for this year, **Femke Beutels**, has single-handedly put together an impressive roundtable on the topic of ‘Queering Disability’, gathering perspectives from a variety of fields. With contributions from **Alan Santinele Martino and Thomas Tri, Femke Beutels and Mirre Verhoeven, Anna Claes, and Sarah Munawar**, the roundtable offers a rich insight into the embodiment of disabilities through a racialised and/or queer/LGBTQIA+ lens, considering how these intersectional identities impact building (intimate) relationships and navigating life, and reflects on the field of feminist disability studies.

Our bookworms have been busy munching this year – this issue’s ‘What Are You Reading’ section has a whopping ten submissions, from authors **Albina Fetahaj, Caro Suringar, David Lombard, Iris Kater Mirsalari, Jante Borremans, Jemma Vercruysse, Josefiën Cornette, Kaat Kenis, Lieve Carette and Liorah Hoek, Teun van Son, and Femke Beutels**. These personal reviews cover books on mental health in the contexts of higher education, black radical creativity, and interdisciplinary approaches; disability and queer studies considering contexts of pain, care, dependence and desire; migration, capitalism and racism; postclassical narratology; the legacies of decolonial thinkers; and the gift economy.