

Katrin M. Kohl

Rhetoric, the Bible, and the Origins of Free Verse

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zur Sprach- und Kulturgeschichte  
der germanischen Völker

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# Rhetoric, the Bible, and the Origins of Free Verse

The Early "Hymns" of  
Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock

by  
Katrin M. Kohl



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FOR MY PARENTS  
AND T.



## Preface

Klopstock's early free-verse hymns introduced a form to German literature that was to prove immensely fruitful. Long before other European poets moved in this direction, Klopstock explored means of organising verse without the established metrical conventions, and not only inspired Goethe and Hölderlin to write some of their most memorable poetry, but established a basis for the rich variety of free verse in the twentieth century.

The immediate aim here is to present an edition of the poems in their original form and to elucidate Klopstock's innovation. The poems will be related to Klopstock's simultaneous work on his church hymns and his epic *Der Messias*, and considered in the context of work by his contemporaries, in order to see what prompted him to depart from traditional modes of poetry. Classical models and their German adaptations played an important part in the form's development, but the main impetus came from the Bible, and in particular the Psalter. Analysis of Klopstock's early hymns shows them to have interrelated arguments founded on biblical tradition, which mould them into a coherent group that points forward to the cycles by Novalis and Rilke. Biblical parallelism emerges as the most striking structural feature, while reminiscences of classical metre are seen to take on an expressive rather than structural role.

Klopstock grew up in an age when the educated person's mental framework was determined to a significant extent by the tradition of classical rhetoric, and it is to rhetoric that I turn primarily for my approach to his innovation, whilst taking into account developments in modern general linguistics where these offer significant advantages to the critic. Klopstock's main principle, it seems, was the rhetorical tenet of decorum, according to which each aspect of a work must be appropriate to its purpose. This principle offers a definite yet flexible guide-line for analysis. It imposes no rigid form-content distinction, but invites the reader to integrate an examination of form into the more general act of interpretation. Furthermore, it requires no presuppositions as to what free verse is and ought to be, and permits descriptive (rather than prescriptive) analysis.

Beyond the central concern with Klopstock's poems, this study is intended to contribute to an understanding of how free verse relates to metrical verse, and to challenge the assumption that successful free verse must have underlying metrical regularity. With Klopstock's free-verse hymns, poetry ceased to depend on metre, and other structural features potentially gained significance. That potential was widely realised only in the twentieth century.

This is the revised version of a doctoral thesis accepted by the University of London in 1988. I should like to thank the following for their generous financial assistance: Westfield College, London, for awarding me a Postgraduate Studentship, a grant from the Eleanor Lodge Fund, and a contribution to publication costs; the University of London for aiding me with a Sir Edward Stern Studentship and grants from the Central Research Fund; the Taylor Institution, University of Oxford, for a grant from the Fiedler Memorial Fund towards publication costs; Jesus College, Oxford. My thanks go also to the staff of the Westfield College Library and Computer Unit, and of the British Library. I am indebted to the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich, to the Gleimhaus Halberstadt for supplying copies of manuscripts, and to the editors of the *Hamburger Klopstock-Ausgabe*, in particular to Dr Elisabeth Höpker-Herberg and Frau Rose-Maria Hurlebusch for their generous help. My examiners, Dr Kevin Hilliard and Professor Martin Swales, gave valuable advice, as did Dr Sonia Brough, Mrs Margaret Kohl and Miss Dorothy Partington. Above all I am grateful to my supervisor Dr Jeremy Adler for his patient and stimulating guidance throughout the preparation of this work.

Oxford, May 1990

Katrin M. Kohl



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## Abbreviations

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| AL                     | ['Dem Allgegenwärtigen'] (1758).   |
| AN                     | 'Das Anschauen Gottes' (1759).   |
| FR                     | ['Die Frühlingsfeier'] (1759).   |
| ER                     | ['Der Erbarmer'] (1759).   |
| GL                     | ['Die Glückseligkeit Aller'] (1759).   |
| NE                     | ['Das neue Jahrhundert'] (1760).   |
| <i>HKA</i>             | Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, <i>Werke und Briefe. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe</i> , ed. by H. Gronemeyer, E. Höpker-Herberg, K. Hurlebusch and R.-M. Hurlebusch (Berlin and New York, 1974—) (= <i>Hamburger Klopstock-Ausgabe</i> , with three sections: <i>Werke</i> , <i>Briefe</i> , <i>Addenda</i> ).         |
| <i>Werke</i>           | <i>Klopstocks sämtliche Werke</i> , 18 vols (Leipzig, 1823—30); vols XIII—XVIII: <i>Klopstocks sämtliche sprachwissenschaftliche und ästhetische Schriften</i> , ed. by A. L. Back and A. R. C. Spindler, 6 vols (Leipzig, 1830).  |
| <i>Lieder</i>          | [F. G. Klopstock], <i>Geistliche Lieder. Erster Theil</i> (Copenhagen and Leipzig, 1758).  |
| <i>Oden</i> (1771)     | [F. G. Klopstock], <i>Oden</i> (Hamburg, 1771).  |
| <i>Oden</i>            | <i>Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstocks Oden</i> , ed. by F. Muncker and J. Pawel, 2 vols (Stuttgart, 1889).  |
| <i>Messias</i>         | <i>Der Messias</i> (1799/1800), <i>HKA</i> , <i>Werke</i> , IV/1—2 (1974); variants in IV/4 (1984) and IV/5.1—2 (1986). In references to variants, the line reference is followed by the <i>HKA</i> abbreviation for the relevant edition or manuscript and its date (e.g. <i>Messias</i> XVIII 633—638 (D9, 1758)). |
| <i>Arbeitstagebuch</i> | <i>Klopstocks Arbeitstagebuch</i> , ed. by K. Hurlebusch, <i>HKA</i> , <i>Addenda</i> , II (1977). References to the text of the diary on pp. 9—104 give page and line numbers (e.g. p. 9. 12); otherwise only the page is given.  |
| Lappenberg             | <i>Briefe von und an Klopstock. Ein Beitrag zur Literaturschichte seiner Zeit</i> , ed. by J. M. Lappenberg (Braunschweig, 1867).  |

- Tiemann            Meta Klopstock geborene Moller, *Briefwechsel mit Klopstock, ihren Verwandten und Freunden*, ed. by H. Tiemann, 3 vols ([Hamburg], 1956).
- Aufseher*            *Der nordische Aufseher*, ed. by J. A. Cramer, 3 vols, quarto (Copenhagen and Leipzig, 1758–61).

In references to collected editions (*HKA*, *Werke*, *Oden*, Tiemann, *Aufseher*), Roman numerals refer to volumes. In references to *Der Messias*, Roman numerals refer to cantos, Arabic numerals to lines. In references to the free-verse poems, Roman numerals refer to sections (i.e. groups of lines similar to strophes), Arabic numerals to lines.

Abbreviations of periodical titles follow those used in *The Year's Work in Modern Language Studies*. For full details of all works cited see the Bibliography.

## A Note on References and Quotations

When quoting primary literature, I cite the text as it stands without drawing attention to anomalies or errors. Where German works have 'ae', 'oe' or 'ue' in ligature, I use umlauts.

Unless otherwise indicated, letter-spacing in a quotation signifies letter-spacing, italics or bold print in the original. Except with titles and foreign words, italics are mine.

The Bibliography lists full details of all works cited. Where I use more than one work by an author, I specify the relevant work by giving the date after a reference; if two works were published in the same year, I distinguish them by (a) and (b) in my text and in the Bibliography.



## Introduction

In 1758 and 1759 Klopstock published five religious ‘hymns’ which introduced a new form to German poetry. Negative criteria most easily characterise Klopstock’s innovation: these poems have no rhyme, no regular organisation of syllables, no regular line-lengths, and no regular groups of lines. Klopstock’s new form, later termed ‘freie Rhythmen’,<sup>1</sup> proved crucial for the development of German verse:

[diese] neuartige dichterische Form [ist] von größter Wichtigkeit für die weitere Entwicklung der gesamten deutschen Lyrik geworden [...]. Der junge Goethe und Hölderlin, der deutsche Expressionismus, Rilke und die Gegenwartslyrik sind ohne diese freirhythmische Dichtung Klopstocks kaum denkbar.<sup>2</sup>

In abandoning both metre and rhyme, Klopstock cast aside those regulating features which traditionally defined poetry, and anticipated a central concern of modern verse:

in den reimlosen freien Rhythmen [...] wurde die seit Otfrid die deutsche Dichtung beherrschende Reimversoetik aufgehoben und in einem kühnen Vorgriff verwirklicht, worum es sprachlich und formal in der modernen Lyrik geht, nämlich um “Reichtum der rhythmischen Linie und Einklang mit den innersten Bedürfnissen des Sprachstoffes”.<sup>3</sup>

The significance of Klopstock’s innovation extends far beyond German literature, for ‘free rhythms’ can claim – somewhat grandiosely – to be ‘das einzige formale Geschenk deutscher Literatur an die Menschheit’.<sup>4</sup> The term ‘freie Rhythmen’ tends to be confined to German poetry, but in all essentials the form coincides with what is elsewhere called ‘vers libre’ or ‘free verse’, in that it is primarily defined as ‘free’ of metrical regularity. In the German eighteenth-century context, the form arguably ‘freed’ itself from adapted classical forms,

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<sup>1</sup> Leif L. Albertsen (*Die freien Rhythmen* (1971), pp. 68 f.) dates the term’s emergence around 1890 and attributes its dissemination to Jakob Minor. It is notable, however, that Franz Muncker already uses it as an established term in 1889 for ‘Die Genesung’ (*Oden*, I, p. 121 (notes)).

<sup>2</sup> Helmut Prang, *Formgeschichte der Dichtkunst* (1971), p. 202.

<sup>3</sup> Bert Nagel, *Das Reimproblem in der deutschen Dichtung* (1985), pp. 82 f.; he quotes Andreas Heusler, ‘Deutsche Verskunst’ (1943), p. 407.

<sup>4</sup> Albertsen, *Neuere deutsche Metrik* (1984), p. 119.

and the lines often have a classical flavour. However, as will be shown, the classical model was by no means paramount in the inception of German free verse, and more recent poetry in the form has looked to many different traditions for inspiration, including the French and English traditions of free verse.<sup>5</sup> Given the late coinage of the term 'freie Rhythmen' towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the mingling of traditions in the twentieth, it seems appropriate to include all German non-metrical poetry in the broad category 'free verse'. This leaves the way open for defining the specific formal characteristics of individual poems.

The aim of the present study is to examine why a poet committed to emulating strictly regulated classical forms should have been prompted to abandon metrical constraints. German metricists in particular have been reluctant to acknowledge Klopstock's radical departure from the metrical tradition and have preferred to assume that successful free verse must fundamentally adhere to the rules of metrical verse. Yet Klopstock sought to go beyond the domain of form in establishing literature as 'poetry'. In his early free verse, numerical regularity of syllables and lines became an expendable criterion.

Klopstock's five religious 'hymns' which introduced free verse to German literature were published in close succession between September 1758 and September 1759 in the moral weekly *Der nordische Aufseher*.<sup>6</sup> A further poem in free verse on the political subject of 'die Souveränität in Dänemark' appeared there in October 1760. Of these six poems only one bears a title, namely 'Das Anschauen Gottes', a title Klopstock retained in subsequent revisions. The other poems have prefaces indicating their subject, and a title or description in the index of the weekly.<sup>7</sup> There is no evidence that Klopstock was responsible for the titles in the index, and most of the poems are better known by the titles they received in 1771, which Klopstock retained in the final edition of 1798. I therefore use the titles of the revised poems in *Oden*

<sup>5</sup> It has been suggested that German 'freie Rhythmen' are founded on classical metres, while 'freie Verse' are freer and more akin to French or English free verse (see for example Christian Wagenknecht, *Deutsche Metrik* (1981), pp. 92–102). However, the distinction is too impressionistic to be useful. As will be shown, biblical poetry was as important for the development of the form as classical metres, and there is no reason to believe that eighteenth-century 'free rhythms' are intrinsically more metrical than twentieth-century free forms.

<sup>6</sup> This was edited by Johann Andreas Cramer and published from 5 January 1758 to 8 January 1761. It was then issued in 3 volumes (Copenhagen and Leipzig, 1758, 1759, 1761; = quarto edition). For publication details of Klopstock's six poems in free verse see pp. 99 f. below. For the texts see Appendix A.

<sup>7</sup> See *Aufseher*, III, pp. [xiii–xiv].



(1771) as working titles,<sup>8</sup> specifying the date in references to all but the first versions. In order of publication, the poems are:

|                            |                   |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 'Dem Allgegenwärtigen'     | 14 September 1758 |
| 'Das Anschauen Gottes'     | 19 April 1759     |
| 'Die Frühlingsfeyer'       | 2 August 1759     |
| 'Der Erbarmer'             | 14 September 1759 |
| 'Die Glückseligkeit Aller' | 15 September 1759 |
| 'Das neue Jahrhundert'     | 17 October 1760   |

The five religious 'hymns' form a coherent group of poems in the Psalm tradition. The speaker presents himself as a psalmist seeking to stimulate the reader's imagination to contemplate the soul's union with God. In accordance with the eighteenth-century view that there were two types of Psalm, Klopstock distinguishes these 'erhabene Gesänge', which I term 'hymns', from 'sanftere Lieder', or church hymns.<sup>9</sup> The themes of the five hymns interweave to form a coherent argument on the subject of the relationship between God and man. Biblical quotations and imagery evoke sublime associations and inspire spiritual elevation; word repetition and parallelism contribute to a hymnic intensity of expression. 'Das neue Jahrhundert' is quite distinct from the religious hymns both in subject and treatment. It is an occasional poem written to celebrate the centenary of Denmark's liberation from an oppressive aristocracy, and bears little affinity with biblical writing in imagery or form. The effect is reminiscent of Klopstock's earlier, classically inspired, occasional poems. With 'Das neue Jahrhundert', the new form gains independence from its biblical origin, and the poem will therefore be treated separately, in a chapter on early developments of Klopstock's free verse. The five religious hymns constitute the core of this study.

Klopstock's early hymns provide an ideal basis for investigating the origins of free verse. They were published soon after having been written, and their significance as the earliest poems in the form is virtually undisputed. Some critics give 'Die Genesung' pride of place as the first, but although Klopstock probably wrote it in 1754,<sup>10</sup> it is

<sup>8</sup> Hans-Henrik Krummacher also uses the later titles in 'Bibelwort und hymnisches Sprechen bei Klopstock' (1969); see especially p. 156 (note 4). He is convinced that Klopstock had no influence on the index of the weekly (pp. 165 f. (note 22)).

<sup>9</sup> Klopstock expounds on this distinction in the introduction to his *Geistliche Lieder* (see Chapter I below). Krummacher (pp. 166–168) outlines the traditional foundation of the distinction between two modes of sacred writing and traces it back to Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*.

<sup>10</sup> Klopstock gives this date in the index of *Oden* (1771). However, the date 1758 for AL in that edition is correct only if it refers to publication of the hymn; composition was certainly earlier. On the subject of dates see Chapter II 1 below.

extant only as published in 1771, in a version which may have been considerably revised. The form of 'Die Genesung' resembles that of the hymns, but crucial differences reduce its significance for an analysis of the new form (see Chapter II 2 below).

Of all Klopstock's free verse, the early hymns probably offered later poets the richest source of inspiration; certainly 'Die Frühlingsfeyer' — celebrated in Goethe's *Werther* — is reputed to be 'das bekannteste und am meisten interpretierte Gedicht Klopstocks, ja der ganzen Aufklärung'.<sup>11</sup> Only the early versions of these poems display irregular groups of lines, or 'sections' as I shall call them. These became typical of the form as used by Goethe, Hölderlin and Novalis, although Klopstock himself later regularised this feature. In the collected edition of *Oden* (1771), the hymns and all other poems in free verse are arranged in quatrains, albeit with irregular lines, while in his later free verse, irregular groups of lines are rare and occur only in poems which otherwise differ markedly from the early hymns.<sup>12</sup> The six free-verse poems from *Der nordische Aufseher* have no formal parallel in Klopstock's work, and only the five religious hymns testify to the importance of the biblical tradition for the origins of the form.

Klopstock's innovation built on a reassessment of the Psalms, and of biblical writing in general: biblical 'poetry' was at that time considered to be metrically irregular, yet was raised to a status equal, or even superior, to that of the classical poetic canon. For Klopstock, a prime criterion in distinguishing poetry from prose was its greater elevation and consequently more emotive expression (see Chapter I below). His hymns with their abandonment of established formal constraints, their effective use of persuasive devices, and their central 'ich', encouraged later poets and critics to interpret the form as a vessel for free personal expression, and the special fusion of religious subject, hymnic intensity and new form in these poems inspired a rich tradition of hymnic verse. In more general terms, Klopstock's departure from metrical regularity enhanced the role of visual criteria for the definition

<sup>11</sup> Uwe-K. Ketelsen, 'Poetische Emotion und universale Harmonie. Zu Klopstocks Ode "Das Landleben"/"Die Frühlingsfeyer"' (1983), p. 245.

<sup>12</sup> *Oden*, which gives Klopstock's last versions, contains only five poems with irregular groups of lines: 'Parodie des *Stabat Mater*' (*Oden*, I, pp. 212–215), 'Klage' (*Oden*, I, pp. 230 f.), 'Die Lehrstunde' (*Oden*, II, pp. 4–6), 'Die Erscheinung' (*Oden*, II, pp. 7–9), 'Psalm' (*Oden*, II, pp. 64 f.). All are either intended for musical setting or have song as their subject. Klopstock's contemporaries regarded free verse as particularly suited to musical setting because of its formal flexibility (see Lessing, *Sämtliche Schriften* (1886–1924), vol. VIII (1892), pp. 142 f., and Herder, *Sämtliche Werke* (1877–1913), vol. I, p. 209).

of lines and groups of lines, and prepared the ground for the rich diversity of modern non-metrical verse.

The importance of Klopstock's early hymns for the development of German poetry is widely recognised, but as yet no detailed study has been devoted to this group of poems. Their origins remain a matter of speculation, and their structure has been insufficiently defined. Numerous interpretations explicate the most famous hymn, 'Die Frühlingsfeier',<sup>13</sup> but they examine it in isolation and focus on those aspects of the hymn which caused it to be received so enthusiastically by later poets, notably Goethe. Setting aside 'Die Frühlingsfeier', which can be interpreted as a nature poem, Hamel's judgement of the other four hymns as 'oratorische Leistungen ohne poetischen Wert'<sup>14</sup> does not seem entirely uncharacteristic of present opinion. I hope to show that all five hymns are oratorical *and* poetic masterpieces which deserve serious attention.

The poor editorial state of the early hymns testifies to the neglect they have suffered. Gottfried Fittbogen stated in 1909: 'Ein Neudruck der Hymnen in ihrer ältesten Gestalt ist dringend erwünscht', but to this day there is no reliable edition of these poems.<sup>15</sup> It is symptomatic of the unsatisfactory editorial situation that so far no editor has pointed out that the text of the poems differs in the quarto and octavo editions

<sup>13</sup> The main interpretations of 'Die Frühlingsfeier' are: Johann J. Dilschneider, 'Über Klopstock's Frühlingsfeier' (1838; originally 1829); Rudolf Hildebrand, 'Ein Stückchen ultramontaner Literatur-Geschichte' (1897; originally 1894); Rudolf Ibel, 'Klopstock: Die Frühlingsfeier' (1929); Paul Böckmann, 'Klopstock: Die Frühlingsfeier' (1942); Robert Ulshöfer, 'Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock. Die Frühlingsfeier' (1956); Gerhard Kaiser, 'Klopstocks "Frühlingsfeier"' (1965; original version 1957); Werner Kraft, 'Der Nahe. Zu Klopstocks "Frühlingsfeier"' (1964); Jörg Hienger, 'Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock. Die Frühlingsfeier' (1969); Ketelsen (see note 11 above). Jean Murat uses FR to clarify Klopstock's stance with regard to pantheism, in *Klopstock. Les thèmes principaux de son œuvre* (1959), pp. 241–250.

<sup>14</sup> *Klopstocks Werke*, edited by R. Hamel, vol. III ([1884]), p. 98 (notes).

<sup>15</sup> *Die sprachliche und metrische Form der Hymnen Goethes* (1909), p. 138 (note 2). The Muncker/Pawel critical edition of 1889 gives 'den letzten von Klopstock selbst festgesetzten Text' (*Oden*, I, p. v) and only cursorily describes variants in the notes; these do not permit accurate reconstruction of the early versions. Some selected editions include early versions of one or more of the hymns, but none corresponds exactly to the original edition: *Ausgewählte Werke*, edited by K. A. Schleiden (1981), includes early versions of AL, FR and ER (vol. I, pp. 78–84, 85–89, 92–94); *Oden*, edited by K. L. Schneider (1966), includes the early version of FR (pp. 58–66), as does *Der Messias. Oden und Elegien. Epigramme. Abhandlungen*, edited by Ketelsen (1968), (pp. 88–94). The new critical edition of Klopstock's odes in *HKA* is unlikely to appear in the near future.

of *Der nordische Aufseher*, and that the layout of 'Dem Allgegenwärtigen' in both editions deviates from that of the other hymns.

Three of the most prominent critics of the day provided valuable comment on the hymns when they appeared.<sup>16</sup> Lessing, Hamann and Herder pinpointed the areas which have concerned critics ever since: the relationship of the hymns to the established genres of poetry and prose, the question of metre as a defining characteristic of poetry, and possible models for Klopstock's form.

Lessing reviewed 'Dem Allgegenwärtigen' in his 51st 'Literaturbrief' of 16 August 1759, and attempted to define the form with reference to the established genres of prose and poetry. He noted that Klopstock's lines have 'kein bestimmtes Sylbenmaaß' (vol. VIII, p. 140) and that they coincide with rudimentary syntactic units (vol. VIII, p. 142). This led him to classify the work as prose which has simply been arranged 'artificially':

Aber was sagen Sie zu der Versart; wenn ich es anders eine Versart nennen darf? Denn eigentlich ist es weiter nichts als eine künstliche Prosa, in alle kleinen Theile ihrer Perioden aufgelöset, deren jeden man als einen einzeln Vers eines besondern Sylbenmaasses betrachten kann. (vol. VIII, p. 142)

Lessing's suggestion that each line has a different metre would seem to be an attempt to accommodate the new form to traditional poetics. Elsewhere in this 'Literaturbrief' he refers to the form as 'prosaisches Sylbenmaaß', as 'Quasi-Metrum' between prose and poetry, and as 'freye Versart' (vol. VIII, pp. 142 f.). The term 'freye Versart' contrasts with the classical concept of poetry as 'gebundene Schreibart'.<sup>17</sup> Lessing here invokes that idea of freedom which was to become so crucial to reception of the form in the 'Sturm und Drang' movement. Lessing proposes no models, but mentions that 'die Verse des Plautus' are 'nicht viel gebundener' (p. 143).

Hamann, in his *Aesthetica in nuce* (1762), ridiculed Lessing's view that Klopstock's form is 'weiter nichts als eine künstliche Prosa'.<sup>18</sup> He suggests, rather, that they are 'ein Muster von klaßischer Vollkommenheit', and, in a further classical reference, dubs Klopstock 'der deutsche

<sup>16</sup> Adolf Goldbeck-Loewe treats the early reception in 'Zur Geschichte der freien Verse in der deutschen Dichtung' (1891), pp. 8–14, 37 f., 41 f.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Peucer (*Erläuterte Anfangs-Gründe der Teutschen Oratorie* (3rd edition, 1744)) defines 'Oratorie' as 'eine gründliche Anweisung zur ungebundenen Beredtsamkeit' (p. 3), whereas 'Dichtkunst' teaches 'über dieses, in gebundner Schreibart, andern unsere Gedancken vorzutragen' (p. 8). Sulzer, in 1771, does not mention the criterion 'gebunden' when defining 'Dichtkunst. Poesie' (*Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste* (1771–74), vol. I, pp. 250–258).

<sup>18</sup> *Sämtliche Werke* (1949–57), vol. II (1950), p. 215.

Pindar' (vol. II, p. 215). His emphasis, however, falls on the affinity of Klopstock's form with that of Hebrew verse:

Das freye Gebäude, welches sich Klopstock, dieser große Wiederhersteller des lyrischen Gesanges, erlaubt, ist vermuthlich ein Archaismus, welcher die räthelhafte Mechanick der heiligen Poesie bey den Hebräern glücklich nachahmt. (vol. II, p. 215)

In a note Hamann refers to Lowth's famous Oxford lectures *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum*, which were gaining currency at that time.<sup>19</sup> Hamann's conjecture that Klopstock modelled his new form on Old Testament style in fact penetrated to the essence of the form.

Herder, in his *Fragmente* (1767), similarly criticised Lessing's term 'künstliche Prosa', and greeted the new form with enthusiasm:

Ich wuste nicht, ob diese neue glückliche Versart nicht eher die natürlichste und ursprünglichste Poesie genannt werden könnte, "in alle kleinen Theile ihrer Perioden aufgelöset, deren jeden man als einen einzeln Vers eines besondern Sylbenmaaßes betrachten könnte," statt daß ihn die Litteraturbriefe eine künstliche Prose nannten. Ich überließ mich meinen Gedanken, und glaubte endlich, daß dies Sylbenmaaß uns vielleicht von vielem Uebel erlösen, und viel Aufschluß und Bequemlichkeit bringen könnte. (vol. I, p. 208)

He confidently classifies the form as poetry and takes up Lessing's suggestion that each line has a distinct metre. Herder posits an affinity 'mit dem Numerus der Hebräer, so viel wir von ihm wissen, und mit dem Sylbenmaas der Barden' (vol. I, p. 208). He praises the 'freedom' of the form with reference to Pindar:

Hätten wir einen Dithyrambischen Dichter, der wirklich von dem Blitzstrale des Bacchus getroffen, trunken und begeistert tönen würde: — natürlich wäre kein gefesseltes Sylbenmaaß für ihn; er zerreißt es, wie Simson die Bastseile, als Zwirnsfäden. Allein diese Verse sind Pindarische Pfeile in der Hand des Starken. (vol. I, p. 208)

In the view of Klopstock's contemporaries, classical poets (notably Pindar), the biblical Psalms, and the Nordic Bards all lend their authority to the new form.

Modern criticism on the form of Klopstock's early hymns begins with Goldbeck-Loewe's 'Zur Geschichte der freien Verse in der deutschen Dichtung. Von Klopstock bis Goethe' (1891) and Fittbogen's *Die sprachliche und metrische Form der Hymnen Goethes* (1909); both, but especially Fittbogen, offer useful analyses of certain formal features of

<sup>19</sup> Hamann, vol. II, p. 215, note 60. Robert Lowth's *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum* (1753) was disseminated in Germany only from 1758 (see below, p. 189, and Chapter III, note 105). On this subject see also Dieter Gutzen, 'Poesie der Bibel' (1972), p. 79.

Klopstock's hymns. Goldbeck-Loewe (pp. 8–14) gives a valuable outline of early reception, while Pittbogen (pp. 133–138) provides illuminating clues to the origins of the hymns. These were taken up by Sixten Belfrage in his article 'Die Entstehung der Freien Rhythmen' (1941), which offers useful material on the date of 'Dem Allgegenwärtigen', and emphasises the Psalms and their translation by Cramer as likely models for the form.

The Psalms and the Bible as a whole are shown to be fundamental to Klopstock's hymns in Krummacker's seminal article 'Bibelwort und hymnisches Sprechen bei Klopstock' (1969). He singles out the five hymns published in 1758/59 as a special group which he terms 'Hymnen' and sets apart from Klopstock's odes. Krummacker relates Klopstock's differentiation between 'Gesang' and 'Lied' to the tradition of religious verse, particularly in the seventeenth century, and outlines the context of ideas which encouraged the emergence of the new form. He distinguishes between Klopstock's use of biblical material in the church hymns and the free-verse hymns, and indicates how in the latter, quotations and allusions are freely adapted to the new context as an integral part of the poem. Meredith Lee's article 'Klopstock's Temple Imagery' (1981) complements Krummacker's study by concentrating on one central biblical image in the hymns which leads to the very heart of their argument. This perspective — like Krummacker's — highlights the five hymns as a group, an approach which will be developed below.

The significance of the Bible for the hymns is matched by that of the classical tradition. This emerges indirectly in two studies which elucidate the formal structure of the hymns. Albertsen's book *Die freien Rhythmen. Rationale Bemerkungen im allgemeinen und zu Klopstock* (1971) offers a stimulating approach to Klopstock's free verse with a wide range of reference that includes metrics, music and classical rhetoric. He distinguishes clearly between acoustic and visual reception, and cuts through the terminological and conceptual confusion that characterises criticism on German free verse. Basing his argument on an examination of Klopstock's revisions of his free verse, Albertsen argues that acoustic criteria do not unequivocally define 'freie Rhythmen', and ascribes the success of this form to the 'Verschiebung der meisten Textrezeption aus dem Akustischen ins Optische' (p. 85). Hans-Heinrich Hellmuth's study *Metrische Erfindung und metrische Theorie bei Klopstock* (1973) is concerned not with free verse but with the 'new metres' Klopstock invented from 1764. However, his invaluable analysis of these metres and Klopstock's related theory of versification sheds light on the earlier free-verse hymns. In particular, he highlights the concept of

'Mitausdruck' as central to Klopstock's theory and shows that it provided the main stimulus for his development of the new metres. Although Hellmuth does not make the connection, there is much to suggest that 'Mitausdruck' derived from the rhetorical principle of decorum; and it is this principle which would seem to have prompted Klopstock's use of free verse.

The above pointers to the importance of the rhetorical tradition for Klopstock's work are fully substantiated in Kevin Hilliard's work on *Philosophy, Letters, and the Fine Arts in Klopstock's Thought* (1987). Hilliard adopts a new perspective when he sets out 'to see what happens if we view Klopstock not as Goethe's contemporary or Herder's but as the contemporary of the generation of 1500 or 1600' (p. ix). The breadth of material discussed leaves no doubt as to the firm humanist foundation of Klopstock's thought and the crucial importance of rhetoric for his writing. In his article "'Stammelnd Gered'" und "der Engel Sprach". Probleme der Rede bei Klopstock' (1987) Hilliard demonstrates the importance of speech in Klopstock's religious verse as an ambivalent medium and image that expresses both man's mortal limitation and his share in eternity. Hilliard's emphasis on 'Rede' helps to define the interlinking classical and religious ideas that form the context of the hymns.

Recognition of Klopstock's firm grounding in the art of rhetoric not only establishes the basis of his formal innovation, but also points the way to an appropriate analysis of the free-verse hymns. Klopstock's purpose in the hymns is to move the reader to contemplate God, in the manner of the Psalms. In accordance with the rhetorical principle of decorum, the style and form of the hymns are a function of their purpose and subject: imagery, word-order, sound, the structure of lines and organisation of syllables all serve to maximise the impact of the argument, emerging most forcibly where they are apposite. It follows that the form cannot be regarded in isolation but must be examined with reference to the poems' purpose and meaning. Form becomes a matter for interpretation.

This rhetorical principle not only furthers an understanding of the structure of Klopstock's free verse, but beyond that offers a useful approach to free verse in general. It discourages assumptions about the nature and 'timeless' formal characteristics of poetry, and instead focusses attention on the specific poem's context, purpose and meaning, and its effect on the reader or listener. Critics have been slow to recognise the significance of the fact that modern poetry tends to be composed primarily for the reader rather than the listener, and that free

verse relies on visual reception. Given this mode of reception, we cannot take for granted that only auditory factors significantly contribute to organising a poetic text: in a poem written to be seen, visual definition of lines and groups of lines will act as a direct signal to the reader.<sup>20</sup> This affects the role of potential auditory signals: liberated from their prime task of defining the units of verse, they may act more freely as expressive devices. If we adopt Albertsen's contention that free-verse poems are 'primär optisch fixierte Texte' as a minimal premise, there is no need for a priori assumptions about auditory realisation. Definition of the form can be based on the written text — usually the sole record of the poet's work — rather than on its auditory interpretation, while the specific role of potential auditory features in a poem remains subject to analysis.<sup>21</sup>

Analysing auditory features of free verse is a complex matter, for there are no definite parameters of the sort we expect from metrically 'bound' verse. In particular, the concepts of metre and rhythm require careful definition in their application to free verse.<sup>22</sup> When entering

<sup>20</sup> We ought not to assume that visual signals have value only as clues to auditory interpretation, as Hartwig Schultz does when analysing a free-verse poem by August Stramm: '[wir] können [...] davon ausgehen, daß die Zeilengrenzen kurze Pausen bedeuten, denn sonst ist die Druckform sinnlos' (*Vom Rhythmus der modernen Lyrik* (1970), p. 107). In concrete poetry, of course, communication is primarily visual, and the respectable tradition of figured poetry shows that this genre is by no means a modern aberration; see Jeremy Adler and Ulrich Ernst, *Text als Figur* (1988).

<sup>21</sup> Analyses of performance do not directly illuminate the nature of a text, and can lead to a circular approach, as in Rolf Bachem's 'Experimente mit einer Zeichenschrift zur Verdeutlichung des Rhythmus von Gedichten' (1970). For example, in order to define the 'rhythm' of Bobrowski's poem 'Immer zu benennen' (pp. 32–37), Bachem assumes that line endings indicate a break in the intonation pattern, and that full stops at the ends of groups of lines mark falling intonation. However, when Bobrowski reads his poetry, he frequently ignores line endings in the case of enjambment (e.g. 'Entfremdung') and does not always drop his pitch when reading full stops at the ends of groups of lines (e.g. 'Die Wolgastädte'; *Johannes Bobrowski liest Lyrik und Prosa* (1966), SP U 00357). His recitation clearly ignores some features of the written text, and interprets others inconsistently. Intonation is the variable product of several features of the text which are subject to individual interpretation.

<sup>22</sup> Divergent definitions of 'metre' and 'rhythm' have bedevilled German criticism of free verse. The term 'metre' — inherited from quantifying classical languages — is used on the one hand to distinguish poetry (including regular and irregular forms) from prose, and on the other to differentiate between regular poetic forms and other types of text. Usage of the term 'rhythm' in modern German criticism is even less definite, prompting Albertsen to reject the term altogether as 'Scheinbegriff' ((1971), pp. 56–69). In classical rhetoric, it is equivalent to *numerus* and applies to non-metrical texts, but the Middle Ages saw the development of an '*ars rithmica* [...]' which treats the art of rhythmical composition in both verse and prose' (James J.



this domain, classical concepts — founded on quantity — are of limited value, for their transference to the stress-timed German language was fraught with difficulty in the eighteenth century, and remains confusing and controversial to this day. While taking account of Klopstock's own views and concerns, I shall therefore also turn to definitions developed in general linguistics.

The relationship between 'rhythm' and 'metre' may be defined as one of degree, where the term rhythm refers to

the perceived regularity of prominent units in speech. These regularities may be stated in terms of patterns of stressed *v.* unstressed syllables, syllable length (long *v.* short) or pitch (high *v.* low) — or some combination of these variables. Maximally regular patterns, such as are encountered in many kinds of poetry, are referred to as 'metrical'.<sup>23</sup>

With respect to a stress-timed language such as German (or English), both concepts depend on the idea that stressed syllables occur at more or less regular intervals in time. Isochrony appears to be fundamental to our perception of speech, although it has never been experimentally verified as fact: 'The most that can be said when viewing the experimental evidence is that there is a tendency to isochrony'.<sup>24</sup> Seen from this angle, one might say that a principle which emerges only imperfectly in ordinary speech can be realised fully in metrical poetry.<sup>25</sup> However, the extent to which any reading of a text is isochronous will depend on both text and reader: a nursery rhyme is likely to be spoken with a regular beat, while more sophisticated types of verse will often have more subtle rhythmic regularities, and encourage expressive variation.<sup>26</sup>

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Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* (1974), p. 161). Already in the eighteenth century, Klopstock abandoned the term as too confusing (*Werke*, XV, pp. 182 f.).

<sup>23</sup> David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (1985), pp. 266 f.

<sup>24</sup> Alan Cruttenden, *Intonation* (1986), p. 24. William K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Monroe C. Beardsley observe in 'The Concept of Meter' (1959) that 'reciting poetry in equal times is a matter related to music, and there is no question that music can be imposed on verse' (p. 588). The difference between rhythm in music and in language emerges for instance in Ernst Toch's *Fuge aus der Geographie* (1950) for speaking chorus: the musical score indicates the timing and stress of the words in a way that cannot be achieved by the words alone, and the effect is one of musical performance.

<sup>25</sup> V.A. Kozhevnikov and L.A. Chistovich (*Speech: Articulation and Perception* (1966), pp. 69–118, especially pp. 109–112) demonstrate with 'closed-mouth' experiments that the neural signals which trigger articulation tend to be isochronous but that the movement of the speech organs introduces irregularity. However, this holds only for groups of syllables that are pronounced at one output; the average length of such groups is seven syllables, and a group may consist of no more than a one-syllable word.

<sup>26</sup> On rhythm in English speech and different types of verse see Derek Attridge, *The Rhythms of English Poetry* (1982), especially pp. 59–75, 123–129.

From a different perspective, the relationship between rhythm and metre may be seen as one between 'two planes':

versification is a question of the interplay between two planes of structure: the ideally regular, quasi-mathematical pattern called METRE, and the actual rhythm the language insists on, sometimes called the 'PROSE RHYTHM'.<sup>27</sup>

This notion offers a useful basis for considering the difference between metrical and free-verse poetry: in the free-verse poem, there is no such interplay, for there is no 'ideal' distinct from the actual rhythm of the language. In order to elucidate this point, the concept of metre needs to be defined more closely.

Unlike the quantity of the classical syllable, which constitutes a definite value, the stress of German syllables is indefinite and dependent on context. The elements of German 'metre' do not inhere unambiguously in the words, so that the concept of metre loses its meaning if it is not established as a pattern that is independent of the words. Where metrically regular forms in German poetry are concerned, it may be said that 1) metre distinguishes two basic categories of syllable ('long', generally interpreted in German poetry as 'stressed', and 'short', interpreted as 'unstressed') and may be depicted in schematic form; 2) it implies perceptible repetition in the sequences of stressed and unstressed syllables, and some regularity in the number of syllables per line; 3) it represents a pattern or rule usually anchored in tradition; 4) the establishment of a pattern in the poem, and/or in conformity with tradition, provides a potential source of tension between universal pattern and specific realisation. None of these criteria apply unequivocally in Klopstock's hymns since 1) we may read the syllables as binary, but may equally distinguish various degrees of stress as there is no definite inherent or external pattern to encourage binary reading; 2) there is no regular repetition in stress or syllable number; 3) the specific use of stress and line length is unique to each hymn; 4) there is no tension between universal pattern, or 'metrical set', and specific realisation.

Overall, the concept of metre seems unhelpful for a definition of free verse and merely blurs the distinction between this and regular forms.<sup>28</sup> It fails to take account of other ways in which a poet may work with effects of repetition and variation. Moreover, it obscures the special role that allusions to traditional metre may attain in this new form:

<sup>27</sup> Geoffrey N. Leech, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (1969), p. 103.

<sup>28</sup> Significantly Siegfried Levy, from his classical vantage point in 'Klopstock und die Antike' (1923), regards the free-verse hymns as 'ametrisch' (p. 14).

precisely because the poem is irregular and does not consist of traditionally regulated strophes, lines, and sequences of stressed and unstressed syllables, allusions to traditional sequences may acquire special significance. In a non-metrical context, 'metre' may be exploited for its expressive effect on the reader.<sup>29</sup>

It follows from the above that potential acoustic features of a free-verse text are less definite than those of a metrical one. When reading free verse, we are guided only by the conventions of ordinary speech, by certain signals in the written text such as punctuation and line endings, and by our interpretation of the meaning; but we do not have the additional help of the metrical pattern. Generally, only features of the text itself (e.g. punctuation and line endings) can be considered definite. They may be regarded as clues or signals for performance, but their interpretation ought not to be considered unequivocal. The degree of confidence with which one proposes an interpretation has to depend on the strength of the signal.<sup>30</sup>

My graphic depiction of acoustic features, notably stress, will depend on the context and purpose of the analysis. Especially when treating the relation between Klopstock's hymns and his classical verse, I use classical signs for 'long' and 'short' syllables, understood to indicate 'stressed' and 'unstressed' syllables respectively.<sup>31</sup> In other contexts I indicate degrees of stress by a modified version of the Trager/Smith system, with the following signs in ascending order: a) no sign, b) ` , c) ^ , d) ' , e) ~.<sup>32</sup> In certain cases my interpretation may meet with disagreement. However, with regard to such questions as the number of stressed syllables per line, it seems important to indicate general trends even if the precise figures are open to dispute, while other aspects such as the expressive value of stress relate directly to the meaning and are by their very nature open to interpretation. I concentrate on selected facets of these poems and refrain from seeking to describe the overall effect, since that depends

<sup>29</sup> If I refer to Klopstock's hymns as 'non-metrical', this is not to say that he himself regarded them as such; that is a separate matter which will be discussed below (see Chapter I).

<sup>30</sup> See Seymour Chatman, 'Comparing Metrical Styles' (1960), p. 166.

<sup>31</sup> But see the discussion of length and stress in Chapter I below. I use the term 'stress' to cover word stress, accentuation suggested by syntax and meaning, and metrical stress. Where relevant I indicate why I consider a particular syllable to be stressed and to what degree.

<sup>32</sup> Outlined in Chatman, *A Theory of Meter* (1965), pp. 227–229. I omit the sign indicating the weakest degree of stress, and add a fifth category for instances where a group of lines builds up to a climactic stress.

on the interrelation between all the elements and on their reception by the individual reader. It defies analysis, for it transcends the sum total of signals on the page — ‘Überhaupt wandelt das Wortlose in einem guten Gedicht umher, wie in Homers Schlachten die nur von wenigen gesehenen Götter’ (*Werke*, XVI, p. 11).

## I. The Early Hymns in Klopstock's Theoretical Writings

Klopstock's poetic writings relate closely to his practice as a poet: the treatises of 1755–59 focus on *Der Messias* and the hexameter, the theory of the 'word foot' developed out of his work on the new metres, and the most extensive, and more or less final, formulation of his theory of versification in 'Vom deutschen Hexameter' (1779) was prompted by the need to defend his hexameter once more. In contrast to the hexameter and the new metres, free verse received scant attention in his theoretical writings, and seems to have contributed little to the development of his theory of versification. However, there are a number of texts which directly concern the early hymns. They concentrate on the poems' religious purpose, and suggest that Klopstock created the new form in order to further his reader's spiritual weal.<sup>1</sup>

The texts which most obviously relate to the early hymns are their prefaces in *Der nordische Aufseher*: one each for 'Dem Allgegenwärtigen' and 'Die Frühlingsfeyer', and a joint preface for 'Der Erbarmer' and 'Die Glückseligkeit Aller'.<sup>2</sup> In this last preface Klopstock refers to his treatise 'Von der besten Art über Gott zu denken', stating that the last few pages form 'eine Art von Einleitung' (*Oden*, I, p. 138 (notes)) to the two hymns. The treatise had been published in May 1758 in *Der nordische Aufseher*,<sup>3</sup> i.e. before any of the hymns, and the explicit link with two of them particularly commends it to our attention. The 'Einleitung' in Klopstock's *Geistliche Lieder. Erster Theil* (1758) also has direct bearing on the early hymns.<sup>4</sup> Klopstock wrote the church hymns at roughly the same time (see Chapter II 1 below), and in the 'Einleitung'

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<sup>1</sup> I shall focus on Klopstock's own statements and largely ignore their relation to classical or contemporary poetics. Hilliard (1987 a) exposes the humanist foundation of Klopstock's poetics; the relationship between Klopstock's theory of versification and classical poetics would make a separate study.

<sup>2</sup> The prefaces are given in *Oden*, I, in the notes on pp. 122, 133, 138.

<sup>3</sup> Stück 25, vol. I, pp. 213–220. See *Werke*, XI, pp. 207–216.

<sup>4</sup> The edition bears the date 1758 but according to Muncker, it was published in autumn 1757 (*Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock* (1900), p. 306). I quote from *Werke*, VII, pp. 51–64.

he distinguishes the church hymn or 'Lied' from the more elevated 'Gesang', while placing both in the Psalm tradition. 'Gesang' is the term he applies to the free-verse hymns in their prefaces, and he overtly links them with the Psalter by reference to the poet's harp (see FR 54 f.; GL 4–7). The characterisation of 'Gesang' in the 'Einleitung' – especially the remarks on their 'Sylbenmaß' and strophic structure – corresponds to the free-verse hymns. The church hymns and free-verse hymns represent complementary types of sacred poetry, both primarily conveying 'Dank' and treating 'die Thaten Jesu' and 'die Werke Gottes' (*Werke*, VII, p. 59). Whereas the church hymns are intended for public worship, and are firmly located in the Protestant church-hymn tradition, the free-verse hymns with their more complex argument and presentation speak to a more select readership and reveal features typical of Klopstock's elevated religious poetry, in particular *Der Messias*. Overall, there seems little doubt but that the 'Einleitung' directly concerns the early free-verse hymns; in fact it is generally held to contain Klopstock's only statement on their form.<sup>5</sup> Certain other treatises composed between 1755 and 1759 have bearing on the hymns, and elucidate ideas expressed in the prefaces. Most immediately relevant are: 'Von der heiligen Poesie' (1755), 'Von der Nachahmung des griechischen Sylbenmaßes im Deutschen' (1755), 'Von der Sprache der Poesie' (1758), and 'Gedanken über die Natur der Poesie' (1759).<sup>6</sup> I shall draw on later writings only occasionally, since Klopstock changed his views on a number of matters concerning versification.

Klopstock's categorisation of the early hymns in terms of poetry and prose is unambiguous. He distinguishes between the two genres primarily by their degree of elevation: poetry is more sublime than prose. That the early hymns were conceived as poetry emerges from the brief preface to the first poem in the new form, 'Dem Allgegenwärtigen':

Es giebt Gedanken, die beynahe nicht anders als poetisch ausgedrückt werden können; oder vielmehr, es ist der Natur gewisser Gegenstände so gemäß, sie poetisch zu denken, und zu sagen, daß sie zu viel verlieren würden, wenn es auf eine andere Art

<sup>5</sup> See Fittbogen, pp. 134–136; Belfrage, pp. 11–17; Karl A. Schleiden, *Klopstocks Dichtungstheorie* (1954), pp. 135, 175 (note 47); Krummacher, pp. 164–166.

<sup>6</sup> *Werke*, XVI, pp. 83–104; XV, pp. 1–20; XVI, pp. 13–32; XVI, pp. 33–44. According to Klaus Hurlebusch, the first two of these treatises probably predate May 1753 (*Arbeitstagebuch*, pp. 281, 355). 'Von der Sprache der Poesie' was drafted in the diary on 12–29 April 1756 (*Arbeitstagebuch*, pp. 47–70). It was published in *Aufseher* (Stück 26, vol. I, pp. 221–236), as was 'Gedanken über die Natur der Poesie' (Stück 105, vol. II, pp. 381–388).

geschähe. Betrachtungen über die Allgegenwart Gottes gehören, wie mich deucht, vornämlich hierher. (*Oden*, I, p. 122 (notes))

These remarks reflect his view that poetic 'Ausdruck' is more elevated than that of prose: 'Wenn man alle Stufen des prosaischen Ausdrucks hinauf gestiegen ist; so kömmt man an die unterste des poetischen.'<sup>7</sup> The sublime subject of God's omnipresence demands supremely elevated and moving presentation which can be achieved only in poetry, through a special use of vocabulary, syntax, and rhetorical figures, through judicious arrangement of consonants and vowels, and through careful placement of the syllables according to their 'length'. Klopstock's derogatory reference to 'versificirte Prosa' in 'Gedanken über die Natur der Poesie' (*Werke*, XVI, p. 36) shows that in his eyes, arrangement in lines is by no means sufficient to create poetry.

At the time of writing the early hymns, Klopstock normally called them 'Gesänge', as has already been indicated, but he varied the terms for his free verse in the course of his career, and his distinctions between genres in any case tended to be fluid.<sup>8</sup> The term 'Gesang' appears in the preface to 'Die Frühlingsfeyer' (*Oden*, I, p. 133 (notes)), and in the joint preface to 'Der Erbarmer' and 'Die Glückseligkeit Aller' (*Oden*, I, p. 138 (notes)). In a letter to his wife Meta of 12 September 1758 he refers to publication of his 'Gesang von der Allgegenwart' (*HKA, Briefe*, III, p. 98). His juxtaposition of 'Gesang' and 'Lied' in the 'Einleitung' confirms that Klopstock designated the five free-verse hymns 'Gesänge'.

Later, he used the terms 'Ode' and 'dithyrambisch' for his free verse, in the period from 1767 when he took up the form again after an interlude during which he mainly wrote in new metres. Once, however, he apparently refers to 'Die Frühlingsfeyer' as an 'Ode' shortly after the poem's first publication:<sup>9</sup> in the treatise 'Gedanken über die Natur der Poesie' he distinguishes between a descriptive 'Lehrgedicht' on the

<sup>7</sup> 'Von der Sprache der Poesie', *Werke*, XVI, p. 18; the essay concerns the distinction between poetic and prosaic diction. The distinction is not absolute, since the most elevated prosaic style almost merges into the most humble poetic style. Barbara Sayles ('The Sublime and Klopstock' (1960)) emphasises the 'ever present vertical scale of valuation' (p. 329) in Klopstock's writing.

<sup>8</sup> On the blurring of genre distinctions in Klopstock's work see Klaus R. Scherpe, *Gattungspoetik im 18. Jahrhundert* (1968), pp. 227–229.

<sup>9</sup> All six free-verse poems in *Aufseher* are referred to as 'Oden' in the index, but this is likely to have been compiled without consulting the contributors and cannot therefore be considered evidence for Klopstock's terminology. Ernst Kaußmann ('Der Stil der Oden Klopstocks' (1931), pp. 172 f.) and Hans G. Müller ('Odisches und Dithyrambisches in Klopstocks lyrischem Werk' (1961), pp. 11–13, 93–95, 103, 112–116, 150 (note 1)) argue that the hymns should be designated 'Oden', chiefly on the grounds that they believe them to be fundamentally metrical, like Klopstock's odes.

subject of '[das] Landleben', which would engender 'sanfte Freude', and a religious 'Ode' on the same subject, which would move the reader to being 'entzückt' (*Werke*, XVI, p. 40). His distinction here parallels that between 'sanftere Lieder' and 'erhabnere Gesänge' in the introduction to the church hymns, where the 'Ode' is in fact derogatorily associated with rationality, and judged inferior to both 'Lied' and 'Gesang' (see *Werke*, VII, pp. 52, 59). The discrepant terminology in the two treatises may be explained partly by Klopstock's unsystematic view of genres, and partly by the varied use of the term 'Ode' at that time,<sup>10</sup> but more particularly by the differing purpose of each treatise. In the 'Einleitung', which is concerned with Christian tradition, the touchstone of the poet's success is: 'Würde David, wenn er ein Christ des neuen Testaments gewesen wäre, so geschrieben haben?' (*Werke*, VII, p. 51). From the classical vantage point in 'Gedanken über die Natur der Poesie', the question is: 'Würde Horaz diese Materie so ausgeführt haben?' (*Werke*, XVI, p. 40). Judged by classical standards, the early hymns may be considered odes, and in 1771 Klopstock in fact includes the revised hymns in his collection of *Oden*.<sup>11</sup>

The association of 'free' poetry with dithyrambs comes both before and after the period when Klopstock wrote the early hymns. In the early ode 'Auf meine Freunde' (1747), he had celebrated 'Dithyramben' in connection with his own Alcaic strophes and with reference to Pindar;<sup>12</sup> he there follows Horace, who associates Pindar with dithyrambs and with 'numeris[...] / lege solutis' or, in Klopstock's translation, 'Rhythmus, frey vom Gesetz' (*Werke*, XVII, p. 10).<sup>13</sup> But Klopstock does not specifically link the term 'dithyrambisch' with his free verse until his 'bardic' period of the 1760s, when he applies it both to the form and to the (typically 'bardic') movement of skating. In Klopstock's writings from that period onwards, the term 'dithyrambisch' becomes firmly associated with his free verse.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See Karl Viëtor, *Geschichte der deutschen Ode* (1961), pp. 117–119, 133–136.

<sup>11</sup> Unlike the 'Elegien', which are presented as a separate group, the free-verse poems – now in quatrains like the odes – are among the odes in classical and new metres.

<sup>12</sup> *Oden*, I, p. 8, ll. 3–8. My dates in references to Klopstock's odes follow Muncker's in *Oden* unless otherwise indicated. These are not always reliable, however, as K. Hurlebusch has pointed out in 'Zur Edition von Klopstocks Oden' (1982), pp. 150 f.

<sup>13</sup> Horace, 'Odes', Book IV, ode 2, ll. 11 f.; in *The Odes and Epodes* (1914), p. 286. Klopstock translated the ode when working on *Grammatische Gespräche* during the 1790s, so I am informed by Frau Rose-Maria Hurlebusch of the Klopstock-Arbeitsstelle.

<sup>14</sup> On the link between skating and free verse see Hellmuth, pp. 180–188. In 1798 Klopstock notes with reference to 'Die Genesung': 'Die Oden, welche in jeder



Unlike 'Gesang', 'Ode' or 'Dithyramben', the term 'Hymne' can claim no basis in Klopstock's theory, yet this is the term which has become established in German criticism as the designation for elevated religious or semi-religious verse in the tradition of Klopstock's poems of 1758/59.<sup>15</sup> In 1771, Sulzer regards the 'Hymne' as 'eine besondere Gattung der Ode', which he defines as follows:

Der darin herrschende Affekt ist Andacht, und anbethende Bewundrung; der Inhalt eine in diesem Affekt vorgetragene Beschreibung der Eigenschaften und Werke des göttlichen Wesens; der Ton feyerlich und enthusiastisch. [...] Die prächtigsten und erhabensten Hymnen sind die, welche wir in der Sammlung der Psalmen Davids antreffen. (vol. I, p. 552)<sup>16</sup>

Sulzer's 'Hymne' clearly corresponds to Klopstock's 'Gesang'.

In his 'Einleitung' to the collection of church hymns, Klopstock offers a detailed characterisation of the genre 'Gesang', defining it in contrast to the 'Lied', and placing it in the tradition of the Psalter. He distinguishes between the two genres by their degree of elevation, on the basis of two different types of Psalm: 'es [ist] genug, [die Psalmen] in erhabene und in sanftere abzuthellen. Ich will die ersten, Gesänge, und die von der zweyten Art, Lieder nennen' (*Werke*, VII, p. 52).<sup>17</sup> The Psalter is in his view the supreme model for the sacred poet: 'die Nachahmung der Psalmen [ist] das höchste [...], was sich der Dichter zu erreichen vorsetzen, und was der Leser von ihm fodern [kann]'

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Strophe das Silbenmaß verändern, haben, in Beziehung auf das letzte, etwas Dithyrambisches' (*Oden*, I, p. 235). See also his note on 'Die Verwandlung' (*Oden*, II, p. 171).

<sup>15</sup> Klopstock does not use 'Hymnus' or 'Hymne' with reference to these poems, and once seems to exclude them from that genre. In 'Gedanken über die Natur der Poesie', where he evidently refers to 'Die Frühlingsfeyer' as an 'Ode', he distinguishes 'Ode' from 'Hymnus': 'Horaz hat den Hauptton der Ode, ich sage nicht des Hymnus, durch die seinigen [...] bestimmt' (*Werke*, XVI, p. 40). The remark is too brief to permit interpretation of his term 'Hymnus'; certainly there is no evidence to suggest that he equates it with 'Gesang', as Krummacker (p. 178) mistakenly posits. I nevertheless use 'hymn', since 'Gesang' has no satisfactory English equivalent; in this I follow Fittbogen (p. 134), Viëtor ((1961), p. 117) and Krummacker (pp. 156, 174 f. (note 40), 177 f.).

<sup>16</sup> Böckmann (*Hymnische Dichtung im Umkreis Hölderlins* (1965), pp. 3–23) traces the use of the term 'Hymne': having been applied to church hymns in the seventeenth century, the term seems to have fallen into disuse in the early eighteenth. In the latter part of that century it was revived with connotations of the sublime. See also Krummacker, pp. 174 f. (note 40).

<sup>17</sup> Klopstock's distinction and terminology would seem to be founded in Psalter exegesis. See Belfrage (pp. 13 f.), and Krummacker (pp. 166–168), who traces the distinction between two types of sacred poetry to Augustine, and shows it to be prevalent in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

(*Werke*, VII, p. 51). 'Nachahmung' here signifies not slavish imitation but original creation in the spirit of David:<sup>18</sup>

Es verstände sich von selbst, daß von einer Nachahmung die Rede wäre, die Original bliebe, und bey der sich der Dichter, der sie unternähme, viel öfter die Frage zu beantworten hätte: Würde David, wenn er ein Christ des neuen Testaments gewesen wäre, so geschrieben haben? als die andere Frage: Hat David so geschrieben? (*Werke*, VII, p. 51)

This statement is exceedingly important for the early hymns since they are in fact presented as New Testament 'psalms'. The prerequisite for such original 'Nachahmung' is the poet's Christian faith, which ensures that he does not merely copy sacred poetry, and that prayer does not degenerate to 'ein bloßes Werk des Genie und der Kunst':

Ich bin so weit hiervon entfernt, daß ich jeden Dichter, der es nicht von ganzem Herzen mit der Religion meint, [...] für sehr unfähig halte, heilige Gedichte zu machen. Er wird nachahmen. (*Werke*, VII, p. 54)

Only the Christian poet, united with the Jewish Psalmist by his faith in God's Word, can work creatively with the Psalter tradition.

What distinguishes the 'Gesang' from the 'Lied' is primarily its higher degree of elevation, which allows it the better to convey 'die erstaunliche Hoheit der Religion' (*Werke*, VII, p. 52). In the 'Lied', the poet has to sacrifice '[die] moralische Absicht, diejenigen, die erhabner denken, in einem gewissen hohen Grade zu rühren' to the 'moralische Absicht, der größten Anzahl nützlich zu werden' (*Werke*, VII, pp. 52 f.). The 'Gesang' is more in keeping with Klopstock's general poetic enterprise, and indeed he implies that writing 'Gesänge' comes more easily to him than writing 'Lieder' (*Werke*, VII, p. 54).

Klopstock's definition of the 'Gesang' as more elevated than the 'Lied' determines its further characterisation as fiery, vivid and emotive, with inspired ideas and concentrated strength of expression:

Der Gesang ist fast immer kurz, feurig, stark, voll himmlischer Leidenschaften; oft kühn, heftig, bilderreich in Gedanken und im Ausdrucke; und nicht selten von denjenigen Gedanken beseelt, die allein, von dem Erstaunen über Gott, entstehen können. (*Werke*, VII, p. 55)

These features of the 'Gesang' on the whole correspond to those traditionally associated with sublime poetry, especially with Pindar's odes.

<sup>18</sup> On Klopstock's distinction between 'original' and 'imitative' 'Nachahmung' see Schleiden (1954), pp. 107–109. Hilliard cites Klaus Dockhorn (*Macht und Wirkung der Rhetorik* (1968), p. 117) on the 'paradoxe Anforderungen der klassischen Imitationstheorie [...]: "was am Vorbild nachgeahmt werden soll, ist seine Originalität"' ((1987 b), p. 293).