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Translating the Hero
Mediums of Translation in Friedrich Klopstock's *Messias*

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Translating the Hero: Mediums of Translation in Friedrich
Klopstock's *Messias*

by Landon Reitz

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As Friedrich Klopstock presented the plans for his epic the *Messias* in 1745, he expressed one of his main goals: to create an epic surpassing all predecessors in a meter and a tongue that would raise the German language to a higher literary status.¹ Among all of his predecessors whom he admired—Homer, Virgil, and Tasso—he most admired John Milton for his religious yet sublime epic *Paradise Lost*. Klopstock was drawn to *Paradise Lost*'s sublimity and creativity when he read Johann Jakob Bodmer's German translation.² Following Milton's example and the theoretical writings of the Swiss duo Bodmer and Johann Jakob Breitinger, Klopstock created in his first poetic work a world filled with imagined celestial figures, religious themes, and heroic actions. In the *Messias*, Klopstock mixed sublimity with his own unorthodox exegetical presentation of Christianity. This mixture of religious and literary unorthodoxy evoked manifold associations with other religious writings and movements such as the Luther Bible and eighteenth-century pietistic sentimental culture because of their shared basis in liberal interpretations of the Bible (Kohl 134). Since Klopstock's exegesis was not always orthodox yet was similar to contemporary religious movements, it provided abundant fodder for theological debate (Kohl 134). When the first three books of the *Messias* were published in 1748, Bodmer and Breitinger immediately praised the new German poet for his literary unorthodoxy and compared his imaginative text with the imaginary and marvelous qualities of *Paradise Lost*. The *Messias* became Bodmer and Breitinger's paradigm of the *Wunderbare* (the marvelous) in poetry in their literary debate with

¹ See Klopstock's valedictory speech (*Abschiedsrede*) from Schulpforta, "Declamatio, qua poetas epopoeiae auctores." *Klopstock. Er; und über ihn. Erster Theil 1724-1747*. Ed. Carl Friedrich Cramer. Hamburg, 1780. 54-98 (German translation), 99-132 (Latin original).

² By 1745 Bodmer had produced two editions of his translation of *Paradise Lost* (he would eventually publish six different editions): *Johann Miltons Verlust des Paradieses. Ein Helden-Gedicht* (1732) and *Johann Miltons Episches Gedichte von dem verlohrenen Paradiese* (1742). It is unknown with which edition Klopstock was familiar, if not with both (Bender 5-6, 20).

Johann Gottsched and his Leipzig school over the role of verisimilitude and reason in literature. Gottsched and his theories became obsolete as contemporaries such as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing recognized the *Messias* as “the eternal song through which the German note first penetrated into heaven”³ (qtd. in Kohl 134); similarly, a review from 1749 asserted that the *Messias* “recovered our honor” because “Germany [must] no longer [stand behind] Greece, Rome, Italy, England, and France”⁴ (qtd. in Kohl 134). However, after a more imaginative and creative conception of poetry driven by genius replaced Gottsched’s theory in German literature, the connection between Milton and Klopstock’s works became less significant. Whenever the *Messias* was compared with *Paradise Lost* the discussion covered questions of style influenced by ideas of nationalism, but few if any critics used *Paradise Lost* as a lens for interpreting the *Messias*.

There is, however, a continuous strand of criticism on the structure of the *Messias*’s plot ever since Johann Gottfried Herder’s “Gespräch zwischen einem Rabbi und einem Christen über Klopstocks *Messias*,⁵” which scrutinizes the apparent lack of plot and action in the *Messias*. The offered solution to this ostensible problem lies in the “Taten der Seele” (deeds of the soul, *Messias* VI.7), because the *Messias*’s religious basis allows only for a gradual realization of salvation that must take place internally where the work of salvation is finally completed (Hilliard 107). This religious understanding leads to the internalization of the *Messias*’s action as outlined and pursued by Dieter Martin in

³ “der ewige Gesang / Durch den der deutsche Ton zuerst in Himmel drang”; every translation of the quoted scholarship originally written in German (except for the translations of Iser) and every translation of the *Messias* are my own.

⁴ “rettet [der Meßias] unsre Ehre’, da ‘Teutschland nun nicht länger mehr hinter Griechenland, Rom, Italien, Engelland und Frankreich’ zurückzustehen braucht.”

⁵ “Discussion between a Rabbi and a Christian on Klopstock’s *Messias*.”

“Klopstocks *Messias* und die Verinnerlichung der deutschen Epik im 18. Jahrhundert.”⁶

In his article, Martin analyses the revaluation of action in the German epic tradition that Klopstock’s *Messias* presents; the *Messias* makes the “Taten der Seele” more meaningful than external actions. He interprets the *Messias*’s internalization of the plot and heroic action as a sentimental *Wirkungskonzept*⁷ meant to affect the reader and then he follows the influence of the *Messias*’s internalization on later secular German epics. But in this article Milton is only mentioned twice (pp.101, 113) and neither instance relates directly to the discussion of the internalization of the heroic action. Based on the internal action in Milton’s epics, Klopstock’s idealization of Milton’s work, and Klopstock’s use of Milton’s heroic motif of standing to portray internalized action, this paper aims to restore Milton and his epics *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* to the discussion of internalized action in the *Messias* and the larger epic tradition.

Milton’s heroic model is based on eternal, internal actions by characters such as the angel Abdiel and the Son that then reappear in the portrayal of heroic action in the *Messias*. The internal actions of Milton’s heroes prefigure those of the heroes in the *Messias*, providing a basis for the internal heroic action that the *Messias* complicates before redefining. The first section of my paper explores Klopstock’s modification and re-application of Milton’s motif of passive standing, which both poets use to depict moments of external action as manifestations of the more heroic internal action. The actions of the angel Abdiel and Christ from *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* are the

⁶ Martin, Dieter. “Klopstocks *Messias* und die Verinnerlichung der deutschen Epik im 18. Jahrhundert [Klopstock’s *Messias* and the Internalization of the German Epic in the Eighteenth Century].” *Klopstock an der Grenze der Epochen* [Klopstock on the Edge of an Epoch]. Ed. Kevin Hilliard and Katrin Kohl. Berlin: Gruyter, 1995. 97-116.

⁷ *Wirkung* can be translated as either ‘effect’ or ‘response.’ For Martin’s use, either translation works but a combination of the two concepts would be most effective. For my purposes, especially with the term *Wirkungsästhetik*, however, ‘effect,’ though a little weak, is the best translation since ‘response’ connotes a conscious action by the reader that the German term does not convey.

Miltonic examples through which I read and interpret the actions and characters of Klopstock's *Abbadona* and *Messiah*. The second part of the paper explores how Milton's epics not only inform the internalization of the heroic action in the *Messias*, but also elucidate Klopstock's mission for the *Messias*—to affect the reader with the wonder of salvation. Klopstock presents his heroes as moral exemplars for the readers and then uses other characters to create *Mitleid*⁸ or empathy as a type of *Wirkungsästhetik* to bridge the gap between hero and reader, compelling the reader to aspire to the heroic ideal. This paper focuses on the *Mitleid* that the fictional narrator or bard of the *Messias* creates, because he occupies an intermediary position between the reader and the Messiah—at once a human and a hero—becoming a perfect example for the reader.

I. The Eternal, Internal Heroic Act

One of the distinguishing features of both *Paradise Lost* and the *Messias* is the distancing of their topic and heroic figures from their classical predecessors: the *Iliad* with wrathful Achilles, the *Odyssey* with clever Odysseus, and the *Aeneid* with pious Aeneas. *Paradise Lost* pursues a “sad task, yet argument / Not less but more heroic than” Achilles' wrath, Turnus' rage, and Neptune and Juno's perplexing ire (IX.13-14), and the *Messias* “does not sing praises about the ruins of the modern world, but instead portrays the heavenly realm to the inhabitants of the divine earth”⁹ (2005, I.575-6)¹⁰. In both epics,

⁸ *Mitleid* is most often translated as “empathy,” but more literally translated it means “suffering with.” I prefer this stronger, literal translation because it captures more accurately Klopstock's desire to stir the reader's soul.

⁹ “...nicht modernde Trümmern der Vorwelt besinget, / Sondern den Bürgern der göttlichen Erde dein Heiligthum aufthut.”

¹⁰ In this paper I cite two editions of the *Messias*. Unless otherwise noted I cite the Elisabeth Höpker-Herberg edition published in 1974, which is based on the final edition arranged by Klopstock and printed in 1799/1800. Some citations, mainly of the opening invocation (like this quote), however, will come from Höpker-Herberg's 2005 edition based on the first printing of the *Messias* (1748), which contains the first

large battle scenes as well as face-to-face duels are either parodied or eliminated and the heroic feats of battle portrayed in the Homeric and Virgilian epics are reconfigured. With these new heroic tales must come a new conception of the hero.¹¹

Speaking about the true form of action in most of Milton's writings, Stanley Fish asserts that Miltonic action is not a single event or act, but a mode of being—a mode that is not displayed at one moment, but at all moments (321). This mode of being is first and foremost internal. As Fish asserts, "Milton works from the inside out;" one's internal being creates one's external environment and actions (23). Although Fish cites evidence mainly from Milton's *Comus*, his concept can and should be applied to the heroic action in *Paradise Lost* and its sequel *Paradise Regained*, where the heroic actions do not come at individual moments, but occur instead eternally as heroic modes of being. Read in the context of this analysis of the action in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, one can understand the heroic actions in Klopstock's *Messias* not as individual physical feats or events, but as internal modes of being. Milton's Abdiel episode in *Paradise Lost* and temptation scenes in *Paradise Regained* portray his ideal conception of an epic hero through the ideal heroic act of being. The culminating action of Klopstock's *Messias*—his death—portrays a similar understand of the heroic act or, as I argue, the heroic being. This, however, is not a coincidence; not only does Klopstock's conception of the heroic act depend heavily on Milton, but so, too, does his presentation and depiction of these acts. Klopstock uses syntax, characters, and episodes similar to, when not directly

three Gesänge—the only Gesänge written at that time. The 2005 edition also contains an appendix with all of the Abbadona scenes based on the editions in which each scene was first published: 1748, 1751, 1756, 1768, and 1773.

¹¹ While the discussion on who, exactly, the hero in *Paradise Lost* is has been commented upon exhaustively, this paper traces characters such as the Son, Abdiel, and the Miltonic bard as examples of Christian heroism, which does away with the competitiveness of traditional heroism altogether.

borrowed from the Miltonic epics to depict heroes and their heroic action. He uses the Miltonic model to the greatest effect in the case of the fallen angel Abbadona, where the Miltonic motif of standing is complicated in order to portray Abbadona's conflicting influences in his struggle for redemption. The result of Klopstock's conversation with Milton is a palimpsest epic where each layer and each action adds a nuance of meaning that echoes backward as well as forward at once depending on the Miltonic epics and augmenting them. After defining Miltonic heroic action, I will show how it then appears in and connects with the *Messias* before proving the Messiah's internal, eternal heroic act of being.

The angel Abdiel, who appears in both Milton and Klopstock, is a critical example of the type of heroic being these poets celebrate. At the end of book five in *Paradise Lost*, "Abdiel, than whom none with more zeal adored / The Deity, and divine commands obeyed, / Stood up, and in a flame of zeal severe / The current of [Satan's] fury thus opposed" (V.805-8). Abdiel opposes Satan and his army by doing nothing more than literally standing up in opposition. Abdiel does not resist Satan with force nor does he need to, because Abdiel is

Among the faithless, faithful only he;
 Among innumerable false, unmoved,
 Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,
 His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
 Nor number, nor example with him wrought
 To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind
 Though single. (V.897-903)

God praises Abdiel for having well fought the better fight (VI.29-30), but it is not what Abdiel *did* physically that defines his act of opposition, but what he *is*—faithful, unmoved, unshaken, unseduced, and unterrified. As adjectives, these "actions" last

forever and have no time or place, unlike active verbs, which come with explicit time markers. The repetitive anaphoric adjectives here evoke an unchanging eternal quality for Abdiel's personality, while Milton's use of several adjectives and repetitive phrases such as "his love, his zeal," "Nor number, nor example," and "from truth or change" foils the singularity of Abdiel's mind. Furthermore, Abdiel's greatest action is keeping his "constant mind" unchanged, because, according to Fish, "Milton works from the inside out" and in Milton's moral view, "what you believe is what you are is what you know is what you say is what you do" (Fish 23, 41). Abdiel is a hero for Milton, then, because he constantly believes in the goodness of God, and his adoration and obedience of God as well as his opposition to Satan are outward manifestations of his inner being. Abdiel *is* first and foremost, and *then* his being projects his actions; this is in contrast to Satan, who puts his faith in actions or deeds when he argues, "our own right hand / Shall teach us highest deeds" (V.864-5). For Milton, the "constant mind" and not the "right hand" produces the heroic act.

Similar to Abdiel, Christ demonstrates his heroism in *Paradise Regained* simply by being and being constant. After fasting in the desert for forty days, Satan tempts Jesus several times: to turn stones into bread (I.342-5), to eat the food Satan provides (II.368-77), to dethrone the Roman Emperor and usurp his realm (IV.90-108), to learn all the knowledge of the world (IV.221-4), and to prove he is the son of God by jumping off the highest pinnacle in Jerusalem and commanding the angels to save him (IV.551-9). In each of these scenes, Satan tempts Jesus to act, but each time Jesus stands still and replies "temperately" or "unmoved" (II.378, IV.109). The adjective "unmoved" here echoes and builds upon Abdiel's attributes—"Among innumerable false, unmoved, / Unshaken,

unseduced, unterrified”—and connotes that those who are unmoved are true, while those who move or are moved from God are false. By the final temptation Satan is annoyed and mockingly orders the Savior, whom he places on a precarious pinnacle, “There stand, if thou wilt stand; to stand upright / Will ask thee skill” (IV.551-2). Indeed it does ask skill to stand up to the temptation of Satan (and to balance on a spire), but that is why Jesus is Milton’s hero: “Tempt not the Lord thy God, he [Jesus] said and stood” (IV.561). This “stood” clearly echoes, again, the story of Abdiel when he “stood up,” and it is the same kind of action—not an action of doing, but an action of being. People who are internally oriented toward God are not moved by the actions of others, for their perfect inner beings mandate their external circumstances: “Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell” (*PL* III.102). Therefore, both Abdiel and Jesus stood and were, whereas “Satan smitten with amazement fell” (*PR* IV.562).

As Fish has argued, this constant standing and being is exactly opposite to the temptation of the now that Satan offers. Satan tempts Abdiel to act in the present to gain freedom from God’s tyranny in the future; Satan tempts Jesus to act in the moment to gain fame, wisdom, and glory later, instead of recognizing them now (Fish 61). Both Abdiel and Jesus resist these temptations, because their fulfillment and glory is already achieved in the immediate present, since the true form of acting is a mode of being displayed at not just one but at all moments (Fish 61, 321). Therefore, Milton makes the eternal action of being the “[n]ot less but more heroic” action of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, and the individual, one-time acts of resisting and standing momentary manifestations of the more important and more heroic eternal action of being.

Although the moment when Abdiel refuses Satan resonates in Christ's resistance of temptation, these episodes are not completely equivalent. When Abdiel stands up to Satan and his minions, he is maintaining his obedience to God and differentiating himself from his fellow angels who are falling. Christ's moment of standing on the pinnacle of Jerusalem clearly echoes Abdiel's moment of standing, but he is standing not to keep himself upright but to raise up all mankind. Milton characterizes Satan's vain attempts against Christ and God as cyclical: as

...surging waves against a solid rock,
 Though all to shivers dashed, the assault renew,
 Vain battery, and in froth or bubbles end;
 So Satan, whom repulse upon repulse
 Met ever, ... his vain importunity pursues." (PR IV. 18-24)

Robert Etzminger sees Satan's fear of the future in this passage as he tries to end Christ's reign on earth (142), and then Barbara Lewalski argues that Satan's repetitious actions are based in his belief that "Christ's behavior must inevitably repeat the patterns set by men before him" (69). But Christ will not repeat Adam and Eve's disobedience and fall; he will stand up to Satan raising mankind with him while forcing Satan to fall. The vocabulary here is the same as in the Abdiel episode where someone stands and someone else falls, but the situations and consequences are different. These episodes cannot be read identically because that is what a Miltonic Satan would do; he would expect a historical pattern where history simply runs in a repetitive circle. But Milton's Christ appreciates an eschatological understanding of history in which "what *has been* is the appropriate starting point but not the fixed definition of what *will be*," making history linear and creating a Christian typology that involves "progress, redefinition, and re-

creation” (Lewalski 77). So when, as Entzminger argues, we encounter the echo of a word,

...we acknowledge the similarity with what has gone before, we also, by noting the change in form or application, measure the accretion of meaning, the resonances the word has acquired in the interim. And thus, recognizing we are involved in a process not yet completed, we are directed to look forward as well as back, to anticipate the further illumination that the future promises. (143)

Such echoes, then, of the Abdiel episode, when they show up in *Paradise Regained*, no longer have the exact meanings of their previous usage, because Abdiel’s action of standing, for example is more nuanced after book XII of *Paradise Lost* because of mankind’s fall. The dichotomy between falling and standing carries even more weight in *Paradise Regained* where Christ tries to stand for all mankind and lift them up and to force Satan back into the abyss. Milton directs the reader at this point to look back to the Abdiel episode and then forward as well. He has created an eschatological orientation that compels the reader to read proleptically, where he/she must resist the temptation to be satisfied with the now and instead anticipate further actions that will illuminate the present and past actions. Abdiel’s action does not fully defeat Satan and neither does Christ’s resistance to Satan’s temptations, but the reader can anticipate further illumination, more moments of defeat for Satan and of triumph for Christ. There is a baseline pattern in this cycle of defeat and triumph, but one that includes progression, redefinition, and re-creation as it moves toward an end.

In his *Messias*, Klopstock progresses, redefines, and re-creates Milton’s basic story. The *Messias* does not merely allude to *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. Instead, it swallows certain aspects whole, incorporating them seamlessly into the body of the epic, but not without development. Milton’s conception of the hero is one such

aspect. Milton's heroic ideal echoes throughout Klopstock's text and the *Messias* echoes back. Klopstock includes the angel Abdiel and Christ as heroic figures in his *Messias* and he adds another angel, Abdiel's twin Abbadona to their ranks. In Abbadona one sees the futile actions of Milton's Satan and the poise of Milton's Christ, because he does what no character in Milton does—he forsakes his place among the damned, receives redemption, and returns to heaven. Klopstock's Abbadona echoes the internal, eternal action of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* in the present while challenging the past and reaching toward the future.

Abbadona is, in almost every way, Abdiel's opposite; he is a dynamic character who in book II wallows in hell and by book XIX is readmitted into heaven's fold—while Abdiel is forever blessed. Although Abdiel is often present in the epic, he functions mainly as a foil for his twin. Their contraposition is highlighted well in book IX when Abbadona has already abandoned hell and ventures to Golgotha where he sees Christ hanging on the cross expecting him to die at any moment. He realizes the importance of the moment and he stands, tries, and wrestles to hold on to the bright image¹² (IX.625). As he tries to understand and internalize Christ's death, his standing clearly echoes the actions of the Miltonic Abdiel and Christ. Then he sees Abdiel near the cross; he approaches him and asks him to explain what is happening. “Abdiel stand gewendet. Allein nun kehrt er sein Antlitz / Auf den Verlornen, und sagt mit Ernste, den Wehmuth mildert: / Abbadona!”¹³ (IX.642-4). Abdiel, too, is described as standing and now the separated twins stand reunited. This moment, however, lasts only briefly because:

So steigt ins Gesicht des blühenden Jünglings,

¹² “[s]tand er, und strebet’, und rang, die lichte Gestalt zu behalten!”

¹³ “Abdiel stood turned. He turns only his face to the lost one and says with gravity which wistfulness softens: Abbadona!”

Welchen der rufende Blitz erschlug, die Farbe des Todes
 Schleunig herauf! so strömte des Abgrunds Nacht in das Antlitz
 Abbadona's empor! Die Heiligen sahen ihn alle
 Dunkel werden! Er floh aus ihrem schreckenden Kreise.¹⁴ (IX.644-8)

Although Abbadona stood trying to contemplate the glory of the Messiah from afar, the moment he approaches the angelic Abdiel, his inner darkness is manifested externally because he has yet to become internally pure. He is still a fallen angel not ready to be forgiven and therefore he can no longer stand but must flee.

Because Milton already demonstrates that reading backward informs the present just as much as reading forward, when one must reach back to Milton to understand Abbadona's present actions, one must also anticipate his actions in the future where their meanings will be further compounded and nuanced. In book XIII, Abbadona stands up against Satan and Adramelech, whom he encounters in conversation with the Angel of Death. Without acknowledging the infernal fiends he asks the Angel of Death, whether he, too, may follow him to see Christ rise again (XIII.489-90). The Angel of Death replies, "Ich habe keine Befehle, / Abdiel Abbadona, für dich"¹⁵ (XIII.498-9). By calling Abbadona "Abdiel Abbadona" the Angel of Death is not confusing the twin angels (Abdiel himself is not present in this scene). Instead he recognizes the two potential personalities in Abbadona—that of the good, god-fearing side called Abdiel and that of the fallen, slavish side called Abbadona.

Throughout the rest of this scene the Angel of Death and the narrator switch between the names "Abdiel" and "Abbadona" when referring to Abbadona to highlight his current liminal position between heaven and hell. The Angle of Death tells

¹⁴ "As the color of death swiftly rises in the face of the thriving young man struck by lightning, so surged the dark night of the abyss in the face of Abbadona! All the saints saw him grow dark! He fled from their terrifying presence."

¹⁵ "I do not have any instructions for you, Abdiel Abbadona."

“Abbadona” that he has no part in the decision whether he ventures to Christ’s grave or returns to hell (XIII.506-7), but he asks “Abdiel” whether he could at least feign rapture and delight at Christ’s resurrection (XIII.507-9). Adramelech then scorns and threatens Abdiel Abbadona (he calls him “verworfenster unter den Engeln” ‘most rejected of the Angels’) (XIII.517-22), but “Abbadona” rebukes him saying, “your furious, flaming words do not scare me!”¹⁶ (XIII.524-5). Adramelech then decides to return to hell; Satan decides to follow the Angel of Death to Christ’s grave; and “Zweifelnd / Stand noch Abdiel” ‘uncertain stood yet Abdiel’ (XIII.529-30). As Adramelech flees to hell and Satan flies to Golgotha “Abdiel” stands. This would seem to be an encore of *Paradise Lost* book V except, of course, this is not Abdiel—it is Abbadona. The name “Abdiel” here alludes undoubtedly to his good side, his heavenly twin, and Milton’s Abdiel. These three ideas then—the struggle within himself between the risen and the fallen, the contraposition of the twins Abdiel and Abbadona, and the Miltonic heroic ideal of the internal act—are all collapsed and encapsulated into this three-word phrase, “Stand noch Abdiel”—but not without first being challenged, complicated, and nuanced by that subtle adverb “[z]weifelnd.” “Abdiel” is not standing firm in the face of cruel opposition; he rebukes Adramelech with vehemence, yet he stands uncertainly or waveringly. The line break comes immediately after “Zweifelnd” and this enjambment forces the reader to read beyond “Zweifelnd” to discover what “Abdiel” will do uncertainly, and then after “Stand noch Abdiel”, the reader must read back into the previous line to fully comprehend this short yet dense sentence. Similarly, the Abdiel reference forces the reader to think back on *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* where Abdiel and Christ stand steadfastly, but then, because Klopstock places Abbadona teetering on the precipice

¹⁶ “Nicht deine flammenden Worte / Schrecken, wüthender, mich!”

between redemption and damnation, the reader must anticipate further action and further illumination. Abbadona is still standing, but something more must happen.

In book XIX, the Abbadona episode culminates in his redemption and a final play on standing and falling. Abbadona comes before God and asks to be destroyed because he knows he cannot be redeemed and he does not want to return to hell. After asking for his own destruction, “Abbadona bleib sinnlos stehen”¹⁷ in the 1773 edition (2005, pg.163), but in the 1799/1800 edition “Abbadona sank an den Felsen”¹⁸ (XIX.128). Both of these phrases work equally well for the former echoes “Zweifelnd stand noch Abdiel” with all of its complications and the later echoes Satan’s falling in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. Furthermore, Abbadona says, “Hier steh’ ich, / Bete zum letztenmale dich an”¹⁹ and then he “sinkt vor dem Richter aufs Angesicht nieder, / Und erwartet den Tod”²⁰ (XIX.174-5, 179-80). Abbadona stands one last time to adore God and then he sinks down in front of him and awaits his death, but God answers, “Come Abbadona to your redeemer!”²¹ (XIX.193). Then there is one more mention of standing: after Abdiel and Abbadona are reunited, “er [Abbadona] am Thron’ aufstand, und zu dem auf dem Throne sich wandte”²² (XIX.215). Abbadona goes to the throne of heaven and there stands up from his fallen state to adore his creator again. *Aufstand* as used here, however, is building upon something else that is not found in Milton, namely the fall of Christ into hell and his *Auferstehung* or resurrection.

¹⁷ “Abbadona stayed senselessly standing.”

¹⁸ “Abbadona sank down onto the rocks.”

¹⁹ “Here I stand worshipping you one last time.”

²⁰ “sinks onto his face before the judge and awaits death”

²¹ “Komm, Abadona, zu deinem Erbarmer!”

²² “he stood up at the throne and turned to him who sat on the throne”

Ultimately, the Messiah's *Auferstehung* enables the heroic standing motif. Abdiel and Christ's standing would be meaningless if Jesus were never resurrected and Abbadona could never rise from the damned if the Messiah had not risen again into heaven. In turn the Messiah's *Auferstehung* is only made possible by his preceding death. Klopstock's *Messias* revolves around the Messiah's death, which occurs at the exact middle point of the epic. It would seem that his death is an action taking place in one moment—a moment of death bringing about eternal redemption. But, since the Messiah's death and following resurrection is narrated at the same time as Abbadona's story and since allusions to Milton's Abdiel and Christ are continually present in both Abbadona's story and the Messiah's story, the Messiah's death must be read as another layer of the palimpsestic relationship between all these characters across the three epics. When read in this way, this seemingly pivotal moment of the Messiah's death becomes an outward expression of the same genuine heroic act that Abbadona and Milton's Abdiel and Christ display. The crucifixion scene thus expresses the Messiah's act of eternal being.

In a letter to Carl Friedrich Cramer, Klopstock writes that in his *Messias*, "Christ delivered an eternal salvation that was accomplished at a certain time"²³ (Kaiser 226). Undoubtedly, Klopstock is referring to the end of book ten where the Messiah dies on the cross at an exact moment in time to bring about a salvation for all eternity. One can point to the exact moment or "bestimmten Zeit" in the narrative where the Messiah dies—lines 1051 and 1052—and to a moment in time—about the year 33 AD. Yet his death is a passive death not of finite action but of eternal being. Klopstock takes this moment in time and through repetitive syntax and temporal shifts translates it into an eternity.

²³ "Christus hat eine ewige Erlösung erfunden, die in einer bestimmten Zeit vollbracht wurde."

The Messiah is very active in the final twelve lines of book ten; he raises his broken eyes to heaven, calls out, not with a dying voice, but with a strong voice: “my God! my God! why have you forsaken me?”²⁴ (X.1041-5). Then, the total feeling of humanity seizes him one last time and he shouts with a yearning tongue: “Mich dürstet!” ‘I thirst!’ (X.1048). Then follows a flurry of action: the Messiah “Ruft’s, trank, dürstete! bebte! ward bleicher! blutete! ruft: / Vater, in deine Hände befehl’ ich meine Seele!”²⁵ (X.1049-50). After he called out, drank, thirsted, trembled, became paler, bled, shouted and commanded his soul and his agency into his father’s hands: “Dann: ... Es ist vollendet! Und er neigte sein Haupt, und starb”²⁶ (X. 1051-2). In these final two lines of the tenth book, the phrases “Es ist vollendet” and “er ...starb” are completely passive—so passive that even a grammatically passive phrase cannot express their passivity. The Messiah is not killed; he does not kill himself; no one kills him, for the sentence is not even passively constructed to imply a hidden actor. Er starb: he died. Furthermore, “it [the redemption] is complete” does not convey an action; no one completes anything, it simply *is* complete. Notice, however, that “er [...] starb” is grammatically in the past tense, but “Es ist vollendet!” is grammatically present. In fact, all of the verbs in these final twelve lines of book ten (except those in quotations) are in the past tense (erhub, ruft(e), bedeckten, ergriff, trank, dürstete, bebte, ward, blutete, neigte, and starb), because the narrative is being told after the events have already occurred. Yet this list of actions recalls the listing of adjectives to describe Abdiel in *Paradise Lost* (unmoved, unshaken, unseduced, etc.). In this way they attempt to convey a sense of the eternal, but since they

²⁴ “Mein Gott! mein Gott! warum hast du mich verlassen?”

²⁵ “Cried out, drank, thirsted! trembled! became paler! bled! shouted: Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!”

²⁶ “Then: ... It is complete! And he bowed his head and died.”

are not heroic actions they are only temporary. Because this is a list of verbs, their meanings do not pile on top of each other, overlapping, while existing simultaneously as Abdiel's attributes do. Instead one begins, ends, and is followed by another creating a sequence; thus, each verb bounds the other verbs temporally. Only when the narrator clearly says, "it is complete" and not it was complete or completed, is the Messiah's passive action—his death—eternal, since its consequence—the redemption—is forever complete in the present tense and unbounded by time.

In fact, the Messiah acts and is for eternity, including both before and after the moment of his death. The Messiah lives eternally: "since eternity, from the beginning on, as the world did not yet exist, Son!"²⁷ (XX.16-7); he dies eternally: "...He, who died from the beginning of the world"²⁸ (X.81-2); and he dies and is raised again from the beginning and for all eternity: "You beginner, and o you perfecter, killed from the beginning and for eternity! for eternity raised, and from the beginning!"²⁹ (XIII.731-2) (Kaiser 226). These quotations are drawn from various locations throughout the epic both before and after the Messiah's death scene and they are mixed within various other episodes. By placing references to these events next to episodes from which they are separated by various lengths of time, Klopstock creates "ein ewiges Jetzt" 'an eternal now' (Kaiser 234), and makes the Messiah's redemption of humankind an eternal event. The scene of the Messiah's death is in the middle of the epic not because it is a climax of the plot, but because in the middle it is as equal distant to all other events as possible. Thus, Klopstock makes the crucifixion scene seem eternal through syntax and

²⁷ "Ewig her, vom Beginn an, als die Welt / Nicht war, Sohn!"

²⁸ "...Er, der von der Welten / Anfang starb..."

²⁹ "Du Beginner, und o du Vollender, getödtet vom Anfang, / Und für ewig! für ewig erwacht, und vom Anbeginne!"

temporality and then constructs an eternity that expands from Golgotha at the middle of the epic to the rest of the epic, for its action is ever present in all points of the plot and all other heroic actions.

But all of these actions, all of these beings are building up to one final point and to one final state of being—the resurrection of the Messiah. Arguably this happens twice in the *Messias*: once in book XIII where the Messiah emerges from the tomb and then again in book XX when the Messiah ascends to heaven. The Messiah’s triumph over hell is described with three simple words: “da Jesus / Auferstand!” (XX.694-5), but really with only one word. “Auferstand” is the single word that comprises line 695—it is the only one-word line in the entire epic and it is packed with meaning. “Auferstand” is the simple past form of the infinitive *aufstehen* meaning ‘to resurrect or revive.’ *Auf* is an adverb meaning ‘up’ and *stehen* means ‘to stand,’ but *erstehen* means to arise as in ‘to come into being.’ So, the Messiah is not only standing up again, but he is also being again. Klopstock compacts into this one word the actions of Abdiel, Abbadona, and Milton’s Christ, including their standing but overshadowed by their being. Then finally, at the very end of the epic Klopstock repositions his hero: “Jesus Christus...setzete sich zu der Rechte des Vaters”³⁰ (XX.1187). The Messiah now, at the end of the epic, sits at the right hand of his father, where he will be for eternity.

The finality of this scene and the Messiah’s state of being seems to be the last word in the standing motif, but as this paper has already shown above the assertions in the *Messias* that the Messiah lives, dies, and is raised again from the beginning of the world to eternity expands a seemingly finite action in all directions suggesting the eternity of Christs’ actions. Now, seen through the lens of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise*

³⁰ “Jesus Christ...sat to the right of the Father.”

Regained, the seemingly momentary actions of Klopstock's Messiah are not eternal actions in that they eternally occur, but in that they are continual manifestations of his eternal, perfect being. This final scene of *Auferstehung* and sitting is no more of an end than any other moment of heroic standing, because it is again merely a manifestation of his eternal being. Thus the actions of Abbadona and the Messiah are portrayed similarly showing how the heroic exemplar is brought down from the Messiah to the angels and eventually through the angels to the bard and reader. However, in the *Messias*'s opening invocation the bard outlines the epic's narrative and says: "er thats, und vollbrachte die große Versöhnung"³¹ (I.7). "Vollbrachte" echos in "vollendet" from the crucifixion scene, but in this case "vollbrachte" is a transitive verb implying action by Christ. Since both "that"³² and "vollbrachte" are past tense verbs, the Messiah's action is placed in the past at one particular time void of any sense of eternity.

In the following lines, however, the bard changes his meaning of "that" and "That." The bard calls out: "Aber, o That,³³ die allein der Allbarmherzige kennet, / Darf aus dunkler Ferne sich auch dir nahen die Dichtkunst?"³⁴ (I.8-9). By addressing the "That" in an apostrophe, the bard recognizes that this act still exists, especially when he asks permission for his poetry to approach the act in all its greatness. The Messiah's "That" is not done and over with—it is eternally present.³⁵ The eternal sense of "That" expressed here is supported and nuanced by other editions of the *Messias*.³⁶ The text immediately above comes from Klopstock's last edition of the *Messias* printed in

³¹ "he did it and accomplished the great reconciliation."

³² Here the word *that* is an alternative way of spelling *tat*, the simple past form of *tun*, meaning "to do." The word "thats" found in the text is then a contraction of *that* and *es*, meaning "did it."

³³ Here "That" is a pervious way of spelling the noun *Tat*, meaning "action," "deed," or "act."

³⁴ "But, o act, that alone the All-Merciful knows, may the poetry out of the dark distance approach you?"

³⁵ See Martin pp. 106-7 for a discussion of the use of the word "That" throughout the *Messias*.

³⁶ For a concise history of the various incomplete and complete printed editions of the *Messias* and Klopstock's revision process see Kohl 69-70.

1799/1800, but in the first edition (1747) the corresponding lines read: “Aber, o Werk, das nur Gott allgegenwärtig erkennt, / Darf sich die Dichtkunst auch wohl aus dunkler Ferne dir nähern?”³⁷ (2005, I.8-9).³⁸ The first edition’s use of “Werk” in the sense of the English “work” or “creation” blurs the specificity of the time of the action that “That” conveys. Calling the Messiah’s action a “Werk” implies that once the work is done or created it exists forever, whereas both the verb “that” and the noun “That” imply an action that was done once at a definite time. “Werk” then is an existence, it connotes an eternal being that is more important than a time specific “That.”

This struggle between “That” and “Werk” is evident throughout Milton’s epics and the *Messias*. The individual actions of standing and falling, of dying and redeeming have been outward manifestations of the greater works of the heroes—their act of being. The individual actions also create a eschatological scheme from beginning to end allowing for one action to be placed on top of the memory of a previous one, but only when everything is seen as a work can these actions be palimpsest and shine through each other both backward and forward.

II. *Mitleid*: the Reader’s (Re)Action

Thus far I have explored the heroic action of the main textual heroes of Milton’s epic series and Klopstock’s *Messias*. Milton and Klopstock refigure the classical conception of the heroic action to fit their Christian theme. Now, instead of his militant physical feats the hero is distinguished by his inner actions of being, which are

³⁷ “But, o work, that only God omnipresent knows, may the poetry out of the dark distance also draw near to you?”

³⁸ About half the editions Höpker-Herberg includes in her *Apparat* of the *Messias* (*Der Messias* 1974 vol. IV.4) use “Werk” and the other half use “That.”

manifested outwardly at particular moments. Then these manifestations interact with and build upon each other mirroring the hero's eternal, internal action of being. This analysis has focused heavily on the construction of characters in the text, but for the next few pages it will focus on the construction and role of the reader in the *Messias*.

In *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, Wolfgang Iser states an obvious point that is not often so obviously stated: texts only gain meaning when read and responded to (20). Klopstock was well aware of that fact, for in the opening of his treatise "Gedanken über die Natur der Poesie" he explains the *raison d'être* of poetry:

The essence of poetry is that poetry, through the help of language, displays from one side a given quantity of subjects that we know or whose existence we can suppose, which employs the most noble sinews of our soul in such a high degree that one affects another, thereby setting the entire soul in motion.³⁹ (180)

For Klopstock poetry, especially holy poetry, must affect the reader's core "lifting us [the readers] over our shortsighted way of thinking and pulling us away from the current that drags us along, as a powerful reminder that that we are immortal"⁴⁰ (*Gedanken* 191).

However, this view of poetry, when applied to the *Messias*, raises the question: how does the text of the *Messias* affect the reader and to what end? Drawing on Iser's reader-response or effect theory (*Wirkungsästhetik*), and particularly his concept of the implicit reader, I will show how Klopstock constructs an implied reader in the textual structure of the *Messias* who then orients the actual reader like a hero, showing that he or she, too, can be heroic when properly internally oriented.

³⁹ "Das Wesen der Poesie besteht darin, daß sie, durch die Hülfe der Sprache, eine gewisse Anzahl von Gegenständen, die wir kennen, oder deren Dasein wir vermuten, von einer Seite zeigt, welche die vornehmsten Kräfte unsere Seele in einem so hohen Grade beschäftigt, daß eine auf die andre wirkt, und dadurch die ganze Seele in Bewegung setzt."

⁴⁰ "...uns über unsre kurzsichtige Art zu denken erheben, und uns dem Strome entreißen, mit dem wir fortgezogen werden. Er muß uns mächtig daran erinnern, daß wer unsterblich sind..."

The implied reader is a textual construction that anticipates the presence of a recipient (a reader) without defining him or her (Iser 34). By focusing on a textual construction that allows for the presence of a reader without predetermining its disposition or historical situation, one can isolate the effects caused and the responses elicited by a literary work (Iser 34). The constructed implied reader is then one viewpoint that the author, within the world he creates in his text, uses to position the reader at a standpoint where he or she “will be able to view things that would never have come into focus as long as his [or her] own habitual dispositions were determining his [or her] orientation” (Iser 35). Such a reader is created alongside the events of the plot, the other characters, and the bard or narrator and together they create the perspective the author presents to the reader. While this holds true for the *Messias*, the implied reader has the most effect (*Wirkung*) on the actual reader ultimately showing him or her how to orient him or herself as a hero.

Because the *Messias* values eternal being over militant actions or daring adventures, plot does not drive the *Messias*. In his article “Über den *Messias*,” Klopstock responds to critics who disparage the *Messias* for lacking plot saying that the “theilnehmende Zuschauer” or sympathetic spectators who stand around the Messiah’s cross and grave account for no plot yet they can affect (“wirken”) Christians more than the plot-driving heroes of the *Iliad* could affect the Greeks since the Christian characters are more sublime and take part in something much greater. It does not matter that the *Messias* lacks action for the production of effect is the goal and presented plot or

sympathy are only means to that end (qtd. in Martin 102-3).⁴¹ So, without many events to affect the reader, the focus shifts to the characters.

In the *Messias*, Klopstock depicts heroes who are worthy of emulation for as he states in his treatise “Von der heiligen Poesie,” “the ultimate purpose of higher poetry and also the true marker of its worth is moral beauty”⁴² (*Gedanken* 191). Abdiel, Abbadona, and the Messiah all display moral beauty and their statuses as angels and the Son of God produce a sublime tale. Yet, the *Messias* does not simply present actions and emotions that should be copied, for Klopstock does not want the reader just to cry when a character cries⁴³; he wants instead that the actions of the poem have a strong authentic *Wirkung* on the soul (*Gedanken* 182). While these super-human characters affect the reader, a stronger *Wirkung* is released by a human—someone more relatable—in this case, the bard.

The *Messias*’s bard is a human whom the other characters and events affect and eventually turn into a hero, someone properly internally oriented like Abdiel and the Messiah. By asking that his “Dichtkunst” might draw near to the Messiah’s *That/Werk*, the bard equates his poetry—this epic—to the Messiah’s *That/Werk* and thereby aspires toward heroism (I.9). Here again rises the discrepancy between *That* and *Werk*: the bard’s *That* is his composing of the epic for that is an action confined by a specific timeframe, while the final product, the epic, is his *Werk*. Similarly to the Messiah’s *Werk*, the bard’s

⁴¹ “Die Himmlischen, welche das Kreuz, und hernachmals das Grab umgaben, sind gewöhnlich zwar nur theilnehmende Zuschauer; sie tragen zu der Handlung nichts bey: aber sie können gleichwohl auf Christen mehr wirken, als die meisten handelnden Personen in der Ilias auf die Griechen konnten. Denn sie sind erhabner und nehmen an etwas viel Größerem Antheil, als das war, was jene Mithandelnden thaten. Wirkung hervorzubringen, ist Zweck; vorgestellte Handlung, oder Theilnahme sind nur Mittel.”

⁴² “Der letzte Endzweck der höhern Poesie, und zugleich das wahre Kennzeichen ihres Werts, ist die moralische Schönheit.”

⁴³ This sentiment is conveyed in Klopstock’s “Gedanken über die Nature der Poesie” as a quote from Horace’s *Ars Poetica* 102-103.

work lasts for eternity after being written seemingly at a particular time; once something is written down it gains an idea of permanency, which, barring a catastrophe, lasts forever. Even the work's origin or date of creation is hard to define, especially the *Messias*, which was published in several stages before multiple whole revised editions were released during Klopstock's lifetime (Kohl 69). Much as the Messiah's death seems to have taken place at a specific time, but has really been happening for all of time, the ideas that shape the poet's work, too, have existed forever, despite the time specific *That*. The idea of poetic creation contemporary with Klopstock was based on the Earl of Shaftesbury's conception of creation that presumed that poets are not simply imitators of nature, but original creators. They are a type of Prometheus or Second-Maker in the sense that poets create or bring into being what God has already thought of, and whose constituent parts already exist, but what is not yet present in the world (Sambrook 623). Therefore, the bard's "Werk"—this epic—has been in existence since God and will continue to exist forever.

But in order for the poet's work to be as good, wise, and just as the Messiah's *Werk* as well as Jesus and Abdiels' actions in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, Fish would argue that he must himself be internally good, wise, and just (41). He must have the correct inner moral orientation to be able to create such a work, since the work will only be an outward expression of his internal act of being. But the bard is, after all, human; he is not God, the Son of God, or an angel. After Adam's fall, the bard, in fact every human, is an imperfect being; humans are more often like Milton and Klopstock's Satans: acting, falling, and running⁴⁴ instead of standing and being. While Milton's bard

⁴⁴ Think of Satan in *Paradise Lost* as he travels from hell to earth (II.927-67) and Satan in the *Messias* as he leaves earth and returns to hell (II.185-196) among many other scenes.

is only concerned with asserting eternal providence and justifying the ways of God to men (I.25-6), Klopstock's bard is in an almost paradoxical situation: he composes his epic to affect a reorientation of the reader's soul *and* he seeks guidance and reorientation for himself through the recording and experiencing of the Messiah's actions. As he is being raised to the status of a hero, he attempts to do the same for the implied reader.

In the opening invocation we have already seen the bard's desire for his work to approach the greatness of the Messiah's work, but in this invocation the bard also calls out to the reader. He implores the "Sterbliche" or the "Menschen"⁴⁵ to "hear my song...hear me, and sing to the eternal Son throughout a holy life"⁴⁶ (2005, I.19, 22). Already then on the opening page the bard encourages the reader to act with him, to do as he does, to sing the glories of the Messiah. In the invocations of books X and XI (those surrounding and bracketing the death of the Messiah), the bard demonstrates the possibility for re-orientation and the process through which the re-orientation can happen. In the tenth book as the bard questions his ability to relate the coming death of the Messiah, he announces, "And I am dust!"⁴⁷ (X.7) and in the eleventh book, "My song must stay beneath in the dust..."⁴⁸ (I.8-9). At first, these lines point toward the vulgarity or baseness of the bard and his poem, but hiding in these lines is a sense of hope for it is from dust that the Messiah arose: "the elevation of the Son from the dust up to the heaven of all heavens"⁴⁹ (XI.18-9). Simultaneously, in these invocations is a declaration of the bard's role as a re-orienter. After claiming that he is dust, he calls out to the Messiah:

⁴⁵ Meaning "mortals" i.e. "those who die" and "people" respectively. The first is used in I.17 of the 1748 and the second in I.18 of the 1799/1800 edition.

⁴⁶ "So hört meinen Gesang...Hört mich, und singt den ewigen Sohn durch ein göttliches Leben."

⁴⁷ "Und ich bin Staub!"

⁴⁸ "Unter am Staube / Müßte bleiben mein Lied..."

⁴⁹ "die Erhebung des Sohns von dem Staub' hinauf zu dem Himmel / Aller Himmel..."

“Oh you, whose blood poured on Golgotha... guide me, my redeemer, and when I misstep, forgive me”⁵⁰ (X.7, 12). Christ is the bard’s guide here because of what he did on the cross—he shed his own blood, which poured on Golgotha and redeemed humankind. In the eleventh book, the bard explains, “If I poured feeling into the hearts of the redeemed; then it was God’s guidance that carried me on eagle wings”⁵¹ (XI.2-3). The image of pouring feeling into the reader to save him or her mirrors the Messiah’s pouring out of his blood to save humankind. God leads the bard and the bard leads the reader of the epic through great emotion and revelation.

The bard pours emotions and feelings into the implied reader through moments of *Mitleid*. The *Messias* includes the idea of “suffering with” because Klopstock remarks in “Von der heiligen Poesie” that our souls share an underlying harmony which flows from one to another and so “when one is powerfully affected, others feel with” (*mitempfinden*); similarly the poet presents a picture, which is so believable that it allures the mind or communicates (*mitteilen*) certain paths that tread on the feelings of the heart (*Gedanken* 195). Holy poetry for Klopstock does not simply convey emotion from the text, but it communicates feelings among people—characters and readers—creating a group that feels with one another as is conveyed in the prefix *mit-* meaning ‘with’ in all of the above terms.

Specifically the *Messias* attempts not just to make the reader feel whatever the characters feel, but to make the reader experience the passion (*Leidenschaft*) of the Messiah and to make him or her suffer (*mitleiden*) with the Messiah. When the bard

⁵⁰ “O du, deß Blut auf Golgatha strömte...Leite mich, mein Versöhner, und wenn ich strauchle, vergieb mirs!”

⁵¹ “Wenn ich Empfindung ins Herz der Erlösten strömte; so hat mich / Gottes Leitung getragen auf Adlersflügeln!”

describes the Messiah's lifeless body, he stops time by describing the body and then his blood as "Starr...auch starr / Stillstand" 'stiff...also stood still stiff' and by repeating the phrase "Hing dein Leichnam" 'hung your corpse' three times (XI.720-6). When the scene is slowed down so is the reader; the reader is ensnared by the passage and forced to contemplate and envision it. But in the middle of this passage the bard inserts "o hätt' ich Namen, dich würdig zu nennen" and "nicht Thränen, und nicht des bebenden Stimme / Nennet dich!"⁵² thereby inserting himself into the scene and making the reader aware of his presence (XI.724, 725-6). These exclamations portray the wonder of the sight by showing the bard's inability to express in words, in tears, or in song what he sees. They also cue the reader into the bard's feelings, because he is presumably crying and his voice is shaking since the bard is experiencing the Messiah's *Leidenschaft* directly and trying to convey that *Mitleid* to the reader. Immediately following the bard's description of the scene, the perspective shifts to one of the "mitgekreuzigte Jüngling" 'youth crucified with [the Messiah]' (XI.731). The adjective "mitgekreuzigte" signals that this youth is experiencing the exact same physical pain as the Messiah and with the Messiah. Yet, the pain is not exactly the same; there must be more suffering than just physical suffering, because the youth says, "Ach gern will ich es leiden, will alles, alles erdulden, / Denn du hast viel mehr gelitten, viel mehr, wie ich leide"⁵³ (XI.736-7). The youth knows that the Messiah has suffered more than he has and therefore knows that he can and should suffer more for what he has done. Shortly before he dies, the youth looks to the group of *teilnehmenden Zuschauer* and remarks, "sie sehn mitleidig mich an! Ihr Sanften! ihr

⁵² "O, if only I had a name worthy for you" and "neither tears nor a quaking voice can name you!"

⁵³ "Alas, I want to suffer everything, everything, because you have suffered much, much more than I suffer."

Frommen!”⁵⁴ (XI.749). The pious onlookers look at him compassionately, they see his passion and they feel his suffering, too. The reader thereby not only experiences the events (*Begebenheiten*) and the Messiah’s *Leidenschaft* through the bard’s sublime descriptions, but he also experiences the *Mitleid* of the *teilnehmenden Zuschauer*.

Obviously then, the bard is not the only character who acts as a means to convey *Mitleid*; while this is the only part where the *mitgekreuzigte* youth conveys *Mitleid*, the angels often convey *Mitleid* and so do the apostles.⁵⁵ But the bard addresses the reader directly, and he is the character that creates the implied reader, whom the other characters can then affect. The bard is so effective because he is in the same position as other mortals—on the precipice between heroism and damnation. The implied reader follows the bard from hell to heaven, from the Messiah’s death to his resurrection, and from Abbadona’s despair to his redemption. And as the *Begebenheiten* affect the bard, he affects the implied reader through the structure of his text—the images and events he relates and his own process of re-orientation. As the bard conveys this *Wirkung* on the implied reader, the implied reader grants the actual reader a perspective through which he or she can access the meaning of the *Messias*—but what the reader does with this access is up to him. All Klopstock can do is provide the textual structure of the *Wirkung*—the reader’s own mind must fully realize it.

The reader is then the focal point of Klopstock’s epic—the final creator and hero. The reader generates the final internal action to realize the epic and, as Klopstock hopes, to correctly orient him or herself toward God. But the obvious paradox is that Klopstock must convey this idea and elicit such responses through external means grammatically,

⁵⁴ “You regard me compassionately! You gentle ones! You pious ones!”

⁵⁵ For passages where the angels and disciples convey *Mitleid* see VI.15-34, VI.539-606, and VIII.17-73.

aesthetically, and linguistically. The intertextuality of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* that echoes throughout the *Messias* is one such external mean through which the internal heroic act is conveyed—it creates at once an idea of evolution and infinite time while adding nuances to the heroic ideal. Meanwhile Klopstock's printed language attempts to raise German to the literary status that French and English have already achieved and simultaneously translates aspects of Milton's language—especially his troupe of standing—complicating, refiguring, and enriching it in and through German. Although the *Messias* depends on internal action for its religious message, its conception of the hero, its plot, and the portrayal and effect of the internal action cannot be represented without the external tools of grammar, aesthetics, and language which in Milton and Klopstock are seemingly outward manifestations of internal realities.

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