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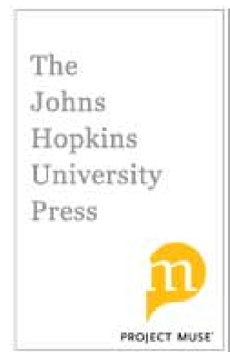

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Persona, Elegy, and Desire

CHRIS MOUNSEY

The past few years have witnessed a steady but distinct shift in eighteenth-century literary studies away from theories of identity based on Continental philosophies of language. The terminologies of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Jürgen Habermas are still employed, and the lessons they have taught us about the complexities of identity, albeit of the historical subject, the author, or the reader, are not forgotten. However, to accept the absolute indeterminacy of identity—historical or fictitious—has for some time seemed inadequate to account for our understanding of the way eighteenth-century writers handled the characters in their texts.

The move away from literary theory, added to the arrival of the full-text database, with the concomitant easy access to primary evidence, has heralded a return to more empirically based historical research in literature. But this is not simply a turn to history, for history has its own theoretical complexities. In a recent paper, Robert D. Hume offered literary scholars some wise words on "The Aims and Limits of Historical Scholarship."[1] Hume's message may be summed up briefly as a method and a warning: we should try to produce contextual readings; such readings, however, will never amount to more than "working hypotheses." The caveat sounds almost like postmodern provisionality, yet Hume does not leave us with indeterminacy. He offers instead sound advice on methods for grading interpretations on a continuum from "no conclusion" through "weak and doubtful conclusion" and "good provisional answer" to "near certainty."[2]

My essay will follow Hume's methodological suggestions with respect to the literary persona, the "subject" of so much recent theoretical debate. In particular it will explore a hitherto

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unrecorded eighteenth-century debate about the word "persona" which took place between John Clendon and Henry Sacheverell (1674?–1724) in 1710. This part of the paper will argue that there is evidence to suggest that early-eighteenth-century people saw themselves as able to entertain more than one persona at one place and time. Furthermore, I will argue that the idea of multiple and discontinuous personae extended to the belief that one individual's different personae did not have to cohere with each other into a "well-rounded" person.

As an example of the application of this idea, what will follow is a discussion of the elegy as a genre in which multiple personae were written by the author, and read by eighteenth-century readers. After a general introduction to eighteenth-century theory of the elegy from William Shenstone, the focus of this section will be the expression of same-sex desire. Here, contemporary theory will show that the elegy was directed to a multitude of addressees and often at the same time. In this sense, the elegy may be understood as displaying Clendon's theory of multiple personae. That is to say, readers might understand the poem in one or more of its personae depending upon whether they were recognizable. George Haggerty's claim that the voluminous form of the elegy was regularly used to mask expressions of same-sex love will then be read beside Shenstone's theory. Thus, we shall see that one reading of an elegy might derive from the aspect of one persona expressed by the poem and read by the reader, while another would derive from a second persona.

As an example of this form of double writing and reading, we shall finally explore William Mason's (1725–97) elegiac *Odes* of 1756, Thomas Gray's (1716–71) *Odes* of 1757, and their detractors. As with most of Mason's and Gray's poems, these odes were lampooned soon after their first publication, and in particular for their invocation of same-sex desire. George Colman (1732–94) and Robert Lloyd's (1733?–64) *Two Odes* (1760) may or may not have been homophobic, but they draw attention to the same-sex desire for each poet in the other's work, a fact which I would argue suggests "good provisional" evidence that it was understood by a contemporary audience amid other possible readings.

PERSONA

John Clendon's *Tractatus Philosophico-Theologico de Persona, or, a Treatise Of the Word Person* (1710) presents a theory of the word "person" that argues that all people are made up of multiple

personae.[3] Clendon was a judge who sat at the Guildhall. He matriculated Magdalen Hall in 1658, entered the Inner Temple in 1668, and transferred to the bench in 1689. His *Tractatus*, he announced, was written in support of the Act of 9no and 10no of William III—*An Act for the More Effectual Suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness*—and purports to explain why the single God of Christianity is also called a Trinity. It also claims itself to be written in answer to Charles Leslie's (1650–1722) *The Socinian Controversy Discuss'd*, in which Leslie, a High Church Anglican, savagely attacked the Socinian contention of the Essential Unity of God.[4] Leslie's book, which is written as a dialogue between a Christian (in fact, a High Church Anglican) and a Socinian, describes the Trinity in terms of very human "Personal Actions": "Chr[istian] . . . we call Personal Actions, attributed to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as the One to Send, the Other to be Sent. The one to Proceed from the Other. The one to Beget, the other to be Begotten of Him. The One to take Flesh, and not the other &c. Therefore we call these Persons, because we find Personal Actions attributed to them."[5] Leslie's argument about begetting (by the Father) and "taking Flesh" by "The One and not the other" (the Son) and proceeding (from the Holy Spirit) is designed to prove the essentially triple nature of God. Against this view, Clendon argues that these three modes of behavior are human actions, and represent the understanding of God in human terms, rather than the understanding of God in his own terms as Essentially One. Clendon therefore turns Leslie's point around and argues that Leslie's attack on Socinianism gives confirmation of the truth of the Sabellian heresy, that God is Three only in relation to the world, and is in Essence One.[6] The Trinity, to Sabellians such as Clendon, was a product of the limited human comprehension of the single Essence of God as three earthly persons who are defined by their different activities.

Clendon, as a judge at the time of the Test Act, necessarily had to disguise his heretical theology (albeit unsuccessfully as we shall see), but the book is pure Sabellianism. In particular, Clendon blames the idea of the Essential Trinity of God upon the infiltration into scripture of Greek philosophy: "This Scripture-Three, *viz.* Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, when the Greek Philosophy, had crowded it self into Christianity, were call'd a Trinity of Hypostases or Substances, and so they pass'd in the Greek Church without scruple for several Centuries: Till at length the Latin Church grew dissatisfied, and rejected them as Tritheistick, and chose rather to call them a Trinity of Persons."[7] Maintaining

the disguise of his argument about the unity of God, Clendon asserts that "each Person [of the Godhead] cannot sustain the Personality of the other. The Father cannot be the Son, nor the Son the Father, nor the Holy Ghost be either, without confounding the Persons, and destroying the Trinity."[8]

Thus, all the persons of the deity are said to be separate and distinct, which would appear to be Essential Trinitarianism. However, what is most important is that while they do not merge into one another, they are still aspects of One Essence. In order to explain exactly what he means, Clendon makes the same reversal that Leslie made and describes the Three and One God in terms of human characteristics, or "Accidents":

> Some Accidents there are which I call Involuntary, because they are connate with and connatural to the man, as Size, Shape, Feature, Stature and the like . . . Another sort of Accidents there are which I call Voluntary, that are assumed or acquired by the Man of his own Act or Acquisition, and are merely adventitious to the Essence. Such are Wisdom, Learning, Religion, Dress, Address, Mean [sic], Deportment, and the other Endowments and Accomplishments of the Mind or Body . . . Now the Personalities that do result from these Voluntary Accidents may, 'tis true, constitute several Persons, as those Involuntary Accidents do; but they may also constitute several Persons in one and the same numerical Essence, which those Involuntary Accidents cannot do. A Wise Man may be another Man from a Learned, and a Learned Man may be another Man from a Religious Man, and a Religious Man may be another Man from both; and yet it may be that the same one Man may be a Wise Man, a Learned Man, and a Religious Man; and there it is so the same one Man may be several Persons in those several Respects.[9]

Clendon, therefore, argues that while our physical characteristics (our "Involuntary Accidents") go to make up one recognizable person, our mental attainments (our "Voluntary Accidents") produce many different "Persons" residing in one body. This is because "it is from Accidents that do attend Essence, and not from the Essence itself, that the Personalities do result; so that the same one particular Essence may in respect of several Personalities be several Persons."[10] In this statement we see the culmination of Clendon's theory: the mute physical body stands behind and

sustains many different personae. No one persona is "the real man or woman." All, like the three persons of the godhead, are consubstantial (sharing a single essence), but they are all separate and distinct.

An important question for the application of this theory to poetry about same-sex love is whether there is any choice about which persona the mute body "puts on." Clendon gives no explicit answer to this question, but since his theory is based on human actions, and there is no controlling spirit motivating them, the question of consciousness and unconsciousness does not come in here, and there is no choice between personae because there is no choosing subject. Persona must therefore be understood as contextual, and as mutually read by other people, and therefore a particular persona is not necessarily noticed by the holder of it.

Clendon's twelve-page description of the persons that inhabit the human body gives supporting definitions of the word "persona" from the Bible and the classics. It gives examples of famous men who were known for their multiple personalities. Lorenzo di Medici, we are told was wise and grave, but also puerile and lascivious.[11] But this is no discourse on multiple personality disorder. The examples are given to explain the triple and unitary godhead. This is how God is, and how all people are, created in his image.

In his reply to the *Tractatus*, Leslie could no more than mock Clendon's position, for example, joking that "when his Beard grows he is one Person, and when he is Shaved he is another; when he has a Black Coat on, he is one Person, and another Person when he has a colour'd Coat."[12] Leslie's weak response was no doubt due to the fact, as he himself noted, that the *Tractatus* "had gain'd a *Vogue* about the Town."[13] In fact, Clendon had become quite the talk of the town, and was included twice by Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) in the *Examiner* of January 1711 in lists of "free-thinkers" against the Test Act.[14]

It was up to Henry Sacheverell to take on Clendon, but as we shall see, even his arguments for the conformity of personae into a singular self did not successfully counter Clendon's theory of multiple personae. Alerting us to the debate between the far more famous religious controversialist and Clendon is a manuscript note in Richard Farmer's copy of the *Tractatus* in the British Library that reads: "*Autor purum putum sabelianismum profitetur; quapropter ejus liber #5 Mart. 1710. flammis ultricibus fuit traditum.*"[15] [The author professed unadulterated Sabellianism, wherefore his book was consigned to the avenging flames on 5 March 1710.][16]

We learn from Abel Boyer (1667–1729) that the book was burned by the public hangman, as it "tends to promote Atheism, Schism and Immorality, and to create Factions and Divisions among Her Majesty's Subjects."[17] In fact, the *Tractatus Philosophico-Theologico de Persona* was burned alongside Henry Sacheverell's infamous High Anglican "bloody flag" sermon, *The Perils of False Brethren* (1710), because Sacheverell had mentioned it in his trial.[18] In order to infer how representative Clendon's views of persona were, we may follow Hume's advice, and reconstruct the context in which Clendon wrote his burnt book.

It was probably no chance occurrence that Clendon published his *Tractatus* in 1710. Sacheverell also matriculated from Magdalen Hall, Oxford, but in 1689, and his inflammatory rhetoric in *The Perils of False Brethren* was aimed at those who held beliefs along the lines of his former collegian. In this context, Clendon's book, a philosophico-theological controversy written in support of the law of the land, reads like a reprimand from a superior colleague.

However, the two dedicatees of the *Tractatus* (William Lord Cowper and Charles Spencer, Earl of Sunderland) show Clendon's staunch support for the Whigs, who were the political targets of Sacheverell's intemperate sermon. Thus, Clendon's pamphlet was situated at the center of a political as well as religious controversy. The unwanted effect of the dedication associating prominent Whigs with heretical beliefs was that it opened them to counterattack: it must have seemed too good a target for the beleaguered Sacheverell to miss.

Sacheverell's *Answer . . . to the Articles of Impeachment* was supplemented by a second, explanatory pamphlet called *Collections of Passages Referr'd to by Dr Henry Sacheverell in His Answer to the Articles of His Impeachment*, in which we find seven references to Clendon's *Tractatus*.[19] Five references concern the question of the presence of Greek philosophy in the Christian religion. In four, Sacheverell draws attention to Clendon's dismissal of the idea that Jesus was the λογοσ, which, as we saw above, was the basis of Clendon's belief that the church had mistaken the One God for an Essential Trinity.[20] The fifth suggests that the church suppressed many revealed texts which did not fit with the Platonization of Christianity.[21] The sixth reference questions the divinity of Jesus, on the subject of which Clendon gives an unequivocally Sabellian response: "it was the Man Jesus that was the Christ, or Messiah, and Son of God."[22]

Sacheverell's seventh citation of Clendon is the most interesting: "I do think the Queen's Majesty with respect to her Three

Kingdoms, to be a most apposite Emblem of the Personal Triplicity in the Divine Unity. She is in each respect a Particular Person, and yet in every respect, she is One and the same particular Royal Essence."[23] Sacheverell's choice of this sentence from Clendon's dedication is an attack on the notion of the singular body with multiple personae. However, in making the attack, he opposes the relatively new idea of the queen of three nations (England, Scotland, and Ireland) because it can be seen to be an emblem of the Sabellian God. The point is made pursuant to Sacheverell's High Church Anglican position that all must conform, and in conforming believe the same things. In his *Perils of False Brethren* sermon, Sacheverell is clear that he thinks that all people (of all nations) should concur on all issues. His argument is that one should share the goals of one's society, and "if He *swerves* from, *Disowns*, or *Betrays* upon any *Sinister Motive* whatsoever . . . [it] involves the Man in a very Heinous *Sin*, *Treacherously* acting against his *Judgment*, and *giving the Lye* both to his *Faith*, his *Reason*, and his *Knowledge*."[24]

However, the very idea that one may have a "Sinister Motive," that one can treacherously act against one's own judgment—to have one persona acting against another persona—opens up the possibility of having more than one persona, no matter how much Sacheverell's rhetoric demands that all people "Preserve Inviolable Unity, professing *One Faith*, *One Baptism*, *One God*, and *Saviour* of us all."[25] Set alongside the fact that the Scottish nation had a completely different national church from the English, and that the Irish saw themselves as a sister nation to England, Sacheverell's statement is untimely, while Clendon's captures the contemporary mood of the diversity and unity of the three and one nation, where the monarch stands as a mute symbol with three aspects or personae representing each nation.

Therefore, from the context of the debate between Sacheverell and Clendon, it would seem safe to argue that the idea of one person with multiple personae that did not overlap and that were distinct from one another was current at this point in the eighteenth century. The pamphlet's burning, because it was part of a controversy in the popular press, gives us cause to believe with some certainty that it was a widely held view, and was, as Charles Leslie said, "the vogue of the Town."[26]

THE ELEGY

William Shenstone's (1714–63) account of the elegy prefaces his *Works in Verse and Prose* (1764).[27] Noting elegy's unfixed style

and variable content, Shenstone comments first on its emotional content, which “throws its melancholy stole over pretty different objects; which, like the dresses at a funeral procession, gives them all a kind of solemn and uniform appearance.”[28] For Shenstone, elegy is distinguished not by verse form or particular content, but by the expression of the sort of intense emotion experienced at a funeral. The phrase “pretty different objects” suggests either that the elegy may be directed toward more than one type of addressee, or that one elegy might be directed toward several addressees. The fact that the stole covers the objects suggests masking. Explaining the reason for writing elegy, he notes: “They [the Romans] gave the name of elegy to their pleasantries as well as their lamentations; ’till at last, through their abundant fondness for the myrtle, they forgot that the cypress was their peculiar garland.”[29] Here, we see that the function of the elegy is to transform grief into happiness. And the question is begged as to whether the masking inherent in elegy is the masking of sorrow with joy.

Moving to more specific pronouncements, Shenstone lists the usual dedicatees of elegy: intimate friends, near relations, celebrated beauties, favorite mistresses, beneficent governors, and illustrious men. The list is interesting since it juxtaposes legitimate objects of sorrow with the illegitimate: mistresses exist alongside friends and famous people. Shenstone next informs us that the element that connects an elegy for an intimate friend or relative with an elegy for a famous beauty, a mistress, or a war leader, is the fact that “elegy is of a species which illustrates and endears the private.”[30] The point is tantalizing. The elegy, according to Shenstone, is a poem about private thoughts and feelings, mixing its objects that may or may not be legitimate, and disguising the private feelings with a “melancholy stole.” We might therefore characterize Shenstone’s overall view of the elegy as a poem that expresses, though secretly, the interior thoughts of the writer when confronted with great emotion such as that connected with death, the pains of love, or political hope dashed, and its purpose as salving that emotion through the expression of it.

A modern commentator, Peter Sacks, expresses a similar view to Shenstone on the capacious elegy, with the added rider that the elegy should be seen as a working through of experience and as a symbolic action.[31] The idea of the symbolic aspect suggests that the elegy, which is a making public of private emotions in order to “work them through,” is carried out in a formulaic or ritualistic way. The reason for this, he argues, is that predetermined formulae give adequate disguise for private emotions lurking be-

neath the surface. More to the point of this paper, the formulaic elements of the elegy give adequate disguise for the homoerotic to lurk beneath the surface of a poem about death. Who would notice at first glance the homoerotic feelings for the other, which we shall see both Mason and Gray expressed in poems on the brevity of life?

For some understanding of the method by which this type of emotional disguise may be brought about, we can turn to Haggerty. In *Men in Love* we read of Thomas Gray's desire for Richard West (1716–42), expressed in a number of poems, which appears not as sexual desire, but as the emotions of a man known for his finer feeling: "Gray's is the love that does dare speak its name, publicly and profusely, at the expense, as Gray's poem makes clear, of the love itself. If Gray's poetry is a poetry of loss, then what he loses is the love he everywhere expresses. What is left of course is the feeling . . . Grief becomes the substitute for the friend and offers protection against the implications of desire. But at the same time it commemorates that desire, and perhaps its fulfillment, in conventional imagery that hides its personal intensity."[32] The first thing we notice about this analysis is that Haggerty suggests the presence of the same masking process in the elegy as was introduced by Shenstone. But he goes further by suggesting that "love" is made up of "desire" and "feeling." "Feeling" expressed by men about men is publicly acceptable, whether the object of the "feeling" is a lover, a platonic friend, or a public figure. What brings about the opportunity for the expression of any "desire" that might underpin the relationship between the two men is that it is expressed as "feeling" and so appears to be the acceptable emotion derived from the death of a friend. Haggerty draws on the emotional similarity between "feeling" and "desire" as two ways of understanding "love." But read in terms of Clendon's theory of persona, "feeling" and "desire" are able to exist side by side in the same poem as two different aspects of the mute carriers of the emotions—the words of the poem—which are activated by the reader in whatever way he or she can, and that were put there by the author, the one disguising the other.

DESIRE

What is unexpected about Mason is that, although he was no brilliant or innovative poet, he was at the center of several important poetical paper wars. In fact almost every one of his early poems was mocked in verse by his contemporaries: *To a*

Water Nymph (in Robert Dodsley's *Miscellany*, 1748) was attacked by Christopher Smart's (1722–71) *The Judgment of Midas* (wr. 1749, pub. 1751); *Isis* (wr. 1748, pub. 1749) by Thomas Warton's (1728–90) *The Triumph of Isis* (1750); *Ode at the Installation of His Grace Thomas Holles Duke of Newcastle Chancellor of the University* [of Cambridge] (1749) by Smart and Bonnell Thornton (1725–68; writing as Fustian Sackbut) in their hilarious *An ODE on Saint CAECILIA's Day: adapted to the ancient BRITISH Musick* (1749 and 1763); and the operatic setting of Mason's *Elfrida* (1772) by Colman, in his opera, *Inkle and Yarico* (1787). More to the point of this essay, Mason's 1756 elegiac *Odes*, which includes the graveyard meditations *To Memory* and *On Melancholy*, was attacked jointly with Gray's 1757 *Odes*, by Colman and Lloyd in *Two Odes: To Obscurity and To Oblivion* (1760).[33]

The persistent mocking of Mason may be due to a contemporary view that he was not a good poet; it may be due to jealousy that he was chosen to write important poems for special occasions; or it may be because the same-sex desiring persona was so obvious in his verse that it could not adequately be masked in the way that it should be according to Shenstone's view of elegiac language. According to Clendon's theory, it is not necessary that the same-sex desiring persona is put there by the author; being contextual, it is discovered by the readers, a fact that could have added to the joke. If, in the four poems to be discussed, Mason and Gray were writing in a manner that suggested same-sex desire, they would become the butt of a joke without knowing why. This is so, because, according to Clendon's theory, a reading of a same-sex desiring persona could, and probably did, exist alongside another more acceptable reading based on "feeling."

At the outset of *To Obscurity*, Mason and Gray are linked as the butt of Colman and Lloyd's joke:

> Heard ye the din of Modern Rhimers bray?
> It was cool M[aso]n: or warm G[ra]y
> Involv'd in tenfold smoke.[34]

Printing their names side-by-side, albeit in semidisguised form, suggests a connection between the two poets although their verses were published separately and by different publishers. To those who knew them, Gray and Mason's close relationship was famous.[35] Gray was officious beyond the point of simple interference in getting Mason elected to the Common Room of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, resorting to a court case against the Master to

get his way.[36] Furthermore, he saw to it that Mason was chosen (over Smart) to write the poem on the investiture of the Duke of Newcastle as chancellor of the university in 1748.[37] The two men wrote copiously to each other, with Gray appending to his letters numerous corrections to Mason's poetry. In some letters, Gray addressed Mason affectionately as "Skroddles."[38]

Colman and Lloyd's choice of the word "involv'd" to connect Mason and Gray has multiple connotations. It suggests the two poets being enfolded or enwrapped in the smoke, but also entwined by it, or even with each other. The word also suggests Gray and Mason's involvement with each other—either in the legal case, or otherwise. "Involv'd" also connotes actions that are underhand or covert, and here the connection with smoke is similar to Shenstone's veil: anything, even same-sex desire, can go on under the veil or smoke screen.

But although the two poets are connected at the beginning, *To Obscurity* continues as a close parody of Gray's Ode "On the Progress of Poetry." For example, where Gray writes

> Man's feeble race what Ills await,
> Labour, and Penury, the racks of Pain,
> Disease, and Sorrow's weeping train,
> And Death, sad refuge from the storms of Fate![39]

Colman and Lloyd parody with

> Man's feeble race eternal dangers wait,
> With high or low, all, all, is woe,
> Disease, mischance, pale fear, and dubious fate.[40]

In fact, Colman and Lloyd transform Gray's metaphor of the progress of poetry as "Man's feeble race" into the story of a horse race between two poets riding Pegasus and Whitenose. Nevertheless, even in a poem directed at Gray, the references to the involvement between Gray and Mason continue. Thus, where Colman and Lloyd mock Gray's use of irregular Pindaricks with a reference to his sartorial sense, there is a secondary reference to Mason:

> The shallow Fop in antick vest.
> Tir'd of the beaten road,
> Proud to be singularly drest,
> Changes, with every changing moon, the mode.[41]

Gray's "antic vest" seems something like the attire he wore in traveling to France. As Robert Mack writes: "Gray's hair was curled and worn, as was then the fashion, a la negligee, and secured in front and back by a large solitaire or black silk neck-tie. His waistcoat and breeches were tightened 'so straight, (one) can neither breath, nor walk,' he had his coat widened and stiffened with buckram. The ruffles of his sleeves were extended to the ends of his fingers, and the entire outfit was bedecked with an abundance of silk and fringe. Completing the outfit was a tremendous muff into which he was told to thrust both his arms."[42]

Clothes were also a constant source of interest to Gray and Mason in their correspondence, and they read people's characters by their choice of apparel. Thus, when Mason wrote to Gray from Hanover in June 1755, he describes a particular "Myn Herr" in the following terms: "He apparels himself generally in a decent grass-green suit, with a fair full peruke, not too full to break upon the spherical form of his cheeks, and yet full enough to add a graceful squareness on each side of them; the altitude of his square-toed shoe heels, the breadth of his milk-and-watered rollups, and the size of his amber-headed cane, are all truly symbolical, not only of his own genius, but of that of all his compatriots."[43] It would seem that Colman and Lloyd had picked up on this foible of the poets they mock, but the joke about Gray's "vest," or waistcoat, works to suggest same-sex desire because of the last lines of Mason's *To Memory*:

> Hence the rich spoils, thy studious youth
> Caught from the stores of antient Truth:
> Hence all thy busy eye cou'd pleas'd explore,
> When Rapture led thee to the Latian shore:
> Each scene, that Tiber's bank supply'd;
> Each grace, that play'd on Arno's side;
> The tepid gales, thro' Tuscan glades that fly;
> The blue Serene, that spreads Hesperia's sky;
> Were still thine own: thy ample mind
> Each charm receiv'd, retain'd, combin'd.
> And thence "the night'y Visitant", that came
> To touch thy bosom with her sacred flame,
> Recall'd the long-lost beams of graces;
> That wisdom shot from Nature's face,
> When GOD, in Eden, o'er her youthful breast
> Spread with his own right hand Perfection's gorgeous Vest.[44]

When read with "feeling," Mason's lines clearly address Milton's *Paradise Lost*, as does Gray in his poem. Nevertheless, with the knowledge that the two men discussed other men in terms of their clothes, the same lines may be read to hold the idea that Mason desires nightly visits to his friend, in order to put his hand inside Gray's waistcoat, as an evanescent, but indelible "desiring" possibility brought about through Clendon's theory of multiple personae. Furthermore, by connecting the two poets in an attack which appears to be on only one of them, the "desiring" reading is highlighted.

Likewise, when we turn to Colman and Lloyd's second poem *To Oblivion*, which is a close parody of Mason's *To Memory*, there is once again reference to Gray's *Odes* that involves Mason and Gray in suggestions of same-sex desire. Thus, where Colman and Lloyd ventriloquize Mason's lines addressed to Memory, "Thy reign / Nor place can fix, nor power restrain: / All all is thine,"[45] in a mocking address to Forgetfulness with the lines

> All, all is thine. Thy pow'rful sway
> The throng'd poetick hosts obey.
> Tho' in the van of Mem'ry proud t'appear,
> At thy command they darken in the rear,[46]

the parody is of ideas that were minted by Gray: "Amazement in his van, with Flight combined, / And sorrow's shaded form, and solitude behind."[47] On one level, the parody suggests that Mason's verse is eminently forgettable as it appears fresh in the forefront of the "van of Mem'ry" but quickly fades to darkness. On another level, Colman and Lloyd's alteration of "behind" to "rear" draws attention to the hinder parts, and the desiring personae of Gray and Mason.

A little further on in *To Oblivion*, Colman and Lloyd use the expected female sex as their voicing of Mason's evocation of his muse:

> Hear then, O Goddess, hear thy vot'ry's pray'r!
> And if Thou deign'st to take one moment's care,
> Attend Thy Bard! who duly pays
> The tribute of his votive lays;
> Whose Muse still offers at thy sacred shrine; [Mason]
> Thy Bard, who calls THEE *His*, and makes *Him* THINE.[48]

In fact, in Mason's *To Melancholy*, Gray is the muse whom Mason evokes, and in whom he wants to be enwrapped: "Thro' this still valley let me stray, / Wrapt in some strain of pensive Gray."[49] Thus, although in *To Oblivion* Colman and Lloyd continue the reversal of Gray's sex, the final image sees him as muse astride a drunken Mason's back: "O come! FAT Goddess, drunk with Falstaff's sack! [Gray] / See, where she sits on the benumb'd Torpedo's back!"[50] The "Torpedo" or electric ray had recently been shown to numb the hand of anyone who touched it. Once again it calls forth Mason's supposedly dull poetry, but the shape of his body is also suggested by the roundness of the fish. The careful numbering of en-dashes at the ends of the lines ("Whose Muse still offers at thy sacred shrine– – – – –" and "O come! FAT Goddess, drunk with Falstaff's sack!– – – –"), which I have resolved into the names Mason and Gray is suggested by a third set of en-dashes at the end of a line on the same page: "Or Lycophron prophetic rave his fill, / Wrapt in the darker strains of Johnny– – – –." The name here is almost certainly "Hill," to rhyme with "fill," and recalls Smart's *Hilliad*, a parody of the same type as Colman and Lloyd's, which mocked the author of *The London Daily Advertiser*, John Hill. [51] Hill, like Gray and Mason, is linked to same-sex desire, though Smart is clearer about Hill's inclinations in his references to "clyster pipes," or enema tubes. Thus, we can be relatively certain that Colman and Lloyd were trying to make sure that their readers understood that Mason was the Bard, and Gray the muse in this poem, and that their joke about this poem lay in its same-sex desiring language.

Building on what we have read in the combined attack on the two poets in these sections of the parodies, we may now perhaps believe with equal certainty that contemporary readers would have understood both of Haggerty's "feeling" and "desire" personae in Gray's and Mason's poems, which called forth mockery. Thus, where Gray writes of

> Slow melting strains their Queen's approach declare
> Where'er she turns the Graces homage pay.
> With arms sublime, that floats upon the air,
> In gliding state she winds her easy way:
> O'er her warm cheek, and rising bosom, move
> The bloom of young Desire, and purple light of Love,[52]

Gray's context of the people of Idalia worshipping their queen Venus gives to the image of the purple phallus a heterosexual

suggestiveness in a "feeling" reading. But even Samuel Johnson thought Gray's lines about Idalia "had something of cant."[53] It would seem, therefore, that it is not out of the question to argue that the lines, written by Gray, about warm cheeks, heavy breathing, and "the purple light of love" could be read in a homoerotic context with a same-sex "desiring" persona. At least Colman and Lloyd believed the poem was excessive, and end their attack with an image that suggests sexual congress between "minions," or male partners:

> O Steed Divine! What daring spirit
> Rides thee now? Tho' he inherit
> Nor the pride, nor self-opinion,
> Which elate the mighty Pair,
> Each of Taste the fav'rite minion,
> Prancing thro' the desert air;
> By help mechanick of Equestrian Block
> Yet shall the mount, with classick housings brag'd,
> And all unheedful of the Critick Mock,
> Drive his light Courser o'er the bounds of Taste.[54]

Likewise Mason, who conjures up his friend Gray's reaction to his death, suggests the response expected of a man of feeling:

> He too perchance (for well I know,
> His heart would melt with friendly woe)
> He too perchance, when these poor limbs are laid,
> Will heave one tuneful sigh, and sooth my hov'ring Shade.[55]

But at the same time, the lines give voice to what may be read as his same-sex desire for his friend, which can only be spoken of in terms of the elegy for his own imagined death. Only in death can Mason's love for Gray speak its name, but it is there to be read following Clendon's theory of multiple personae.

NOTES

I would like to thank R. D. Hume, Howard Weinbrot, and one anonymous reader from *SEL* for their wise and useful comments made about this paper.

[1] Robert D. Hume, "The Aims and Limits of Historical Scholarship," *RES*, 53, 211 (August 2002): 399–422.

[2] Hume, p. 419.

[3] John Clendon, *Tractatus Philosophico-Theologico de Persona, or, a Treatise of the Word Person* (London: John Walthoe, 1710).

[4] Charles Leslie, *The Socinian Controversy Discuss'd* (London: G. Strahan, 1708).

[5] Leslie, pp. 10–1.

[6] Sabellius was a Christian theologian who was excommunicated in 220 by Pope St. Calixtus for the heretical doctrine that God was one substance with three modes or activities that appeared to humans as God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

[7] Clendon, preface, n.p.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Clendon, p. 15.

[10] Clendon, p. 19.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Leslie, p. 8.

[13] Leslie, p. 2.

[14] Swift mentions Clendon's tract in two numbers of the *Examiner* in January 1711.

> These Church-Projectors had directed a *Presbyterian Preacher* to draw up a Bill for repealing the *Test*: It was accordingly done with great Art, and in the Preamble, several Expressions of Civility to the *establisht Church*; and when it came to the Qualifications of those who were to enter on any Office, the Compiler hath taken special Care to make them large enough for all Christians whatsoever, by transcribing the very Words (only formed into an *Oath*) which *Quakers* are obliged to profess by a former Act of Parliament; as I shall here set down. *I A.B. profess Faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ his eternal Son, the true God; and in the Holy Spirit, one God blessed for ever more; and do acknowledge the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine Inspiration.* This Bill was carried to the chief Leaders for their Approbation, with these terrible Words turned into an Oath: What should they do? Those few among them who fancied they believed in *God*, were sure they did not believe in *Christ*, or the *Holy Spirit*, or one Syllable of the *Bible*; and they were as sure that every Body knew their Opinion in those Matters, which indeed they had been always too sincere to Disguise; how therefore could they take such an Oath as that, without ruining their Reputations with *Tindal, Toland, Coward, Collins Clendon*, and all the Tribe of Free-Thinkers, *and so give a Scandal to weak Unbelievers.* Upon this nice Point of Honour and Conscience the Matter was husht, the Project for repealing the *Test* let fall, and the *Sacrament* left as the smaller Evil of the two.
>
> *Examiner* 22, 4 Jan 1710/11

> *A Petition of Tindal, Collins, Clendon, Coward, Toland, in Behalf of Themselves and Many Hundreds of Their Disciples, Some of Which Are Members of This Honourable House; Desiring, that*

> *Leave Be Given to Bring in a Bill for Qualifying Atheists, Deists, and Socinians, to Serve Their Country in Any Employment, Ecclesiastical, Civil, or Military.*
>
> *Examiner* No. 26, 25 Jan 1710/11

[15] Richard Farmer, D.D., was Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge University.

[16] My thanks to Dilwyn Knox of University College, London, for this translation.

[17] Abel Boyer, *The History of the Reign of Queen Anne, Digested into Annals. Year the Eighth.* (London: T. Ward, 1710), p. 335.

[18] Henry Sacheverell, *Answer . . . to the Articles of Impeachment* (London: Henry Clements, 1710).

[19] Sacheverell, *Answer.* There are several editions of this text, none of which bear a publisher's name. See also Sacheverell, *Collections of Passages Referr'd to by Dr Henry Sacheverell in His Answer to the Articles of His Impeachment* (London: Henry Clements, 1710). This pamphlet was also pirated several times without a publisher's name.

[20] Sacheverell quotes Clendon's references to λογοσ thus: "When St. *John* came to end his Days at *Ephesus*, he found the Church there in great Disturbance notwithstanding all *Paul* had done, and *Plato's* λογοσ was pressing hard to be taken in for the *Second Person* in the *Scripture Trinity*, the Son of God. The Good Evangelist was not skill'd in their Philosophy, and so was not a Match for them" (*Collections*, p. 42); "The Father, the Son, or λογοσ, as You call him" (*Collections*, p. 44); "St. *John* should on the sudden in the very same Chapter of his Epistle Chime in with a Doctrine so Inconsistent with his Own, as this of the λογοσ is" (Collections, p. 45); and "When St. *John* came home to *Ephesus* He doubtless found their angry Divisions not Lessen'd but Improv'd. Philosophy had at that time set up barefac'd against Revelation, and the λογοσ stood fair for the Divine Filiation" (*Collections*, p. 45).

[21] In *Collections*, p. 19, Sacheverell again quotes Clendon, *Tractatus*, p. 56: "The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles, and other Writings of those Holy Men were most of them either rejected as spurious, or Suppress'd, or otherwise Apocryphated. And those few only were allow'd of as Canonical which were of such Notoriety, that they could not be conceal'd, and which remain to Us at this day. This was one Necessary Piece of Artifice they [i.e., the Primitive Christians] us'd."

[22] See *Collections*, p. 19, which also quotes *Tractatus,* p. 38 (Sacheverell mistakenly numbers it p. 39): "The Doubt is what is meant by Those Words [of *St. Peter*] *the Son of God.* Many would have it imply the Divine Nature in him, but that will appear to be a great Mistake, and could never be intended."

[23] Sacheverell numbers it p. 9, but it is in the epistle to Charles, Earl of Sunderland, and unpaginated.

[24] Sacheverell, *The Perils of False Brethren* (London: Henry Clements, 1710), pp. 8–9.

[25] Sacheverell, *Perils*, p. 11.

[26] Leslie, p. 2.

[27] William Shenstone, *The Works in Verse and Prose, of William Shenstone, Esq.,* 2 vols. (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1764).

[28] Shenstone, p. 4.

[29] Shenstone, p. 5.

[30] Shenstone, p. 6.

[31] Peter Sacks, *The English Elegy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1985), p. 1.

[32] George Haggerty, *Men in Love: Masculinity and Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century*, Between Men-Between Women: Lesbian and Gay Studies (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1999), pp. 115 and 122.

[33] William Mason, *Odes* (Cambridge: H. Payne and William Thurlbourn, [London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1756]); Thomas Gray, *Odes* (Strawberry Hill: for R. and J. Dodsley, 1757); and George Colman and Robert Lloyd, *Two Odes* (London: H. Payne, 1760), p. 6.

[34] Colman and Lloyd, p. 6.

[35] Regrettably, Mason destroyed Gray's most intimate letters after his friend's death. As Robert F. Gleckner suggests, we must therefore turn to Gray's poetry to understand the poet's inner life. See his *Gray Agonistes: Thomas Gray and Masculine Friendship* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1997), pp. 1–18.

[36] Robert L. Mack, *Thomas Gray: A Life* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2000), p. 377.

[37] Chris Mounsey, *Christopher Smart: Clown of God*, Bucknell Studies in Eighteenth-Century Literature and Culture (Lewisburg PA: Bucknell Univ. Press, 2001), chap. 3, pp. 43–63.

[38] See *The Correspondence of Thomas Gray and William Mason*, ed. John Mitford (London: Richard Bentley, 1853). In a letter of 23 September 1753, Mason signs himself "Yours with sincerity and affection." Mason first signs himself "Scroddles" in a letter of 25 December 1755, and the name transforms into "Skroddles" before July 1756.

[39] Gray, *Odes*, p. 7.

[40] Colman and Lloyd, p. 13.

[41] Colman and Lloyd, p. 6.

[42] Mack, p. 223. My thanks to Haggerty for this reference.

[43] *Correspondence of Thomas Gray and William Mason*, p. 31.

[44] Mason, p. 7.

[45] Mason, pp. 3–4.

[46] Colman and Lloyd, pp. 20–1.

[47] Gray, *Odes*, p. 16.

[48] Colman and Lloyd, p. 21. There are five en-dashes at the end of the penultimate line which I have resolved into the name Mason. (I discuss the reasons for coming to that conclusion on p. 614 of this essay.)

[49] Mason, p. 17.

[50] Colman and Lloyd, p. 22.

[51] Smart, *Hilliad* (London: John Newbery, 1753).

[52] Gray, *Odes*, p. 7.

[53] Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, 4 vols. (London: C. Bathurst, 1781), 4:479.

[54] Colman and Lloyd, p. 15.

[55] Mason, pp. 17–8.