

Call for Papers

Comparatismi – **Rivista di Letteratura, Arte e Media**

No. 11 (2026): The discourse of sexuality

Drawing from Foucault's famous analysis in *The Will to Knowledge*, sexuality can be understood as a discursive intersection of epistemic instances, social practices, and control strategies. Far from being simply repressed, modern sexuality has been produced and regulated by a proliferation of statements, norms, images, specialist knowledge, and narratives which, in multiplying their forms, have made its representation more accessible and its censorship more insidious. According to Foucault, talking about sex is already an act of power. Today, however, it is also an aesthetic, political, narrative, and performative act.

Issue 9 of *Comparatismi* invites contributions that examine the discursive construction of sexuality across literary, philosophical, iconographic, audio-visual, and legal texts, without chronological or geographical limitations. Submissions may focus on individual authors or works, theoretical genealogies or cultural practices, institutional frameworks, or the symbolic phenomenology of desire.

We particularly welcome proposals that explore one of the following areas:

1. The Foucauldian device of sexuality - Theoretical reflections and textual analyses that test the Foucauldian paradigm, whether by criticizing its predominantly verbocentric and bibliocentric approach, by revising the relationship between the proliferation of 'discourses of truth' on sex (the phenomenon with which Foucault equates modernity), or by reconsidering the processes of control and censorship to which they are subjected (the driving force behind the phenomenon itself). Examples are D.H. Lawrence's novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which depicts sexual desire as a vital and subversive force in opposition to social control, or Stanley Kubrick's film *Eyes Wide Shut*, which explores the relationship between desire, jealousy, and gender stereotypes in bourgeois culture.

2. Figures of desire - Studies on the dynamics of erotic desire, through the lens of the most recent post-Freudian psychoanalytic theories. How is desire represented in novels, films, and TV series? What symbolic, narrative, or visual configurations support it? Potential topics include Louise Labé's *Le Sonnets de la mort* (1555), a French Renaissance collection dedicated to romantic and sexual desire from a female perspective, or, of course, Marcel Proust's *Recherche*, or André Aciman's *Call Me by Your Name* (2007), a novel (and a film) that explores homosexual desire in its genesis, censorship, and sublimation. examining the emergence, censorship, and sublimation of homosexual desire.

3. Cultural history of sexuality - Investigations into representations of homosexuality, heterosexuality, transgender and queer identities in literature, art, cinema, and visual culture, from modernity to the contemporary era. How and when is sexuality discussed, or ignored, in canonical texts? One emblematic example is Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), a novel that allows us to investigate how culture represented (or ignored) queer identity even before contemporary categories emerged.

4. Sexuality and institutions - We encourage submissions that explore the interference between sexuality and political, legal, religious, or educational institutions. From the Merlin Law enacted in Italy in 1958 to the medicalization of sexuality, to contemporary debates on pornography, what roles do institutions play in shaping discourses on sex? Examples of analysis include the so-called *Wilde Trial* (1895) or Abdellatif Kechiche's film

La Vie d'Adèle (2013), in which individual desire is represented in relation to educational institutions.

5. Pornography, media, and post-porn - Analyses of so-called porn studies and the transformations of the erotic imagination before and after the digital age. How has online pornography redefined the codes of representation of the body, pleasure, and power, or the ways in which humans experience them in real life? What role has post-porn played in rethinking gender, desire, and self-perception? Possible examples of analysis include *I Modi* (1524), erotic engravings by Giulio Romano with sonnets by Pietro Aretino, the film *Baise-moi* by Virginie Despentes and Coralie Trinh Thi (2000), an example of “post-porn” that mixes pornography, violence, and feminist representation of sex, or J.G. Ballard’s novel *Crash* (1973, followed by Cronenberg’s film in 1996), based on the relationship between body, technology, and sexuality.

References

- Attwood F. (2011), *Mainstreaming Sex: The Sexualization of Western Culture*, London, I.B. Tauris
- Attwood F., Smith C., Barker M. (eds.) (2019), *Porn Studies: Critical Positions*, London, Routledge
- Bailes S. J., Lepecki A. (eds.) (2021), *Performing Sex: The Erotics of the Stage*, London, Routledge
- Bini D. (2022), *Corpi che bruciano. Il cinema e il desiderio*, Roma, Carocci
- Calabrò D. (2023), *La carne e l'archivio. Politiche della sessualità nel presente*, Milano, Mimesis
- Danna D. (2021), *Sociologia della pornografia*, Milano, Meltemi
- Dean T. (2014), *Porn Archives*, Durham, Duke University Press
- Deuber-Mankowsky A., Kaiser B. (eds.) (2021), *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns*, Berlin, De Gruyter
- Fitzpatrick J., Ellis J. (2020), *Desire and the Political: A Psychoanalytic Approach*, London, Rowman & Littlefield
- Halberstam J. (2020), *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire*, Durham, Duke University Press
- Jagose A. (2020), *Orgasmology*, Durham, Duke University Press
- Lang S. (2023), *Erotic Futurities: The Sexual Politics of Contemporary Science Fiction*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press
- McGowan T. (2013), *Enjoying What We Don't Have: The Political Project of Psychoanalysis*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press
- Ortoleva P. (2022), *Il secolo dei media*, Roma-Bari, Laterza (Parte II).
- Paasonen S., Nikunen K., Saarenmaa L. (eds.) (2020), *Pornification and the Media: Cultural and Political Challenges of the Sexually Explicit*, London, Rowman & Littlefield
- Rojas P. (ed.) (2024), *Post-Porn: Feminist and Queer Perspectives on Pornography*, New York, Verso
- Smith C. (2022), *Pornographic Realism: The Art and Science of Sex in the Nineteenth Century*, Stanford, Stanford University Press
- Vittorini F. (2024), *Queer Bodies. Identità trans* nella letteratura e nei media*, Bologna, Pàtron Editore, 2 voll.

- Williams L. (2021), *On The Wire*, Durham, Duke University Press Williams L. (1999), *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible”*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Zanotti P. (2024), *Il gay. Dove si racconta come è stata inventata l’identità omosessuale*, Firenze, Ponte alle Grazie.

Submission

Proposals (including title, abstract of approximately 250 words, five keywords, brief bi-bibliographical note, academic affiliation, and email address) must be submitted by **March 1, 2026**, via the “Submit a submission” page on the journal’s website.

The outcome of the selection process will be communicated by **March 30, 2026**.

Final contributions must be submitted by **September 1, 2026**.

Accepted texts will be published by **December 2026**.

Articles in Italian, English, or French will be accepted.

The call is curated by Stefano Calabrese, Peppino Ortoleva, and Fabio Vittorini.