

Special Issue

Queer Culture and Literature in Eighteenth-Century Studies

Message from the Guest Editor

In his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), Samuel Johnson defines 'queer' as 'Odd; strange; original; particular'. The literary example used to illustrate Johnson's definition of 'queerness' comes from Addison's and Steele's *The Spectator*, and curiously involves the story of 'a fellow' who would not go to 'bed until two in the morning' so as to avoid being labelled 'a *queer*'. This 'non-queer' man also encounters the constabulary only to be 'knocked down'. The de-contextualised narrative components within Johnson's chosen literary example tantalizingly enfold the potential intimacy or sexuality of the 'bed' with the rough enforcement of the 'constable' and the gendered performance of 'vivacity'. Reading, perhaps, anachronistically, there is much in Johnson's description to tease a resonance with twenty-first century queer experiences of intimacy, sex, criminalisation, and performance.

Guest Editor

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