RICE UNIVERSITY

LOVE, FRIENDSHIP AND FAMILY IN LESSING'S DAMON,
ODER DIE WAHRE FREUNDSCHAFT, MINNA VON BARNHELM,
ODER DAS SOLDATENGLÜCK AND EMILIA GALOTTI.

by

KURT CANOW

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Michael Windler

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Abstract

Love, Friendship and Family in Lessing's *Damon*, *oder die wahre Freundschaft*, Minna von Barnhelm, *oder das Soldatenglück* and *Emilia Galotti*.

Kurt Canow

The social relationships of love, friendship and family are important themes in all of Lessing's dramas. Such abstract concepts as emotion, forgiveness, empathy, honor, harmony and virtue have a particular meaning in the later eighteenth century and do not necessarily correspond to twentieth-century social and moral outlooks.

The object of this paper is to examine an early and late comedy and a late tragedy by Lessing, to show similarities and differences, and to point out some of the outlooks toward love, friendship and family -- variations of the same associative principle in the literature of Sentimentality -- found in these dramas.
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In Lessing's dramas, the social relationships of love, friendship and family play an important role. In the literature of Sentimentality they represent variations of the same associative principle. But there are distinctions within this triad. The "sentimental" person has the need to find his reflection in the singular "you", and is most inclined to perceive his own self in a friend or lover. This is based on the presupposition that he seeks his partner with the principle of equality in mind. Not any arbitrary person comes under consideration:

Bey der allgemeinen Menschenliebe findet dieses in einem geringern Grade statt; allein bey der Freundschaft wächst diese Bereitwilligkeit bis zur Neigung, uns völlig an die Stelle unseres Freundes zu setzen, und alles, was ihn betrifft, so zu fühlen, als wenn es uns selber beträfe.2

The sentimentalist does not, however, choose a partner in order to see himself reflected in the other's entire personality, including all his shortcomings and weaknesses. He chooses from the individual traits of his friend or lover. For sentimental love, such exterior traits as looks or occu-

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1Lothar Pikulik, "Bürgerliches Trauerspiel" und Empfindsamkeit (Köln, 1966), pp. 92-94. (The ideas in my introduction are basically a condensation of these pages and form the initial impulse of this paper.)

pation are not only considered valueless in comparison with inner, abstract qualities, but -- and this is especially true of physical traits -- they also serve to individualize and distinguish a person.

Of the inner traits, not so much the ethically neutral as those morally valuable to the sentimentalist are considered, for the latter serve to flatter most. In the same manner, the other's feelings or emotions are an important consideration, for self-consciousness as feeling identifies itself most easily with another's feelings. Therefore, virtue hinging upon emotion has the greatest attraction for the sentimentalist. If the exterior of the partner is unobtrusive (yet not insignificant), but his virtue, his heart is grand, then he can best perform the function of reflecting someone else.

What has been said of sentimental love also holds true for sentimental friendship. During the "Empfindsamkeit", love and friendship are of a mutual emotional root and function. Both arise from the need for self-assertion, whereby friendship proves itself to be as blissful in feeling as love, and love as unerotic as friendship.

The third milieu for emotional association is the family. Pikulik points out:
Wenn die Familie bei den Empfindsamen den Charakter einer Gefühlgemeinschaft hat, so bedeutet das auch, dass das Familienideal des 18. Jahrhunderts nicht mit der klassischen bürgerlichen Familienauffassung verwechselt werden darf.... Das Familiendrama kontrastiert den empfindsamen Familienbegriff gern mit einem anderen, der dabei als der traditionelle charakterisiert wird und sich mithin als der klassische bürgerliche erweist. Aber für die Tendenz der Gattung ist bezeichnend, dass dieser fast immer abgelehnt wird, denn die bürgerliche Familie ist alles andere als durch Gefühle be-stimmt.3

Whereas in the sentimental family a mild and indulgent father lovingly and understandingly co-operates with his children, the middle class, bourgeois ("bürgerliche") father is a sovereign figure for his children and wife. The authority of the father is met with reverence on the part of the children. The sentimental family is not ruled by economical interests and objective, moral principles, but by subjective criteria, and its only principle is the cultivation of tender emotion. Of course, family members' feelings for one another are again based on the need for self-assertion, and are basically no different from sentimental love and friendship.

Empathy in love and friendship is based on similarities of the partners with one another, and for the sentimentalist this relationship is most evident in parents and children,

3Pikulik, p. 93.
where the similarities extend beyond the emotional to the physical. But the harmony of the family can be disturbed through love, when the conflict arises from two different value systems.

Although Emilia Galotti does not adhere to all the principles mentioned above with regard to family (especially since the elements of intrigue and seduction are included), Pikulik points out "dass [seelengeschichtlich] die Frühe Sächsische Komödie aufklärerische oder rationalistische Anschauungen vertritt, während die Rührkomödie und das 'Bürgerliche Trauerspiel' empfindsam sind."

The "sentimental" in the themes of friendship and love can be seen in Lessing's early comedy, Damon, oder die wahre Freundschaft, which retains some of the traits of the French tradition of type comedies, but which deals with the new concept of friendship rather than social alienation caused by a quirk of character (e.g., Der junge Gelehrte, Die Alte Jungfer).

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5 Horst Steinmetz notes in Die Komödie der Aufklärung (Stuttgart, 1966), pp. 59-60: "[Damon] ist das einzige Lustspiel Lessings, das etwas von der Wirkung der Rührkomödie spüren lässt. Zwar gehört die heiratslustige Witwe, die sich zwischen zwei Freisinn nicht entscheiden kann, durchaus in den Bereich der satirischen Komödie; doch andererseits weist das gehaltlich bedeutsame Thema der 'wahren Freundschaft', die im Laufe des Geschehens auf die Probe gestellt wird, unzweifelhaft in die Richtung des empfindsamen Lustspiels."
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Published in 1747 in *Die Ermunterungen zum Vergnügen des Gemüths*, Damon was never intended for the stage. In fact, Lessing himself later repudiated this comic attempt by excluding it from editions of his work which appeared during his lifetime and by his indignation at its unauthorized second publication in C. H. Schmid's *Anthologie der Deutschen* in 1770. With the exception of a few critics, the significance of *Damon* is rated quite low.

What Lessing attempted to achieve in his comedy is outlined in the following statement made in the *Theatralische Bibliothek*, 1754:

Noch einmal also mit einem Worte: das Possenspiel will nur zum Lachen bewegen; das weinerliche Lustspiel will nur rühren; die wahre Komödie will beydes, Man glaube nicht, dass ich dadurch die beyden erstern in eine Klasse setzen will; es ist noch immer der Unterschied zwischen beyden, der zwischen dem Pöbel und Leuten von Stande ist. Der Pöbel wird ewig der Beschützer der Possenspiele bleiben, und unter Leuten von Stande wird es immer gezwungene Zärtliche geben, die den Ruhm empfindlicher Seelen auch da behaupten suchen, wo andere ehrliche Leute gähnen. Die wahre Komödie allein ist für das Volk, und allein fähig einen allgemeinen Beyfall zu erlangen, und folglich auch einen allgemeinen Nutzen zu stiften.

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But in *Damon*, Lessing had fallen short of this goal. Oronte's repetition of the phrase "Versteh' er mich!", a device already employed by Molière, gets on one's nerves, and Oronte just weakly begins to farcically amuse in the last scene, when he suggests himself as a worthy rival. Nor does Damon's forgiveness of Leander, because he acted as a man rather than a friend ("Diese Uebereilung hat der Mensch und nicht der Freund begangen."), and his threatened renouncement of the proven love of the Widow in favor of the friendship of the weak but repentent Leander, fulfill the criteria of the "comédie larmoyante". Oehlke notes:

So klingt der letzte Auftritt wie der Ausbruch eines Gefühlsehlers. ... Der Zuschauer verzeiht solche Uebereilungen dem Leander um so weniger, als dieser ständig dabei die Freundschaft im Munde führt, ein prächtiger Vertreter jenes Wortes in Corneille's *Britannicus*: "J'embrasse mon rival, mais c'est pour l'étouffer."\(^9\)

Structurally, *Damon* is an assembly of dissociated elements into a proportioned whole rather than their blending together into an organic unit.

But in spite of its deficiencies, *Damon* does provide us with a revealing early treatment of friendship and love


which is in many ways characteristic of the period and can therefore be compared profitably with Lessing's later plays.

The plot centers around the Widow, Damon and Leander. But Lisette, in the French classicist tradition, is the main driving force in the action of the play. The serious characters -- that is those who are most directly involved in the conflict of friendship and love -- portray a combination of dry rhetoric and emotional profuseness, which brings them closer to a stylized assembly of diverse elements than a truly organic unity of character, as we have it in Minna von Barnhelm. The stylistic goal is not so much the unfolding of individual character, but rather the development of a sentimental plot, which is maintained in a comic balance by the interspersion of humorous elements (especially in the personages of Lisette and Oronte), and which culminates in the high emotionality of the last scene.

Moralischer Ernst und sittliche Verantwortung des bürgerlichen Geistes erfreuen sich in dem vereinfachten Weltbild nach einem Schwebezustand zwischen tragischer Erschütterung und gelöster Heiterkeit am obligaten Sieg der Tugend.\textsuperscript{11}

Damon, through an excess of virtue, high-mindedness, and abjuration brings his potentially "tragische" situation to a

happy outcome. He is highly rewarded for his steadfastness in that he obtains the hand of the Widow and is given an opportunity to show his "grosse Seele", while Leander, on the other hand, receives a moderate punishment by losing the Widow. His hypocrisy is exposed, but through repentence he gains forgiveness. The play ends in a sentimentality that attempts to transform the consternation of the audience into relieved pleasure.

The ideal of friendship is in itself not humorous. The humor inherent in Damon's exaggerated and naive adherence to friendship, which is advanced to the point where everybody but he himself knows that he is being used, should not (especially in view of the friendship cult through the later eighteenth century) be interpreted as a character flaw, as in such other of Lessing's early comedies as Der Junge Gelehrte or Die alte Jungfer. Nor should the concept of love in Damon be viewed with today's criteria. This becomes more obvious when we look at the details of the play.

The themes of love and friendship can best be traced through the relationships of the Widow, Leander and Damon.

The rich, young Widow is well-disposed towards both her suitors. But these, in an excessive friendship, continually yield one to the other, and thereby neglect their attestations of love for her. Lisette, who is determined to resolve the
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predicament, asks which of the suitors the Widow loves.

Ich liebe sie beyde.
Lisette: Nun, dass ist gut. Sie werden sie auch auch beyde heyraten?
Die Witwe: Du mengest alles unter einander.
Itzo war die Rede vom Lieben und nicht vom Heyraten. (I, i. 181)12

The "love" that the Widow speaks of here is not the kind that necessarily leads to marriage. It is the "tender" kind, which expresses a cordiality that approaches friendship or companionship. And indeed, the Widow remarks:

Kann ich nicht beyder Liebste werden, so kann ich doch wohl beyder Freundinn seyn.
Ja, gewiss, die Freundschaft kümmt mir itzt viel reizender vor als die Liebe. (I, i. 180)

The Widow is quite in control of her emotions. There has been no love at first sight; no irrational force has overpowered her. For the time being, she does not choose to extend the kind of love that leads to marriage. As it turns out, she waits until one or the other has demonstrated his worth and expressed a similarity of outlook in his view of life.

She remonstrates Lisette for not understanding well the

12Citations from Lessing's plays in my text are from Gotthold Ephraim Lessings sämtliche Schriften, edited by Karl Lachmann, II and III (Stuttgart, 1887). Act, Scene, and page number are given in the parentheses. Damon is found in III.
mute language of love. Lisette, who is on a different social level than the Widow, and who does not care for the refinements of a higher class, has an earthy, practical outlook:


She feels no compulsion to consider the characters of Leander and Damon in any great depth, but views their exterior qualities and their material possessions, not emotional considerations, as the crucial determinants. Nor does she see gradations or levels of love:


This view would have been applauded by contemporary bourgeois audiences. In the last scene it does, however, become obvious that Lisette and her mistress do indeed have a different philosophy of love.

Since Lisette is not inclined towards passivity, she chooses action and a quick resolution of the problem. She turns to a conventional determinant in marriage arrangements -- money. She gets the Widow to agree reluctantly that she will
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declare herself for the one who is most successful in his affairs.

Sie wissen, dass sie beyde vor einem Jahre, beynahe ihr ganzes Vermögen, jeder auf ein besonderes Schiff, welche nach Ostindien handeln, gegeben haben. Sie warten alle Tage auf ihre Rückkunft. (I, i. 182)

Lisette then approaches Damon and Leander to see how they will react to this decision.

The behavior of Leander and Damon is determined by their sincerity towards friendship. They reveal themselves to be total opposites.

Leander goes to great lengths in explaining the attributes of friendship, but they are exaggerated and practically unachievable. He plays out a ritual that prepares Damon for the deception Leander perpetrates upon him later:


Everything Leander says is hypocritical, for he has just received the erroneous news that his ship has sunk. He confidently asserts that he would like an opportunity to
forgive Damon a great wrongdoing. "Wie entzückt wollte ich seyn, die süsse Rache einer grossmütigen Verzeihung an Ihnen auszuüben!" (I, v. 190). However, he lacks the clean conscience that would enable him to enjoy such a "sweet revenge". All his actions really center only around himself and his worldly interests and therefore, at the first test of his friendship, Leander tells Lisette: "Ich will Euch in allem folgen, was mir nützlich seyn kann." (I, iv. 186).

Besides being egotistical, Leander lacks the basic ingredient of friendship -- trust.

Ich weis es gewiss, mein Freund würde, wenn ich mein Vermögen verlöhre, nicht grossmütig genug seyn können, die Pflichten, die er mir alsdenn, vermöge unsers Bundes, schuldig wäre auszuüben. (I, iv. 188)

He rationalizes his own intent to use Damon's friendship to his advantage and projects his own weakness on Damon: "Ich will ihn derothalben von dem gewissen Schimpfe, von der Nachwelt ein ungetreuer Freund genennet zu werden, befreyen." (I, iv. 188).

Damon proves to be the antithesis of Leander. In all honesty, Damon sees the difficulty in living up to the kind of selfless friendship Leander attests to. "Die Gedanken davon scheinen mir edel und wahr, die Erfüllung aber unmöglich." (I, v. 190). He sees friendship as a mutual responsibility, where a friend not only forgives, but also
provides as little opportunity as possible to necessitate forgiveness:


He is apprehensive about his ability to live up to friendship under stress, but extends to Leander an optimistic trust.

Determined not to let money be the Widow's criterion for choosing one or the other, the worthy Damon offers to share profit and loss in their business ventures. Leander gladly agrees to this and treacherously turns the opportunity to his advantage, magnanimously proclaiming: "Nicht die Hälfte meines Vermögens, mein ganzes Vermögen wäre allezeit so gut, als das Ihrige." (I, v. 192).

In a monologue, Damon admits to himself that he does not feel what Leander claims to feel towards him. He has his doubts about Leander but blames them on his own weakness: "Ich irre mich wohl auch--ich beurtheile ihn nach mir----weil ich so schwach bin;" (I, vi. 193). In order to test the friendship of Leander, Damon plays with the thought of saying that his ship has sunk, but then tells himself:

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Doch nein—das war ein niederträchtiger Einfall---Seinen Freund auf die Probe setzen, heist, seinen Freund gern verlieren wollen . . .
acht--ich schäme mich recht vor mir selbst---

(I, vi. 193)

The appearance of Oronte, his opportunist cousin, serves to put Damon into even greater consternation. Oronte tells Damon that his ship has sunk and that he must declare bankruptcy. But Damon, finding it beneath his honor to resort to such baseness, resigns himself to the situation. When Oronte tells Damon that Leander received a letter notifying him of the loss of his ship, Damon, in another monologue, wonders:

Allein Leander—sollte es wahr seyn, dass er diese falsche Nachricht bekommen hätte?---und er sollte mir es verschwiegen haben?---wie hätte er den Vorschlag annehmen können, den ich ihm that---ich falle auf ganz besondere Gedanken—doch weg damit—sie schäden meinen Freund--- (I, viii. 197)

As a final blow, Lisette reveals to Damon what Leander told her about the sinking of his ship. But Damon dismisses Leander's behavior as "a small infidelity":

Er hat es Euch selber gesagt? So ist mein Verdacht doch wohl gegründet—Dem ohngeachtet. Lisette, könnt Ihr mir gewiss glauben, dass es einen blosse Irrung mit seinem Schiffe gewesen—aber sollte mein Freund wohl eine kleine Untreue an mir begangen haben? (I, ix. 197)

In this respect, too, Damon proves to be the opposite of Leander in embracing a complete trust, even when his doubt
is greatest.

In the last scene, the sham of Leander's behavior becomes apparent. He has gone to the Widow under false pretenses and told her that Damon no longer loves her. After learning that it was Damon's ship that sank, Leander offers his condolences — but no part of the riches he claimed to be so willing to share:

Mein liebster Freund, das Glück ist Ihnen zuwider gewesen. Ich weis, Ihr Gemüth ist viel zu gesetzt, als dass es dieser eitle Verlust sehr beunruhigen sollte. Ich hoffe übrigens, dass Sie leicht mit dem Glücke werden auszusöhnen seyn. Es wird Ihnen vielleicht dasjenige, was es Ihnen itzo entzogen, ein andermal desto reichlicher ersetzen. (I, x. 198)

In the presence of Damon, he requests the Widow to declare herself, pointing out that Damon has only his heart to offer now. Leander assumes that he has been most successful because of his financial gains. Damon can only say, "Gerechter Himmel! Was höre ich? Leander, Sie wollen---Verdruss und Erstaunen lassen mich kein Wort aufbringen."

(I, x. 198).

The Widow tells Damon:

Ja ja. Damon, Sie sind bey diesem Handel der glücklichste gewesen. Sie sind glücklich gewesen, dass Sie Gelegenheit gefunden haben, Ihre grosse Seele auf so eine ausnehmende Art zu zeigen.

(I, x. 199)

In recognizing and valuing Damon's inner merits rather than
monetary gains as her criteria of success, she reveals her own outlooks. And because Damon's and hers are similar, she is drawn to him.

The Widow's choice is not rationally calculated, but stems from the heart. This is demonstrated both stylistically and psychologically. Whereas no more than two people appeared on stage in all the preceding scenes, every character is present in the last one. With the interaction of all these people, at a moment when the real facts and a profuseness of emotion are displayed, the sentimental plot is meant to reach its high point. In love and friendship, a display of feeling is very important and it is in the midst of emotion that the Widow makes her choice. One can assume that in a high state of emotion one's true feelings come through.

At a time when all the world is condemning Leander, Damon gives final proof of his idealistic friendship by closely adhering to the principles that Leander laid down at the start. He tells the Widow, who has just condemned Leander:

Ich schlage alles aus, wo Sie nicht mit mir alles wider ihn vergessen. Wenn Sie uns trennen, so werde ich nothwendig der ungücklichste seyn. Ich weis, wie schwer es ist, einen Freund zu finden. Und will man ihn schon des ersten Fehlers wegen verlassen, so wird man Zeit Lebens suchen, und keinen erhalten. (I, x. 200)
It was stated earlier that Damon, in spite of its deficiencies, provides us with a revealing early treatment of friendship and love which is in many ways characteristic of the period.

In pointing out some of the differences of outlook in Damon as compared to earlier plays, it is relevant to note a distinction that Pikulik makes between "Sächsische Komödie" and "Rührkomödie":


In the "Rührkomödie", love hardly distinguishes itself

\textsuperscript{13}Pikulik, pp. 9-10.
from friendship. This helps to account for the behavior of Damon and Leander at the outset of the play, where neither yields to the other with regard to the Widow. The motivation is not merely based on an excessive friendship for one another, but on a new concept of friendship. Pikulik states that "Wendungen wie 'allerliebster Freund', 'süße Vereinigung der Gemüter' verraten, dass wir es hier mit einem Abbild des damals in Mode kommenden empfindsamen Freundschaftskultes zu tun haben." The actual conflict between love and friendship is based on the fact that the two friends and rivals in love do not know how to distinguish between two analogous things.

Wenn die Rührkomödie hier überhaupt einen Unterschied macht, so gewiss nur den, dass sie die Freundschaft als wertvoller erachtet. Denn das Streben nach Entsinnlichung, wie wir es bei der Darstellung der zärtlichen Liebe in der Rührkomödie beobachteten, erreicht naturgemäß sein Ideal nicht in der Geschlechterbeziehung, sondern in einer von jeder Geschlechtlichkeit reinen Seelengemeinschaft.

When the Widow says: "Schweig! schweig! Lisette. Du verstehst [die] stumme Sprache [der Liebe] sehr schlecht." (I, i. 181), she seems to point at the lower middle class's lack of understanding and rigidly limited views of social relations.

14Ibid., p. 27.
15Ibid., p. 28.
Another trait worth noting is Lessing's exclusion of socializing on the stage. In the first scene, Lisette complains that "unser Haus" up to a week ago was "ein belebter Sammelplatz von unzähligen jungen Herren und verliebten Narren", but that within a short time it had turned into a wilderness because the Widow had sent away all her other suitors. Lisette would herself like to leave because "Gesellschaft ist das halbe Leben!". But the Widow judges differently:

Alle Freyer, die ich gehabt habe, waren theils eitle verliebte Hasen, theils eigennützige niederträchtige Seelen. Was habe ich nicht von beyden ausstehen müssen! . . . Ich habe allen den Abschied gegeben, die nicht selbst so klug waren, ihn zu nehmen; nur sie habe ich da behalten, und sehe sie noch mit Vergnügen bey mir. (I, i. 180)

In the "Rührkomödie", the great world is viewed as a scene of vice, and not a place that teaches virtue, as in the "Sächsische Komödie".

Lisette and Oronte's view of money as a criterion of marriage, social approval, and even of virtue is another point of difference. It is Lisette's idea to make financial success the criterion for choosing Damon or Leander. It is the rich, crotchety Oronte's conviction that Damon is a fool for not declaring bankruptcy or using underhanded means to get ahead in the world. "Der Himmel will haben,
versteh' er mich, dass wir für uns selbst fein sorgen sollen." (I, vii. 196). Damon would rather suffer self-abnegation than be dishonorable.

Selflessness is far more important than money. Damon, through his willingness to accept the loss of his ship and the Widow, earns her admiration and love. Forgiveness fits into this category, too, for here forgiveness means more than forgetting or disregarding injustice. It means the repression of a natural need for personal atonement.

A final trait worth noting is the sentimentality of the last scene. Pikulik states that:

Man darf annehmen dass nach dem Wunsch des Autors bei den damaligen Aufführungen in allen Rührkomödien häufiger geweint wurde, als es der Text ausdrücklich vermerkt.17

I stated earlier that with the laying bare of emotion in the final scene, the sentimental plot is meant to reach its high point. Leander says: "Damon--Urtheilen Sie aus diesen Thränen, ob ich gerühret bin?" (I, x. 200). Damon's selflessness and forgiveness are the prerequisites that move ("ruhren") the personages to sentimentality, as witnessed by the profuseness of tears.

16 Ibid., p. 53.
17 Ibid., p. 84.
These are by no means all the traits worth noting, but they should at least serve to point out that a play which, in the words of C. H. Schmidt, is "eine schwächliche Primararbeit, ohne Welt- oder Theaterkenntnis," can have many redeeming qualities when not viewed only by itself.

There is a span of twenty years between the publication of Lessing's early comedy, Damon, and the first presentation of his last comedy, Minna von Barnhelm, oder das Soldatenglück (1767), in connection with which Lessing also made his final definitive statement on the uses of comedy. He writes in the Hamburgische Dramaturgie (1767-70):

Die Komödie will durch Lachen bessern; aber nicht eben durch Verlachen; nicht gerade diejenigen Unarten, über die sie zu lachen macht, noch weniger bloss und allein die, an welchen sich diese lächerlichen Unarten finden. Ihr wahrer allgemeiner Nutzen liegt in dem Lachen selbst; in der Uebung unserer Fähigkeit das Lächerliche zu bemerken; es unter allen Bemäntelungen der Leidenschaft und der Mode, es in allen Vermischungen mit noch schlimmen oder mit guten Eigenschaften, sogar in den Runzeln des feyerlichen Ernstes, leicht und geschwind zu bemerken.19

In Minna von Barnhelm, the "Lächerliche" is, basically Tellheim's insistence upon an exaggerated sense of honor at the expense of love and friendship, an "Ueberspannung

18 Schmidt, p. 130.
19 Lachmann, IX, pp. 303-304.
In *Damon* the goal was stylistic. The personages were given to a wooden rhetoric and a bombastic sentimentality. But a carefully developed characterization is presented in *Minna von Barnhelm*, where each person has a particular range and pattern of speech, compatibly and plausibly drawn.

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21Gerhard Fricke, "Lessings 'Minna von Barnhelm'", *Studien und Interpretationen* (Frankfurt/M, 1956), p. 25, states as an introductory remark: "Minna von Barnhelm ist als Dichtung das Reinste und Vollendetste, was Lessing geschaffen hat. Sie ist zugleich die lebendigste gestaltbaffe Verdichtung, die Geist und Form, Charakter und Kultur der deutschen, der preussischen Aufklärung gefunden haben. . . . Es ist das erste deutsche Drama, das über die Grenzen hinauswirkt, mit dem der deutsche Geist, seit Jahrhunderten von aussen her empfangend und verarbeitend, seinerseits antwortet und gibt. Es ist Lessings grundlegender Beitrag zu der von ihm zuerst erhobenen Forderung nach einem deutschen Nationaltheater. Verschwunden ist die vom blossen Witz regierte statische Typik der Situations- und Eigenschaftskomödie französischer Herkunft und sächsischer Nachahmung."
together in a complex inner make-up that motivates and is in accord with the actions of the characters. Rather than the relatively simple two-sided conflict between love and friendship, a third characteristic is introduced: Tellheim's strict sense of honor.

At this point it should be noted that Lessing strives for an inner and outer balance of character and situation. Tellheim is too much the rational man who subordinates his heart to his intellect; who reasons according to the precepts of the larger sphere of society rather than the smaller circle of friends. He is of a serious, pessimistic temperament and strictly observes a narrowly-defined code of ethics which is founded on the rationalistic logic that honor must always be upheld, even at the expense of the heart. He lives by an exaggerated self-reliance which prevents him


23Staiger, p. 81, notes with regard to this balance: "Dieses Walten einer um Ausgleich besorgten, begütigenden Hand verspürt das Publikum unserer Theater nicht mehr".
from comprehending the exclusively positive motivations behind friendship and love. His lack of an inner balance (harmony) is caused partly by external circumstances and partly by his mental disposition.

On the opposite side, Minna's and Werner's motivating impulses with regard to love and friendship come only from the heart. They do not fully understand Tellheim's conflict with honor, and Minna, especially, plays it down. She misjudges his conflict with honor as a flaw of too much pride (III, xii) and with her ruse almost drives him to despair. Lessing strives for an inner balance through the learning experience that enables Tellheim and Minna to understand each other more fully. "Nein, ich kann es nicht bereuen, mir den Anblick Ihres ganzen Herzens verschafft zu haben!" (V, xii. 260).

Although the king does not appear in person, he does nevertheless play an important role in achieving an outer balance. At the start of the play, Tellheim is weighed down with the shame of a tainted honor and he bitterly places all the responsibility on the king. Tellheim wants "die vollkommenste Genugtuung" (IV, vi) because his honor is all-important to him. Yet when he finally receives the king's letter, it does not arrive as a deus ex machina that resolves
the predicament as a last resort, but only complements the inner balance achieved through a harmony of Tellheim's mind and heart with an outer harmony of circumstances.

In order to understand Tellheim's present outlooks, it is necessary to look back into his past. Tellheim, a wealthy and high-principled aristocrat from the Kurland, had volunteered his services to the army of Frederick II in the Seven Years' War. His motives were honorable:

Ich ward Soldat, aus Partheylichkeit, ich weiss selbst nicht für welche politische Grundsätze, und aus der Grille, dass es für jeden ehrlichen Mann gut sey, sich in diesem Stande eine Zeitlang zu versuchen und sich mit allem, was Gefahr heisst, vertraulich zu machen, und Kälte und Entschlossenheit zu lernen. (V, ix. 226)

At another time he says,

Man muss Soldat seyn, für seyn Land; oder aus Liebe zu der Sache, für die gefochten wird. Ohne Absicht heute hier, morgen da dienen: heisst wie ein Fleischerknecht reisen, weiter nichts. (III, vii. 220)

His scrupulous services helped him gain the rank of "Major".

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24 This view is held by Staiger, pp. 90-91 and Otto Mann, p. 91.

25 Steinmetz, p. 68, states: "Das Handschreiben des Königs . . . beendet jedoch nicht mehr oder weniger gewaltsam ein inneres Geschehen, das noch nicht zu seiner eigenen Vollendung gelangt ist, sondern ergänzt die Lösung der inneren Handlung mit einer gleichwertigen Harmonie der Äusseren."

26 Lachmann, II, p. 226.
He received the assignment to either annihilate the Saxon Estates or to collect high war retributions from the defeated Thüringer, with strict orders to take the entire prescribed sum and only under the direst of circumstances accept a lower minimal one. He soon realized that he would have had to apply great force to get even the smaller amount, so he advanced the money from his own resources in exchange for a promissory note which was to be included in the signing of peace "unter die zu ratihabierenden Schulden".

This honorable deed was well received in Thüringen. Minna von Barnhelm became so attracted to Tellheim through his merits that she was determined to love him without even having seen him. She met him at her first opportunity and they were soon engaged. Since she was only twenty at the time, she was in the legal care of her uncle, who was away in Italy to avoid the turmoils of war. It was feared that since Tellheim was on the opposing side of the war, her uncle would not grant permission for the marriage.

In the meantime, the war was nearing its end, and Tellheim, along with many other officers, was recalled by the king. The returning troops moved to Berlin for the time being, awaiting a turn for the better. It was soon to be seen that there was no more need for so many officers, and Tellheim says:
Es ist gekommen, wie es kommen müssen. Die Grossen haben sich überzeugt, dass ein Soldat aus Neigung für sich ganz wenig, aus Pflicht nicht viel mehr: aber alles seiner eigenen Ehre wegen thut. Was können sie also schuldig zu seyn glauben? Der Friede hat ihnen mehrere meines gleichen entbehrlich gemacht; und am Ende ist ihnen niemand unentbehrlich. (IV, vi. 237)

When Tellheim presented his promissory note in order to collect the money he had lent before the signing of the peace, the court treasury accused him of accepting a bribe in settling for the least possible sum. At this point he was discharged from the army of the king. This taint on his honor grieved Tellheim and, determined not to be a passive instrument in the hands of great ones, he courageously resolved to remain in Berlin until the matter was cleared up and his good name reinstated. As months passed by, he heard nothing. His resources dwindled; his servants began to leave him. His account at the inn went into arrears.

With the arrival of Minna, the fawning but greedy innkeeper found an excuse to give Tellheim notice. But in cleaning out Tellheim's quarters, the innkeeper found the money Tellheim was keeping for Werner, and regretted a possible loss of business. He promised Tellheim other quarters, but for Tellheim "Die Ehre ist nicht die Stimme unseres Gewissens, nicht das Zeugnis weniger Rechtschaffenens--" (IV, vi. 212). It is an uninfringable possession which must
be holy to every individual. The innkeeper, of a lower rank, is not worthy of Tellheim. Had he been Tellheim's equal, Tellheim would have required reparation. Had the offense been imposed by someone above Tellheim's social rank he would have been guaranteed of vindication, or "es soll ihn lieber das äusserste Elend vor den Augen seyners Verleumder verzehren". 27 Tellheim left the inn, resolved never to stay there again.

With these external circumstances weighing down on him, it is easy to see why Tellheim has become bitter. And yet his strict sense of honor is not to be regarded as a character weakness, for Tellheim deals according to it consistently and resolutely, and without exception. He lives by the


28Guthke, p. 35: "Denn Tellheims Charakter ist . . . von einer Ehre, die sich auf die höchsten Anforderungen einer tiefen sittlichen Existenz gründet und eins ist mit dem unbedingten Anspruch des Gewissens. Und wenn auf diese durchaus positive Ehre, sei es auch nur in ihrer Uebersteigerung, ein komisches Licht fällt, so lässt das die Sinnstruktur der sächsischen Komödie weit hinter sich."

29Belgardt, p. 19, notes: " . . . Tellheim exemplifies Lessing's new concept of man: an individual who is ready at any time to pledge his whole existence on the honor of his actions." That Lessing's conception of Tellheim was a revolutionary innovation is pointed out by Fritz Brüggemann in "Lessings Bürgerdramen und der Subjektivismus als Problem", Jahrbuch des freien deutschen Hochstifts (1926), p. 83: "Mit dieser unerschütterlichen Festigkeit ist etwas ganz neues auf die deutsche Bühne gekommen: der Mann von Charakter".
firmly maintained deduction that the world is against him. He cannot accept the manifestations of heart-felt emotions for their own sake, but subordinates them to his concept of honor.

However, there is more than simply honor that makes up Tellheim's personality. He has compassion and generosity, and these qualities, ironically enough, cause his predicament and redeem his potential self-negation. When Tellheim's compassion is aroused, his rational logic breaks down and his sympathetic emotion takes over. It is this tension between outward composure and inner turmoil, complicated by a stalwart sense of honor, which will not allow Tellheim to accept a man's friendship or a woman's love.

We are presented with Tellheim's sense of honor and outlook towards friendship in his dealing with Just, his servant. Though easily given to rudeness and unrefined in his manners, Just is honest and dedicated, portraying a dogged faithfulness towards Tellheim over a period of many years. In his concern for Tellheim's financial predicament, he is less tight-lipped than he should be. He has told Werner of Tellheim's need, and his boastful assertion: "Mein Herr, mit diesen [500 Talern] können Sie machen, was Sie wollen. Auf meine Verantwortung -" (I, iv. 179), convinces Tellheim that the news of his misfortune has already spread to wider
circles. This hurts Tellheim's pride in his independence and honor. At a time when Just seems most likeable, Tellheim chooses to castigate him for his bad traits (I, viii). But more than his own feelings of remorse and bitterness, Tellheim sees the present situation as an opportunity to dismiss Just, for Tellheim's honor reminds him that he must not maintain responsibilities he has no means of fulfilling -- in this case, affording to pay Just his fair wages. Just, taken aback, views this as a banishment and is deeply hurt. But it is the arousal of Tellheim's compassion which enables Just to overcome his master's strict sense of honor. Just relates how he came by his poodle, and the faithfulness it shows him for having saved it from drowning. Tellheim immediately sees the parallel between himself and Just: "Nein, es gibt keine völlige Unmenschen! -- Just, wir bleyben beysammen." (I, vii. 184).

In his meeting with the widow of Marloff, he shows more than honor and compassion. He demonstrates a dignity, a fairness, a generosity that would have been less striking if they had only been mentioned. When the widow arrives, Tellheim immediately assumes that she has come for help, and he does not hesitate to offer whatever aid he can. Tellheim considered her husband a friend: "Ihr Gemahl war mein Freund,
When he remembers his own situation, bitterness overcomes him:


But her intent to repay an old debt of Marloff causes Tellheim to be so overcome with her misery that he forgets his own. He graciously rejects her offer to repay him. And more than this, he says, "Ich werde es nicht vergessen, dass ein Sohn von ihm da ist. Er wird mein Sohn seyn, so bald ich sein Vater seyn kann." (I, vi. 181). Then he tears up the bill of debt to eliminate any future temptation to make use of it.

Tellheim's conflict with friendship is best seen in his treatment of Werner, a boisterous professional soldier who likes to brag about war and tends to be careless with his money. He is devoted to Tellheim after the fashion of men who admire their brave leaders. Unlike Tellheim, he deals according to his emotions and does not harry himself to reason things out. In the course of Werner's conversation with Just (I, xii), it turns out that not so much because of levity of outlook towards life has he sold his land, but more so to obtain money for Tellheim. He assumes that
Tellheim must have spent the 500 talers by now, and he therefore brings another 300 ducats. "Die bring' ich dem Major—... der Mann muss Geld haben, und es ist schlecht genug, dass man ihm das Seinige so sauer macht!" (I, xii. 187). But Just, already having had one encounter with Tellheim, will have none of it. Werner knows that Tellheim will not simply accept his money, so he employs the ruse of having collected it from Marloff's widow. Werner's lie fails, and Tellheim will not have his money:


His honor will not permit it. As with Just, he feels that without foreseeing a way to repay Werner, it is wrong for him to borrow — especially from a man of a lower social rank.

Werner, too, manages to appeal to Tellheim's sympathy by saying,

Wer von mir nichts annehmen will, wenn er's bedarf und ich's habe; der will mir auch nichts geben, wenn er's hat und ich's bedarf. — Schon gut. (III, vii. 220)

Tellheim promises that when he has no more money he will turn to Werner before seeking help from anyone else. When, in V, i, Tellheim feels compelled to help Minna, he keeps
his word and asks Werner for money. 30

Tellheim's feelings of friendship are directly dependent upon his relationship towards love and Minna, and these are of more consequence and influence in changing Tellheim's attitude.

Minna is in some ways the opposite pole of Tellheim. She has an optimistic outlook towards life and a healthy, unsophisticated nature. Her disposition is bright and cheerful. She can be outspoken and impulsive, obstinate and mischievous, and yet she has tact and poise when the situation warrants it.

However, Minna is not without flaws, as has already been mentioned above. She is naive in the sense that the natural,

30 Regarding Tellheim's relationship towards Werner, Fricke, p. 33, is of the opinion: "Schon Tellheims Verhältnis zu Werner zeigt ganz deutlich, wie der kategorische Imperativ der inneren sittlichen Forderung (d.i. seine Ehre!) ihn von jeder natürlichen und echten Gemeinschaft mit dem Du trennt und ihn in die Abstraktheit des sittlichen Subjekts abschliesst, das mit sich und seiner Ehre allein ist."

31 Mann, p. 97, sees Minna as a flawless personage: "Der Charakter der Minna ist eine der herrlichsten und strahlendsten Konzeptionen der Weltliteratur". She represents "die sieghafte menschliche Helle und Unbeirrbarkeit."; similarly, Minna appears in Kuno Fischer's G. E. Lessing als Reformator der deutschen Literatur (Stuttgart und Berlin, 1904), I, p. 123, as a "in ihrer Klarheit gegen alles unechte Glück gesicherte, in ihrer Heiterkeit über alles eingebildete Unglück erhabene Natur."; Staiger, p. 91, feels that she is given the authority to inflict a "Bestrafung" on Tellheim "die nur sie selbst im Namen der natürlichen Vernunft... und des Menschensinns vollziehen darf".
the human and the moral are to her a self-evident and indivisible unit. She does not reflect and weigh in her mind, but acts out of the spontaneity of a loving, feminine heart. Beyond the immediacy of her love she is incapable of perceiving Tellheim's painful inner conflict between the passionate and illimitable love he feels for her and his uncompromising moral outlook that compels him to renounce all personal feelings. She wonders what could possibly prevent him from lovingly sharing his misfortune with her and concludes that it must be his pride. On the basis of this observation she decides to "heal" him.

Minna throws off the fetters of conventional reserve. But it is precisely her optimism and cheerfulness that excuses her unrestrained and self-confident aggressiveness. Her outlook towards love is quite different from Tellheim's. Her feelings are independent of her intellect and will. She easily gives in to her heart. She feels; and she finds no

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33 Ibid., p. 36. "Kann es noch etwas anderes sein als eine Grille, eine Schrulle, hervorgerufen durch einsame Gräbeleien, durch die lange Trennung, durch militärischen Verduss oder wodurch auch immer -- Falten, die von leichter, liebender Hand rasch zu glätten sind."
need to reason out her love for Tellheim.

Already the first time she appears, she reveals a sunny disposition and a trust in her feelings:

Franziska, mein Herz sagt es mir, dass meine Reise glücklich seyn wird, dass ich ihn finden werde. (II, i. 189-190)

There is no more need for Tellheim to prove his worth to her. No matter what his present situation, her initial attraction to him remains. She can only praise his virtues, and when the innkeeper shows her the ring Tellheim has pawned, she does not stop to reason things out, but simply bursts out with an unrestrained joy that is revealed in every word and move: "Nun habe ich ihn wieder, Franziska! Siehst du, nun habe ich ihn wieder!" (II, iii. 198). In a naive and winning tone she expresses her love for Tellheim.

Shortly before Tellheim enters, Franziska tells Minna to dress properly, but Minna retorts that he will see her just as she is, oftener than not. As far as she is concerned, Tellheim is already hers. Franziska remarks, "O, Sie kennen sich, mein Fräulein". And Minna, with her "Wahrhaftig, Mädchen, du hast es wiederum getroffen." (II, vii. 201), says far more than might at first be realized. They know each other's outlooks and dispositions, for they are of a similar social upbringing and have a similar value system. She knows that Tellheim has many praiseworthy character traits,
such as courage, but that he never boasts about them:

Freund und Feind sagen, dass er der tapferste Mann von der Welt ist. Aber wer hat ihn von Tapferkeit jemals reden hören? Er hat das rechtschaffendste Herz, aber Rechtschaffenheit und Edelmuth sind Worte, die er nie auf die Zunge bringt. (II, i. 190)

But she does not fully understand him in the sense already mentioned. Tellheim does not view love the same way that Minna does, but nevertheless he knows her well enough and gives a very accurate summary of her character:

Sie sind noch das süßeste, lieblichste, holdseligste, beste Geschöpf unter der Sonne; ganz Güte und Grossmuth, ganz Unschuld und Freude! Dann und wann ein kleiner Muthwille; hier und da ein wenig Eigensinn - (V, ix. 255)

He knows her better than she him, but the balance of understanding striven for in the end is still lacking.

When Tellheim sees Minna again for the first time after many months, his first inclination is to run to her: "Ah! meine Minna!" (II, viii. 202), for beneath his external rational composure is a barely restrainable emotion. He still loves Minna, but he immediately recalls his present situation, and his deep sense of honor forbids his chaining Minna to his own fate and circumstances, even if she herself is willing to lower her present sense of honor and security before the world. For Tellheim, "Gleichheit ist immer das festeste Band der Liebe." (V, v. 249). Since he has lost his
honor before the eyes of the world: "Die Ehre ist nicht die Stimme unser Gewissens, nicht das Zeugniss weniger Rechtsschaffen --" (IV, vi. 242), he no longer feels an equality with Minna, and is therefore unworthy of her love.

But Minna, guided only by her heart, is not convinced of Tellheim's potentially tragic situation. She is filled with an innocent optimism and a contented resignation with life:

Nichts suche ich mehr. (mit offenen Armen auf ihn zugehend) Alles, was ich suchte, habe ich gefunden. (II, ix. 203)

But Tellheim views his love entirely on a rational level:

He is a misfortunate man, whose honor forbids him to marry Minna in spite of his love for her, or to accept money from a man who sincerely wants to be his friend.

Der Unglückliche muss gar nichts lieben. Er verdient sein Unglück, wenn er diesen Sieg nicht über sich selbst zu erhalten weiss; wenn er es sich gefallen lassen kann, dass die, welche er liebt, an seinem Unglück Antheil nehmen dürfen. (II, ix. 203)

34Belgardt, p. 20 [see also his article "Minna von Barnhelm als komischer Charakter", Monatshefte, LVIII (1968), pp. 209-216.], goes so far as to say that "she represents the ideal of resignation ('Gelassenheit') and the anti-individualistic concepts of the Enlightenment which believed the universe governed by natural laws, at all times reasonable, so that nothing could go wrong, unless the supposedly impossible were admitted that God Himself had made an error in His divine reasoning." But Belgardt gives the impression of having condensed 18th century philosophy into a simplified formula.
Ich bin Tellheim, der verabschiedete, der an seiner Ehre gekränkte, der Krüppel, der Bettler. (II, ix. 205)

Tellheim's sense of propriety needs a formal confirmation that the engagement is being broken off. Since he is unable to come to terms verbally, he decides to send Just with a letter explaining his reasons. Minna's tenacious optimism sees only the good aspects of the letter:

Sein Brief! o sein Brief! Jede Zeile sprach den ehrlichen, edlen Mann. Jede Weigerung, mich zu besitzen, beteuerte mir seine Liebe. -

(II, xii. 225)

This is not only true in her attitude towards Tellheim. Minna embraces a basic confidence in morality, even though adverse conditions may surround a person. When Riccaut rushes into the inn to convey the good news he has heard about Tellheim's appeal to the king, probably in the hope of gaining some monetary favor from Tellheim, he finds Minna instead. She shows her warm heart for unfortunates, and even fears that she might offend him. "Ob er mir es wohl übel nehmen würde, wenn ich ihm etwas anböthe?" (IV, iii. 231).

Riccaut provides a contrast to the character of Tellheim. He is a blustering, boastful mercenary soldier who serves for financial gain and has the bad manners to accept money from Minna, a lady and a total stranger.

Although Minna dislikes Riccaut, she looks for motives
that would excuse his opportunism. Franziska sharply admonishes her, but Minna, revealing her optimistic disposition, replies:

Mädchen, du verstehst dich so trefflich auf die guten Menschen: aber, wenn willst du die schlechten ertragen lernen? - Und sie sind doch auch Menschen. - Und öfters bey weitem so schlechte Menschen nicht, als sie scheinen.

(IV, iii. 233)

Optimism is also demonstrated in her confidence that she will be able to persuade Tellheim to give up his "Stolz" by employing a ruse:


(III, xii. 225-226)

By returning Tellheim's letter as if she had not read it, she gets him to see her again. Although she very well knows the contents of the letter, she diplomatically plays the fact down: "Haben wir ihn gelesen, oder haben wir ihn nicht gelesen? Was schrieben Sie mir denn, lieber Tellheim?" (IV, vi. 237).

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35 Fricke, p. 40. "Wenn selbst Minna sich nun zu taktischen Unternehmungen dieser Art gedrängt sieht, um Tellheim durch Eingehen auf seine Eigentümlichkeit ans Ziel zu bringen . . ., dann tritt die ganze Einsamkeit hervor, in der diese beiden so innig verwandten und einander gehörenden Menschen sich an diesem Punkte des Geschehens gegenüberstehen."
Tellheim wishes to reiterate what he has said in his letter: "Nichts, als was mir die Ehre befiehlt." (IV, vi. 237). In her desire to avoid any conversation that might renew Tellheim's bout with honor, she cuts him off by telling him of the impending arrival of her uncle, who is to give Tellheim Minna's hand in marriage. Months ago, that would have been joyous news, and Minna hopes to brighten Tellheim's brooding mood with the reawakening and fulfillment of the past wish. But Tellheim refers Minna back to the letter dictated by his honor. With a calm, cheerful tone she adroitly encounters each reason for discontinuing their relationship. And indeed, Tellheim seems much quieter. Minna thinks that they have reached a point where she can handle his feelings of injured honor. In the interests of his self-justification, she forces Tellheim to recount how his honor was injured. But Tellheim, reliving the exasperating experience, is struck to his inner core:


(IV, vi. 239-240)

His bitterness intensifies to the point where he despairs of the justice of God, and Minna, having achieved the opposite of her desired goal, shudders, "Es ist das schreckliche Lachen des Menschenshasses." (IV, vi. 240). She employs every
method she can think of to reverse Tellheim's misanthropy. Although she fails miserably in doing so, she at least has reasons for her attempt: to make it easier for Tellheim to accept with her also her fortune, and to restore his trust in mankind by making him feel that at least one person has implicit faith in him and loves him. While this is entirely to Minna's credit and reveals the splendor of her selfless, unconditional love, she nevertheless drives him to despair and is in the words of Tellheim, "auf dem besten Wege, mich [um den Verstand] zu bringen" (IV, vi. 241) by her insistence that everything is "just fine" and by her defense of abstract principles when reality clearly contradicts them.

Minna invokes his religious consciousness: "Die Vorsicht, glauben Sie mir, hält den ehrlichen Mann immer schadlos; und öfters schon im voraus." (IV, vi. 240). She recalls the example of the Moor in Shakespeare's Othello ("For naught did I in hate, but all in honour." V, ii):

Sie sind so schwarz und hässlich nicht; auch so eifersüchtig werden Sie nicht seyn. Aber Tellheim, Sie haben doch noch viel Ähnliches mit ihm! O über die wilden, unbegsamen Männer, die nur immer ihr stieres Auge auf das Gespenst der Ehre heften! für alles andere Gefühl sich verhärten! (IV, vi. 240)

Tellheim replies distractedly: "Warum vermietete er

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seinen Arm und sein Blut einem fremden Staate? - " (IV, vi. 241), as if to say: Why did Tellheim go into the service of a foreign state, when all he received in return was shame?

Finally, somewhat calmer, he summarizes why he cannot marry her:

Ich wollte sagen: wenn man mir das Meinige so schimpflich vorenthält, wenn meiner Ehre nicht die vollkommenste Genugthuung geschieht; so kann ich, mein Fräulein, der Ihrige nicht seyn. Denn ich bin es in den Augen der Welt nicht wert, zu seyn. Das Fräulein von Barnhelm verdient einen unbescholtenen Mann. (IV, vi. 242)

Minna has exhausted all her powers of persuasion, so she resorts to a ruse. She knows that if she can arouse Tellheim's compassion, she can at least temporarily make him forget his feelings of unworthiness. Before Tellheim's arrival, Minna had put on his ring and given Franziska hers to keep, not yet quite sure how she would make use of the switch. Now she tells Tellheim:

Man muss ganz uneigennützig lieben.—Ebenso gut, dass ich nicht offenherziger gewesen bin! Vielleicht würde mir Ihr Mitleid gewähret haben, was mir Ihre Liebe versagt. . . . Nein, keines muss das andere, weder glücklicher noch unglücklicher machen. So will es die wahre Liebe! Ich glaube Ihnen, Herr Major; und Sie haben zu viel Ehre, als dass Sie die Liebe verkennen sollten. (IV, vi. 243)

She hands the unwitting Tellheim his own ring and leaves the room.

This gives Franziska the opportunity to play her role.
She confesses to Tellheim that she and her mistress ran away from home because Minna's uncle had disowned her after she had refused to marry any of the suitors he had brought forth. Forsaken and scorned by her countrymen, Minna set out to look for Tellheim.

That is all Tellheim needs to hear. He does not even give Franziska a chance to finish. "Ich habe genug!" he retorts. "Komm, ich muss mich zu ihren Füssen werfen."

(IV, vii).

His compassion for Minna's supposed need becomes aroused, and all other issues become secondary. Werner rushes into the room to inform Tellheim that his appeal at the court treasury has been concluded in his favor. It was the very matter that a short time ago brought him to the point of despair. But now Tellheim wants to hear nothing of it. With no assurance that he will be able to repay Werner, he asks him to raise whatever money he can. He confides in Werner in the manner that he had promised earlier and tells him that tomorrow he will marry Minna. For the moment he seems to become unfaithful to his principles of honor and his insistence on remuneration:

"Und übermorgen geh' ich mit ihr fort. Ich darf fort; ich will fort. Lieber hier alles im Stiche lassen! Wer weis, wo mir sonst ein Glück aufgeohoben ist. Wenn du willst, Werner,
so komm mit. Wir wollen wieder Dienste nehmen.
(V, i. 246)

Guided by his emotion and by concern for Minna, Tellheim is willing to go against all that he expressed such conviction in before. The monologue of V, ii. effectively gives us an insight into Tellheim's sensitive and compassionate heart and his renewed confidence in the future and in himself:

Wie ist mir? - Meine ganze Seele hat neue Triebfedern bekommen. Mein eignes Glück schlug mich nieder; machte mich ärgerlich, kurzsichtig, schüchtern, lassig: ihr Unglück hebt mich empor, ich sehe wieder frei um mich, und fühle mich willig und stark alles für sie zu unternehmen - (V, ii. 246)

In the end, Tellheim is beginning to see emotion through the eyes of others as well as through his own.

However, it must be remembered that he is still motivated by the principle: "Gleichheit ist immer das festeste Band der Liebe." (V, v. 249). In concurrence with his concept of honor, now that Minna has experienced shame and injury, Tellheim feels himself worthy of her love. Whereas he considered her on a higher level because her honor was untainted, he now feels that they are equals again. This equality in mortification releases Tellheim to love Minna as before:

Diesen Ring nahmen Sie das erstemal aus meiner Hand, als unser beyder Umstände einander gleich, und glücklich waren. Sie sind nicht mehr glücklich, aber wiederum einander gleich. (V, v. 249)
Minna's reply is: "Da ist keine Gewalt der Welt, die mich zwingen soll, diesen Ring wieder anzunehmen!" (V, v.).

Ironically, Minna seems to express a total rejection, whereas in reality, by rejecting the transposed ring, she confirms her continuing love for Tellheim.

Her game should have stopped here, but through her willfulness she assumes the same stance Tellheim had formerly embraced: she admits that she loves him, but regrets that her honor will not allow her to augment the misfortunes of Tellheim by adding her own troubles. She even throws back his own words:

Sie müssen sich die allervollständigste Genugthuung - ertrotzen . . . und sollte Sie auch das äusserste Elend, vor den Augen Ihrer Verleumder, darüber verzehren! (V, v. 250)

Tellheim at this point reveals his changing disposition in moving terms:

Aegernis und verbissene Wuth hatten meine ganze Seele umnebelt; die Liebe selbst, in dem vollsten Glanze des Glücks, konnte sich darinn nicht Tag schaffen. Aber sie sendet ihre Tochter, das Mitleid, die, mit dem finstern Schmerze vertrauter,

37Guthke, pp. 41-42. "Die Rollen haben sich jetzt komisch vertauscht zwischen Tellheim und Minna. . . . das stellt Tellheims extremen Ehrbegriff in komisches Licht. Und das noch mehr, als er sich dann in der zweiten Wandlung auch noch ritterlich für die ungetreue Minna verantwortlich fühlt, indem also seine Ehre die verzagte, negierende Misanthropie wieder überwindet, obwohl es Minna um ihn 'nicht verdient' hat (V, 12)."
Tellheim has finally come to the emotional preparedness to accept a lover and friend on a non-rational level -- except for one aspect: he has not really made any compromises with his prerequisite of equality in love. Minna's obstinacy almost results in tragedy when she continues to insist upon her ruse after Tellheim receives the letter from the king which makes amends for Tellheim's wounded honor. But it is psychologically and structurally necessary for the final development of Tellheim's emotional maturity that she does so. Tellheim's honor has been restored, but in his eyes, Minna still suffers from the same degradation as before. With this turn of events, Minna is able to take on the same position Tellheim had taken. She thereby points out the absurdity in his exaggerated personal system of honor at the cost of love and friendship:

Konnte nur sein wiederkehrendes Glück ihn in dieses Feuer setzen? ... es sey eine nichts-würdige Liebe, die kein Bedenken trage, ihren Gegenstand der Verachtung auszusetzen ... [Tellheim braucht] eine unbescholtene Gattin! Ein Sächsisches verlaufenes Fräulein, das sich ihm an den Kopf geworfen - [braucht er
Tellheim becomes vexed by this and is prepared to tear up the king's letter. He thereby demonstrates that with the inner development of his character, the restoration of his public honor is no longer the prime concern.

Minna's continuing stubbornness causes Tellheim to begin doubting her intentions towards him. Just tells him that Minna has ransomed the ring that had been in the innkeeper's hands and that she has not agreed to return it. Tellheim is certain that she had come to break with him, and that chance and cunning had aided her trickery. Their relationship is at the brink of disaster.

Werner arrives with more money, and sooner than Tellheim would have anticipated. But now he only serves as an outlet for Tellheim's renewed anger and bitterness towards the world. "Alle Güte ist Verstellung; alle Dienstfertigkeit Betrug." (V, xii. 259).

Minna's pleas are useless. However, the arrival of the Graf von Bruchsall suddenly arouses Tellheim's compassion again. He assumes that Minna's uncle has come to forcefully
take her back. In spite of his belief that she has acted dishonorably, Tellheim is willing to protect Minna if he can only be sure that she regrets her deeds. Minna confesses her ruse and proves her faithfulness with the rings. When she states, "Nein, ich kann es nicht bereuen, mir den Anblick Ihres ganzen Herzens verschafft zu haben!" (V, xii. 260), she realizes that what she considered mere pride or whimsy ("Grille"), was not at all as she had conceived it. Tellheim's flaw was too strict an application of the virtue of honor ("Ueberspannung des Ehrbegriffs"). It was the dis-harmony of character (the imbalance of heart and mind; feeling and rational calculation, along with his exaggerated self-reliance) which Tellheim, though driven near total despair, manages to overcome through Minna's ruse. Not only "Entlarvung des Charakters", but also a change of outlook in Tellheim and Minna, a greater understanding of each other and a balance of character that was lacking at the outset takes

\[38\text{Böckmann, p. 542. "Demnach kann es sich auch nicht darum handeln, bei dem Major den Starrsinn der Tugend wirklich aufzulösen: es gilt nur, ihn in eine Grazie des Herzens zu verwandeln, die Gesinnung selbst in freier Form erscheinen zu lassen. . ."}

\[39\text{A similar kind of "flaw of exaggeration" appears again in Emilia Galotti, where Emilia's strict sense of modesty and propriety in church (along with her inexperience) prevent her from discouraging the advances of the Prince.}

\[40\text{Steinmetz, p. 67.} \]
This also holds true for Tellheim's relationship with Werner. Tellheim recognizes Werner's deep friendship: "Ha! wer ein besseres Mädchen, und einen redlichern Freund hat, als ich, den will ich sehen!" (V, xiv. 263), and Werner exclaims, "Ich hätte aber doch so ein Tölpel nicht seyn sollen. Nun seh ichs wohl." (V, xiv. 263).

Mention still needs to be made of the secondary plot of love between Franziska and Werner. Unlike Lisette in Damon, Franziska is not a common soubrette who intrigues against her mistress. She is neither blindly obedient nor submissively abject. She is a commentator upon as well as a participant in the action. Her familiarity with Minna is due to her close contact with her from childhood and her similarity of character with Minna. She is sharp-witted and has a vividness of expression for which the innkeeper is no match. Her self-assured absoluteness of speech is direct and honest.

As a parallel to the main action, she has a liaison with Werner that takes place on a lower social level.

In III, iv. Franziska and Werner meet for the first time.

41Fricke, pp. 45-46. "Indem sie den Ernst Tellheims unterschätzte, schuf sie sich (und ihm) diesen Augenblick höchster Gefahr, der sie zum Ernst Tellheims erzieht, wie sie zuvor (auf zu leichte Weise) Tellheim zur Ganzheit und Einheit seines Menschentums erzog und befreite und das lähmende Gegeneinander von Herz und Gewissen überwand."
time. The appearance of Franziska is pleasing to Werner. Franziska's naivety towards Werner is similar to that of Minna towards Tellheim, except that it is on her own level. Mutual admiration for Tellheim generates a feeling of congeniality and sparks off a similarity of heart-felt emotion towards each other.

In order to remove the suspicion that Tellheim is almost destitute, Werner unwittingly portrays him as a fickle galant who pawns Minna's ring simply to be rid of it:

Dem Soldaten geht's in Winterquartieren wunderlich, Da hat er nichts zu thun, und pflegt sich, und macht vor Langerweile Bekanntschaften, die er nur auf den Winter meinet, ... Besonders in Sachsen; wenn er zehn Finger an jeder Hand gehabt hätte, er hätte sie alle zwanzig voller Ringe gekriegt. (III, v. 181)

Thereby, Werner later draws Tellheim's bitter reproaches in the presence of Franziska.

When Werner brings Tellheim the money he had requested from him as a friend, and Tellheim tells him to keep it himself, Werner angrily throws it down: "Nun, so brauch' es, wer da will!" (V, xii. 232). When Franziska goes towards Werner to calm him, he is disgruntled: "Geh Sie! -".

Whereas Tellheim's outlook towards friendship is determined by his stronger bond of love, Werner's love is influenced by the friendship he feels towards Tellheim.

After all has turned out well between Tellheim and
Minna, Franziska reflects: "Ja gewiss, er ist ein gar zu
guter Mann! - So einer kommt mir nicht wieder vor. - Es
muss heraus!" (V, xv. 236). She asks Werner whether he
would not like a wife.

The concerted action of the women in the settlement of
the matters of their heart brings each to the desired outcome.

When viewing Minna in its entirety, the comic and tragic
elements need to be discussed. Böckmann notes:

Es wird vermieden, in den blossen Ernst der
Tugend zu verfallen: vielmehr soll gerade die
Leidenschaft des Herzens und die Strenge des
Ehrbegriffs in einer Freiheit des Spiels um-
kreist werden, die zwar den Ernst bestehen
lässt, ihm aber den dunklen Druck der Allein-
herrschaft nimmt. Die innere Beteiligung
verlangt zugleich nach Abstand, nach freier
Ueberschau und sucht den Ernst im Witz auf-
zufangen. Und zwar geschieht das vor allem
durch die Sprache.42

Minna repeatedly, in the words she employs, brings the comi-
cal elements in Tellheim's relationship towards honor to
out attention. This is an indication that Tellheim, who
knows only the seriousness of responsibility and honor, does
still have ties with the "Sächsische Typenkomödie"43 in spite

42 Böckmann, p. 543.
43 Steinmetz, p. 67, says with regard to this: "Es steht
ausser Frage, dass Tellheim auch vor IV, vi. nicht ohne
jegliche Einschränkung dem Charaktertyp des sächsischen
Lustspiels zugerechnet werden kann. Das verbietet schon die
Tatsache, dass keine seiner Handlungen ihrem Wesen nach
unvernünftig oder unsinnig-glächerlich ist. Dieses Aussehen
gewinnen sie erst durch die einseitige und unzulängliche
Begründung, die Tellheim ihnen gibt. Ebensowenig ist es zu
bestreiten, dass Tellheim nicht nur auf Grund der Anwendung
des Schemas als ein in sein Ich eingesperrter Offizier
erscheint. Er ist darüber hinaus von sich aus auch ein
'schwieriger' Charakter; insofern bewirkt die Intrige doch
auch eine 'Befreiung'."
of his appearance as a complex character rather than a character type. In the final analysis, it is not circumstance which lets Tellheim become a potentially tragic figure, but his own quality of character. He finds himself set into a situation where he deals according to his strict sense of honor.

But in contrast to the seriousness of Tellheim and his circumstances, there are the comic scenes with the Wirt, Riccaut, Franziska, and Werner, plus the humor Minna presents through words. Guthke sees a polarity of the comic Minna and the tragic Tellheim, on which basis he concludes that Minna von Barnhelm is "zumindest als Drama mit tragikomischen

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44Guthke, p. 40. Similarly, Steinmetz, p. 66, states: "Hier wird in aller Klarheit deutlich, dass das Problem von Tellheims Tragik erst dann ins Spiel kommen kann, wenn er als Charakter auftritt. Tragisch kann nur der Charakter sein, nicht der Charaktertyp."


46Belgardt, p. 24, views Minna herself as a comic character: "The contrast we see in the character of Minna between her selfless love for Tellheim and her abstract philosophizing if analogous to Lessing's terms 'Anständigkeit' und 'Ungereimtheit', both of which should be contained in a comedy (Schriften, VI, p. 51) [Lachmann]. This makes Minna a comic character according to Lessing's definition: 'Jede Ungereimtheit, jeder Kontrast von Mangel und Realität ist lächerlich' (Schriften, IX, p. 302). Minna's 'Ungereimtheit' consists of the fact that her defense of her limited philosophical categories renders her incapable of understanding Tellheim and the reality of the day. This view seems to be confirmed by Lessing's statement: 'Die jungfräulichen Heroinen und Philosophinnen sind gar nicht nach meinem Geschmacke.' (Schriften, XVIII, p. 18)."
53. Möglichkeit anzusprechen\textsuperscript{47}, but goes a little too far in categorizing it into a tragicomedy. Fricke's observation, "Das Sittliche und das Menschliche, das Gewissen und das persönliche Gefühl einigen sich" \textsuperscript{48}, fits well with the idea that Lessing strives for a harmony of character as well as a balance of tragic and comic elements.

Discussion thus far has dealt with an early and a late comedy of Lessing, where friendship and love were the main themes. Lessing's \textit{Emilia Galotti} is a tragedy that deals with the themes of family, love, and, to a lesser degree, friendship. In the \textit{Hamburgische Dramaturgie}, Lessing had occasion to state his distinction between comedy and tragedy:

\begin{quote}
Die verschiedensten Charaktere können in ähnliche Situationen gerathen; und da in der Komödie die Charaktere das Hauptwerk, die Situationen aber nur die Mittel sind, jene sich äussern zu lassen, und ins Spiel zu setzen: so muss man nicht die Situationen, sondern die Charaktere in Betrachtung ziehen, wenn man bestimmen will, ob ein Stück Original oder Copie genannt zu werden verdiene. Umgekehrt ist es in der Tragödie, wo die Charaktere weniger wesentlich sind, und Schrecken und Mitleid vornehmlich aus den Situationen entspringt. Ähnliche Situationen geben also ähnliche Tragödien, aber nicht ähnliche Komödien, anstatt dass sie in den Tragödien fast gar nicht in Erwägung kommen.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{47}Guthke, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{48}Fricke, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{49}Lachmann, IX, pp. 402-403.
In this connection, Lessing distinguishes between the passions which move the characters of the drama and those which the audience experiences:

. . . die Tragödie, mit einem Worte, [ist] ein Gedicht, welches Mitleid erregt. Ihrem Geschlechte nach, ist sie die Nachahmung . . . einer mitleidswürdigen Handlung . . . Mitleid und Furcht sind die Mittel, welche die Tragödie braucht, um ihre Absicht zu erreichen: und die Erzählung kann sich nur auf die Art und Weise beziehen, sich dieser Mittel zu bedienen oder nicht . . . unser Mitleid wird durch die Erzählung wenig oder gar nicht, sondern fast einzig und allein durch die gegenwärtige Anschauung erregt . . . die Tragödie soll unser Mitleid und unsere Furcht erregen, bloss um diese [vorgestellten] und dergleichen [erweckten] Leidenschaften, nicht aber alle Leidenschaften ohne Unterschied zu reinigen. (Hamburgische Dramaturgie, Stück 77).

The passions presented on stage (which themselves do not necessarily portray pity or fear) must arouse pity and fear in the viewer.

In evaluating *Emilia Galotti*, it is only through presentation on the stage that this play can realize its full potential. Lessing himself, in a letter of October 25, 1772, to Gebler, comments: "Dazu habe ich nur einen einzigen Gesichtspunkt, aus welchem ich ein theatralisches Stück beurtheile, nehmlich die Vorstellung."

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50 Lachmann, XVIII, p. 55.
The evils which produce tragedy, Lessing felt, cannot but be caused, to a great extent, by humanity itself, and although he did not go so far as to present, as later dramatists do, the purely temporal and therefore remediable evils of the social world, tragedy is for him a matter of human weakness rather than divine indifference. We are presented with a chain of cause and effect of weakness and misfortune. There is an interaction of character and situation: initially, the situations arise from the inclinations of the characters according to their personalities.

There is a conflict of two value systems, and none of the characters are free-acting agents: Emilia and Odoardo embrace a bourgeois moral outlook and strive for a dehumanized, abstract virtue which leads to tragic results when confronted with practical life. Emilia's "Furchtsamkeit" -- her propriety, modesty, inexperience in her encounter with the Prince at church; her docility and obedience to her mother -- and Emilia's "Entschlossenheit" -- her determination to die in order to save her virtue -- may be well-motivated. But they are also tragic in that the one can be considered a sin of omission which leads to Appiani's death while the other a sin of commission that arouses her father to kill her.

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Odoardo's abstract moral outlooks and his relationship towards God are, if not blasphemous, then at least deficient; his emotional obstinacy ("brausender Jünglingskopf") and his impracticality in dealing with the world close the avenues of escape.

The Prince, the sensuous lover, and Marinelli, the Machiavellian friend, live by a negative worldly-courtly ethic. Through his unrestrained passions, the Prince initiates the tragic circumstances while Marinelli, the main driving force of the action, advances the tragedy through his crafty ingeniousness. However, none of the characters gain an upper hand over the situation they may initially have helped to bring about. They are driven on by circumstances which get beyond their control.

Each of the characters has touches of realism: the reasons for and the manner in which they act, as well as their speech are realistic within the structure of the play. However, Lessing's ultimate goal in the build-up of emotion is stylistic: the laws which govern the conduct of his characters, and the elaboration and resolution of the conflicts in which these characters are involved, are the laws, not of life, but of drama, an aesthetic category.

\[^{52}\text{Stahl, p. xviii.}\]
A point of difference among critics deals with the search for a main character. The title of the play has the name "Emilia", but Lessing, in a letter to his brother, Karl, wrote (Feb. 10, 1772):


Emilia only becomes the central figure if she harbors secret inclinations towards the Prince. The play does not, however, indicate that to me, at least not on Emilia's conscious level, and I shall attempt to show that.

Marinelli, the only character who appears in all five acts of the play, is an important active and conscious element in furthering the circumstances leading up to the death of Emilia. At a first glance, he seems to come closer than any person in the play to being omnipotent, but his power is dependent upon the sanctions of the Prince, and his plans are foiled by the latter's impatience and Orsina's jealousy.\footnote{What Lessing writes to Nicolai (Nov., 1756) pertains to Marinelli: "Das Trauerspiel soll so viel Mitleid erwecken, als es nur immer kann; folglich mussen alle Personen, die man ungluecklich werden laesst, gute Eigenschaften haben, folglich muss die beste Person auch die ungluecklichste seyn, und Verdienst und Unglueck in bestandigem Verhaeltnisse bleiben. Das ist, der Dichter muss keinen von allem Guten entblösssten Bösewicht aufführen."}
But beyond him, each character initiates an action essential to the outcome of the play, namely Emilia's death.

Writing at a time when he had already expressed a definitive theory of the drama and the importance of pity and fear (esp. in *H.D.*, Stücke 74-79), it is not certain to me whether Lessing intended this play to fulfill his criteria of tragedy. There is a great sense of horror and waste at the end, and we do not experience the intensity of emotion felt by contemporary audiences, when irresponsible princes still wielded arbitrary power. I think that Lessing's purpose lies somewhere between the revelation of human weakness and a striving for the heightening of emotion culminating in Emilia's death.

As in *Damon* and *Minna von Barnhelm*, love is an important theme in *Emilia Galotti*. It deals with Orsina's rejected love, the relationship between Emilia and Count Appiani, and the love of Hettore Gonzaga, Prince of Guastalla, for Emilia. Each of these "loves" (with the possible exception of Emilia-Appiani), is only a shabby reflection of a

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55 Joachim Müller, "Lessings Emilia Galotti", in *Wirklichkeit und Klassik* (Speyer and Munich, 1957), p. 61, states that it is wrong to conclude that "die Furchtsamkeit und die Angst der vom verbrecherischen Despotismus unterliegenden Bürgerin zuletzt zur Entschlossenheit wird, mit dem Opfertod dem Bürgertum das Zeichen zu geben, dass das Mass voll ist."
better love, and none of them attain the admirable love found in *Minna von Barnhelm*.

We are first presented with the relationship between the Prince and Orsina. The Prince's love is based on a lascivious and capricious feeling that only wants a gratification of present desires and that is based on exterior appearance and personal whim. His love does not have marriage as an outcome, for his love is not ruled by moral tenets. In short, dignity and consideration for conscience and law are sacrificed for his carnal desires and passions.

Once he has lost his feelings for Orsina, the Prince casts her off:

Nun ja, ich habe sie zu lieben geglaubt! Was glaubt man nicht alles? Kann seyn, ich habe sie auch wirklich geliebt. Aber - ich habe! (I, i. 380)\(^56\)

In the painting Conti brings him, the Prince hopes to find the physical charm that once caused him to be attracted to Orsina. But what he sees is dependent upon the feelings he presently has towards her:

Der Prinz: Stolz haben Sie in Würde, Hohn in Lächeln, Ansatz zu trübsinniger Schwärmerey in sanfte Schwermuth verwandelt. Conti (etwas ärgerlich): Ah, mein Prinz, - wir Maler rechnen darauf, dass das fertige Bildnis den Liebhaber noch ebenso warm findet, als warm er es bestellte. (I, iv. 382)

\(^{56}\)Lachmann, II, Act I, Scene i, p. 380.
He callously dismisses Orsina from his mind:

Wenn sie aus Liebe nährisch wird, so wäre sie es, früher oder später, auch ohne Liebe geworden.-
Und nun, genug von ihr. (I, vi. 387)

The utter contempt he feels for her is demonstrated in deed and word when she comes to Dosalo to see him:


In the Prince's view, his own fate in life is much harder than that of the rejected Orsina, for he must bow to political ties rather than pursue the inclinations of his heart:

Mein Herz wird das Opfer eines elenden Staatsinteresse. Ihres darf sie nur zurücknehmen: aber nicht wider Willen verschenken. (I, vi. 386)

However, his engagement to the Princess of Massa does not prevent him from seeking a new mistress.

Although Orsina is the rejected lover of the Prince, she still has deep feeling for him. Marinelli observes:

Mit dem lustigsten Wesen sagte sie die melancholischsten Dinge: und wiederum die lächerlichsten Possen mit der allertraurigsten Miene. (I, vi. 387)

Orsina sends the Prince a letter requesting to see him at Dosalo. When she learns of his arrival there, she
assumes that he has granted her wish, not realizing that it is part of Marinelli's plan to help Gonzaga seduce Emilia. She assures Marinelli: "Sie hören ja, dass es verabredet worden. So gut als verabredet. Von meiner Seite, der Brief: von seiner, die That." (IV, iii. 426). However, when Marinelli informs her that the Prince has not even read her letter, Orsina is deeply hurt:


She is fully aware that the Prince no longer loves her and regrets that all he feels for her now is disdain:


But not even that could comfort her now: "Gleichgültigkeit [ist] ein leeres Wort, ein blosser Schall . . ., dem nichts, gar nichts entspricht." (IV, iii. 427). She begins to realize, too, that the Prince is not only ignoring but actively avoiding her:

Ein Zufall? - Glauben Sie mir, Marinelli: das Wort Zufall ist Gotteslästerung. Nichts unter der Sonne ist Zufall; - am wenigsten das, wovon die Absicht so klar in die Augen leuchtet. (IV, iii. 428)

She learns from Marinelli that Emilia Galotti is with
the Prince, and knows from her spies that after he spoke to
Emilia at the church her fiancé was shot.

... der Prinz ist ein Mörder! Des Grafen Appiani Mörder! - ... mit dieser Emilia
Galotti hat der Prinz heute morgen, in der Halle bey den Dominikanern, ein Langes und Breites gesprochen... Morgen will ich es auf dem Markte ausrufen. (IV, v. 432)

Orsina has brought a dagger to kill the Prince, and poison to commit suicide. Whether or not she would have used them is not clear, but she does not get the opportunity to be alone with him. She therefore tries to goad Odoardo into killing the Prince for her. While giving Odoardo her knife, she says:

Mir wird die Gelegenheit versagt, Gebrauch davon zu machen. Ihnen wird sie nicht fehlen, diese Gelegenheit: und Sie werden sie ergreifen, die erste, die beste, - wenn Sie ein Mann sind. (IV, vii. 436)

Orsina's bitterness, jealousy, and desire for revenge are best illustrated by her words shortly before she leaves Dosalo:

Ich bin Orsina; die betrogene, verlassene Orsina. - Zwar vielleicht nur um Ihre Tochter verlassen. - Doch was kann Ihre Tochter dafür? - Bald wird auch sie verlassen seyn. - Und dann wieder eine! - Und wieder eine! - Ha! (wie in der Entzückung) welch eine himmlische Phantasie! Wann wir einmal alle, - wir das ganze Heer der Verlassenen, - wir alle in Bacchantinnen, in Furien verwandelt, wenn wir alle ihn unter uns hätten, ihn unter uns zerrissen, zerfleischt, seine Eingeweide durchwühlten, - um das Herz
zu finden, das der Verräther einer jeden versprach, und keiner gab! Ha! das sollte ein Tanz werden! das sollte! (IV, vii. 436-437)

The relationship of love between Count Appiani and Emilia is quite different, but not at all obvious. Do they feel a deep love for each other or has there been a good deal of encouragement on Claudia's part? Is Appiani's love for Emilia abstract and artificial as some critics have argued?

Appiani, who does not care for public life or the favors of the court, has decided to marry a girl who has neither his wealth nor his social rank. After his marriage, he plans to move to his father's estates in Piemont, away from the intrigue of the court. His motives for marriage are not political or monetary.

Already in the first act we are given an account of how people view his character, and by no less than the Prince himself, who harbors no ill feelings towards Appiani:

bey alle dem ist Appiani . . . ein sehr würdiger junger Mann, ein schöner Mann, ein reicher Mann, ein Mann voller Ehre. Ich hätte sehr gewünscht, ihn mir verbinden zu können. Ich werde noch darauf denken. (I, vi. 387)

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57 Friedrich Hebbel: Tagebücher, ed. R. M. Werner (Berlin-Steglitz, n.d.), I, p. 335 (Feb. 19, 1839). Hebbel states that Emilia is fully aware that her relationship to the Count is strictly artificial, predetermined.
Odoardo holds him in very high esteem:

Kaum kann ich's erwarten, diesen würdigen jungen Mann meinen Sohn zu nennen. Alles entzückt mich an ihm. Und vor allem der Entschluss, in seinen väterlichen Tälern sich selbst zu leben.

(II, iv. 396)

Odoardo himself lives away from the city in quiet seclusion from "das Geräusch und die Zerstreuung der Welt".

Appiani does not have praises for the Prince, only contempt. When he goes to the house of the Galottis, he is somewhat disturbed because he has allowed himself to be talked into telling the Prince about his upcoming marriage. This upsets Claudia because she is afraid that Appiani will learn that the Prince encountered Emilia while she was at church. Claudia, too, has a high regard for Appiani. But with her it seems to be more a mixture of vain ambition and love for the great world. She has done all she can to further Emilia's chances of getting a good husband: She has moved to the city to give Emilia a good education. She has also done her share in exposing her to the world, as for instance at the "vegghia" of Chancellor Grimaldi. Claudia tries to avoid any chances of turmoil in her daughter's relationship with Appiani:

Emilia: Ich dächte doch, ich behielte lieber vor ihm nichts auf dem Herzen.

There is only one short scene where Emilia and Appiani are
together. And from the conversation between them, it is not readily, if at all, discernable how they feel towards each other. He devotes most of the conversation towards praising Emilia's parents and the interpretation of her dream. This could be considered a rather artificial relationship with Emilia. Perhaps, just as Odoardo has an abstract view of virtue, Appiani's concept of love is only on the ideal level. He praises and chooses to imitate the very kind of virtue Emilia's father has:

Welch ein Mann, meine Emilia, Ihr Vater! Das Muster aller männlichen Tugend! Zu was für Gesinnungen erhebt sich meine Seele in seiner Gegenwart! Nie ist mein Entschluss immer gut. immer edel zu seyn, lebendiger, als wenn ich ihn sehe - wenn ich ihn mir denke. (II, vii. 403)

This partisan attraction of the Galottis and Appiani, and Emilia's obedience to the will of her family, may be more the reason for Emilia's marriage than a mutual attraction of love.

However, I find Hatfield's argument most convincing.

He notes:

That Appiani's language is rather stilted, that she addresses him as "mein lieber Graf", that they use the formal pronoun -- all this reflects stylistic conventions rather than psychological states. For different reasons, both the lovers speak in a rather subdued way; but I submit that their conversation about Emilia's dress for the wedding [II, vii] implies a deep and mutual affection . . . Every detail of their first significant encounter has been remembered by them both. When one recalls that the mature
Lessing was an implacable foe of "Schwärmerei" about relations between the sexes, one is all the more convinced that they express real devotion -- not, of course, romantic passion. Emilia, an inexperienced girl, naturally cannot speak with the intensity of an Orsina.⁵⁸

Emilia tells Appiani about her dream, where each of the pearls on the jewelry that Appiani gave her turns into a teardrop. She had not told her mother about the dream, perhaps another indication that Emilia's and Appiani's private divulgence goes deeper than one can surmise in II, vi. But keeping back this information until this point also lends itself to the structure of the play. The dream seems to be a foreboding of the sorrow of that day, and Appiani, in a pensive mood to begin with, later muses:


His meeting with Marinelli gives us an insight into a different aspect of Appiani's character. There is an overt hatred between the two of them. The reason is not given, but Appiani seems to realize more than anyone, what Marinelli

stands for at the court. Marinelli's first attempt to hinder the marriage is by telling him to do an errand for the Prince. Marinelli discredits Appiani's marriage to a social unequal and easily manages to rile him by assuming that a marriage ceremony to a lower class girl could easily be postponed:

Ich sollte meynen, dass es sonach umso weniger Schwierigkeit haben könne, die Zeremonie bis zu Ihrer Zurückkunft auszusetzen? (II, x. 408)

To this, Appiani replies, "Pah! Hämisch ist der Affe;". He knows that the ape is malicious, yet he persists in irritating Marinelli. In fact, Appiani is willing to duel on the day of his wedding. But Marinelli is too cowardly. It is difficult to say what Appiani's reaction would have been, had he known that the Prince had gone to see Emilia at church that day.

Emilia does not seem to have had any previous experiences with love. She is charming and modest, and she wants to be candid with Appiani. When she returns from church after being approached by the Prince, she says: "Aber, nicht, meine Mutter? Der Graf muss das wissen. Ihm muss ich es sagen." (II, vi. 401). But obedience to her mother is a stronger force in her. She follows her mother's guidance because she is inexperienced with matters outside the sphere of her own home. Claudia tells her to regard the Prince's words as mere language of the court:
Der Prinz ist galant. Du bist die unbedeutende Sprache der Galanterie zu wenig gewohnt. Eine Höflichkeit wird in ihr zur Empfindung; eine Schmeicheley zur Betheurung; ein Einfall zum Wunsche; ein Wunsch zum Vorsatze. Nichts klingt in dieser Sprache wie alles: und alles ist in ihr so viel als nichts. (II, vi. 402)

Emilia gladly dismisses her disturbing experience:

O meine Mutter! - so müsste ich mir mit meiner Furcht vollends lächerlich vorkommen! - Nun soll er gewiss nichts davon erfahren, mein guter Appiani! Er könnte mich leicht für mehr eitel, als tugendhaft, halten. (II, vi. 402)

H. J. Weigand has argued that Emilia wants her mother to enjoin silence upon her. However, Hatfield's socio-historical insight into Emilia's obedience seems far more convincing.

Steinhauer also disagrees with Weigand. He asks whether this is the embodiment of bourgeois virtue which Lessing wished to depict in *Emilia Galotti*. Is there any cogent reason for rejecting Emilia's own statement that she could not make a scene in public "aus Scham"? Is this reason not completely borne out by her upbringing? If Emilia were


60Hatfield, p. 290. "A docility which would be most suspect in a twentieth century girl seemed only normal obedience in Lessing's day; at least I know of no contemporary comments to the contrary. In other words, Emilia is wrong to keep silent, but there is no reason to question her good faith. It is authentically tragic that this well-motivated and well-meant silence has ruinous results."
looking for the negative answer she gets from her mother, surely she would have put the question in a less drastic form. "Der Graf muss das wissen. Ihm muss ich es sagen" does not seem to invite a negative answer. What could have taken up an entire scene, economy has compelled Lessing to condense into a few lines. Emilia's swift submission may be psychologically dubious, but it is logically consistent with her character, and it was logic with which Lessing worked in this play.

Emilia's closeness to her mother is further demonstrated when she has just been brought to the palace at Dosalo to Marinelli:


Emilia is more concerned for the safety of her mother than that of Appiani. Her thoughts and feelings are still absorbed in the sphere of her family, and part of the tragic circumstances is the close-knittedness of the Galottis

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at the cost of being able to effectively respond to and deal with the world outside their little unit.

Another association of love is that felt by the Prince towards Emilia. Already in the first scene of Act I the Prince shows his preoccupation with thoughts of Emilia and, at the same time, his impracticality and capriciousness in dealing justly:


The Prince's neglect of moral scruples in favor of thoughts of Emilia is also demonstrated in his callousness towards the value of human life:

Camillo Rota: Ein Todesurtheil wäre zu unterschreiben.
Der Prinz: Recht gern. - Nur her! geschwind.
(I, viii. 392)

In speaking with Marinelli, he admits that murder is not beyond him:

Auch ich erschrecke vor einem kleinen Verbrechen nicht. Nur, guter Freund, muss es ein kleines stilles Verbrechen, ein kleines heilsames Verbrechen seyn. Und sehen Sie, unseres da, wäre nun gerade weder stille noch heilsam. (IV, i. 423-424)

Besides being impractical in dealing with affairs of state, capricious in meting out justice, and lacking in moral
scruples, the Prince believes that everything has its price. First he wanted the sketch of Emilia. Now he passionately wishes to possess her, too:


He admits that he loves Emilia, "Nun ja, ich liebe sie; ich bete sie an." (I, vi. 389), but it is the same kind of aroused passion he once felt for Orsina, a lascivious desire based on the senses rather than the heart.

When he learns that Emilia is to be married, he is willing to do anything to have her for himself. He grants Marinelli a free hand without even questioning him: "Alles, Marinelli, alles, was diesen Streich abwenden kann."
(I, vi. 390).

Impatient to gratify his own wishes, the Prince cannot wait to see what Marinelli will do. "Warum will ich mich auf ihn allein verlassen?" (I, viii. 391), and rushes to the church in hopes of seeing Emilia. Thereby he unwittingly
helps to ruin Marinelli's scheme.

Marinelli tells the Prince of his plans after they have already been carried out. The latter does not like it:

Sie überraschen mich auf eine sonderbare Art. -
Und eine Bangigkeit überfällt mich - . . .
ich sehe bey alle dem nicht ab -- (III, i. 412)

However, he lacks the fortitude or moral inclination to take a stand against Marinelli, who seems to be the Prince's crutch when it comes to making decisions and furthering plans. This is revealed again later with Odoardo (IV, ii).

Marinelli encourages the Prince to hide behind a sly dialectic in his attempts to seduce Emilia:

Da sind tausend Dinge, auf die sich weiter fussen lässt. - Und vergessen Sie denn das Vornehmste? . . . Die Kunst zu gefallen, zu überreden, - die einem Prinzen, welcher liebt, nie fehlet. (III, iii. 414)

But how successful are the advances of the Prince towards Emilia? He says ironically:

(hönisch) . . . - Sie kam meinem Verlangen, mehr als halbes Weges, entgegen. Ich hätte sie nur gleich mitnehmen dürfen. (III, i. 410-411)

and later:

When he finally has Emilia alone for a while at Dosalo, he employs all his artfulness in verbal seduction:


Even his soothing, flowing words are not successful in making Emilia come with him willingly. He must forcefully lead her to another room. It is not made clear what ensues while the Prince is alone with Emilia, but when Claudia rushes in, Emilia faints into her mother's arms.

Emilia's disposition towards the Prince has been a point of wide divergence among the critics. She is presented as a tender, charming, modest, and pious girl. These are traits which also attract the Prince, and Emilia should have snubbed his advances right at the start. However, a direct course of action seemed grossly improper to her at the time:


When she flees to the protection of house and family,
she is confused, frightened, disturbed. She relates to her mother the experience of having been accosted by the Prince. Not content with interrupting her devotions, he has forced Emilia to listen to his pleas in the hall of the church, and then pursued her (she believes) through the streets. As the Prince reveals later to Marinelli, she behaved more firmly than she had realized. His reactions after Emilia's fainting lead one to believe that his efforts while alone with Emilia are far from successful. Here, as later, Emilia tends to exaggerate her own weakness, and to judge herself too severely. She feels that she has done something wrong, as expressed by her words: "Ich hätte mich anders dabei nehmen können, und würde mir ebenso wenig vergeben haben." (II, vi. 402).

Emilia wants to tell Appiani what has happened. But when her mother advises her not to, she says: "Ich habe keinen Willen gegen den Ihrigen." (II, vi. 264). As already stated, Emilia's submission to her mother's will reveals her virtue of filial obedience; but at the same time it gives

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62Weigand, p. 475. "Auf diese Ohnmacht hin kommt der Prinz zu Marinelli herausgeflohent und lässt einer äusserst gereizten Stimmung gegen seinen Günstling freien Lauf. Täte er das wohl, trotz des Geschreis der Mutter, trotz der Ohnmacht Emilia's wenn er auch nur ein Wort, einen Blick halben Entgegenkommens bei Emilia gewahrt hätte?"

63Hatfield, p. 290.
Emilia a share in the blame for the omission of actions that could have been taken to counteract Marinelli's schemes.

Emilia's fear of having done something wrong does not, at this point, seem to be based on a conscious knowledge of an inner deficiency. Emilia feels guilty that she should have been involved in such a scandalous affair at all. She feels guilty at not having taken a firmer stand in the whole matter and driven the Prince back behind the bourgeois hedge of respectable conduct. She exclaims in horror, how the intrusive efforts of the Prince have involved her in a complicity despite her best intentions:

Nein, meine Mutter; so tief liess mich die Gnade nicht sinken. - Aber dass fremdes Laster uns, wider unseren Willen, zu Mitschuldigen machen kann! (II, vi. 399)

Emilia cannot as yet orient this experience within her moral system, but since she does not expect to see the Prince again, she gladly dismisses the occurrence from her mind: "Aha! (mit einem tiefen Athemzuge) Auch wird mir wieder ganz leicht. - Was für ein albernes, furchtsames Ding ich bin!" (II, vi. 402).

Does Emilia have a secret, conscious inclination towards the Prince? Goethe said to Riemer that the prime fallacy

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Steinhauer, p. 178.
(proton pseudos) of the tragedy was that Lessing failed to make clear Emilia's love for the Prince. Unless she loved him, so he says, she must have been "eine Gans oder ein Luderchen" to fear his attentions. Later writers have preferred to speak of a subconscious love for the Prince or of a physical fascination for him.

Against those who argue that Emilia's distress at meeting the Prince in church is based on a secret inclination towards him (e.g. Weigand), Steinhauer asks whether it is not more natural to interpret Emilia's distress as caused by terror and dismay, resulting from the abysmal difference in social station between the middle-class girl and the absolute ruler of the land. While appalled at the advances of the aristocratic libertine, she would naturally be at a loss how to deal with the unwanted suitor.

It is worth noting, as Hatfield does, that we may say that an Emilia, Aristotelian in Lessing's eyes, can err but

65F. W. Riemer, Mitteilungen über Goethe (Berlin, 1841), II, p. 663.
67Weigand, p. 478. "Emilia ist sich eines deutlichen Schuldgefühls bewusst ... sie wittert in ihrem Blut die Ansteckungskeime alles dessen, was ihr Sittenkodex als Laster bezeichnet."
68Steinhauer, p. 177.
not drastically sin; that in fact we see her as a person who
does not usually err, that her weakness may not be of a kind
which would seem disgraceful or ridiculous to an eighteenth-
century audience; that she must not appear a perfect character,
suffering as the completely innocent victim of a social
situation.

Steinhauer acquits Emilia from the "guilt" of an erotic
attraction towards the Prince, but he sees in her a culpable
sin of omission: That she had not the vision to react absolutely
in accordance with the dignity of her class-consciousness --
that is her sin, her mistake, her hamartia . . . showing too
much respect for the authority that is vested in royalty.

Hatfield, quite justifiably, points out that we must
beware of reading the play as we would read Shakespeare or
Schiller. The drama develops primarily out of action, not
out of the personalities of the individuals involved. He
says that it may well be that Emilia is attracted to the Prince,
consciously or unconsciously, but the extent and depth of the
fascination are never made clear. To make this attraction

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69 Hatfield, p. 289.
70 Steinhauer, pp. 182, 184.
71 In this regard Otto Ludwig, Ludwigs Werke, ed. Arthur
Eloesser (Berlin, n.d.), IV, pp. 51-56, labels Emilia
Galotti, "eine künstliche Machine, d.h. ein Kunstwerk . . .
das überall auf Schrauben steht" in contrast to Shakespeare's
"organisms".
the central cause of her downfall would be a violation of
Lessing's own criterion of unambiguous, ineluctable motiva-
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When Emilia is again brought into the presence of the
Prince after the attack upon the carriage, her fears for her
virtue are renewed, and it seems that not until this point
does she seriously consider and begin to realize that there
is not only an outward danger for her mother but also an
imminent inner one for herself. Already the mention of the
Prince makes her "äußerst bestürzt" (III, iv).

The few sentences which Emilia utters show unquestionably,
says Steinhauer, that she has no secret passion for the
Prince. The stricken girl who wrings her hands in the agony
of uncertainty about the fate of Appiani and her mother,
and who falls at the feet of the Prince, imploring mercy,
does not act out the ambivalence of love-hate very
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convincingly.

I do not think that is Lessing's intent to make
Emilia's susceptibility to the persistent temptations of the
Prince an inherent, idiosyncratic trait of character. The
realistic touch of seducibility seems to be more a weakness

72Hatfield, p. 288.
73Steinhauer, p. 181.
pertaining to humanity in general. Emilia herself states that innocence is not above seducibility, and it seems that most normal, young, warm-blooded girls would eventually fall prey to the likes of the Prince.

Later when Emilia tells Odoardo, "Ich kenne das Haus der Grimaldi." (IV, vi), the implications may well be that any girl, in the house of the Grimaldis, would eventually fall. This is the view that E. L. Stahl takes. If so, then Emilia's quite normal vulnerability can hardly be her specific tragic error. In any event, excessive sensuality, as already mentioned earlier, cannot be regarded as Emilia's central, decisive failing; neither Lessing nor his eighteenth-century audience would have considered this an acceptable tragic flaw: it would have appeared as depravity rather than hamartia.

The theme of family has only been touched upon. In order to discuss Emilia's death, it is first necessary to examine Odoardo and the Galottis.

Odoardo holds the authority and respect due a man of the

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74R. M. Werner, Lessings "Emilia Galotti" (Berlin, 1882), p. 8, has remarked that every syllable, every mark of punctuation even, is important in this highly concentrated play. Emilia's reference to the Prince, "ihn selbst" (II, vi), is one such ambiguity.

75Hatfield, p. 294.
house. He has an admirable independence and a concept of virtue that Appiani finds worth imitating. Claudia praises her husband for his rustic virtue: "Welch ein Mann! O der rauhen Tugend!" (II, v. 398). He demonstrates his independence by resolving to stay at Sabionetta, away from his family and "das Geräusch und die Zerstreuung der Welt . . . die Nähe des Hofes . . . der Stadt" (II, iv. 396-397). But there is also a streak of obstinacy in sacrificing the presence of his family for the sake of independence and the preservation of his concept of virtue.

What he admires most about Appiani is his decision to leave public life and to live in innocence and peace, away from the court:

Alles entzückt mich an ihm. Und vor allem der Entschluss, in seinen väterlichen Thälern sich selbst zu leben . . . Nun haben sie sich gefunden, die für einander bestimmt waren: nun lass sie ziehen, wohin Unschuld und Ruhe sie rufen. (II, iv. 396-397)

Odoardo is very concerned about the safety and virtue of his daughter. When Claudia tells him that Emilia has gone to church alone, he is worried:

Odoardo: Ganz allein?
Claudia: Die wenigen Schritte --
Odoardo: Einer ist genug zu einem Fehltritt! --
. . . sie sollte nicht allein gegangen seyn.
(II, i. 394)

He abhors the Prince and his court, which are to him
symbols of degradation and vice:


When Claudia expresses her delight at the Prince's high praises of Emilia at Grimaldi's "vegghia", Odoardo angrily retorts:


Admirable though it may be to avoid the turmoils of the outside world and to remain socially inactive and withdrawn, Odoardo does so at the expense of a conscious experience with practical life. He judges people and situations by criteria based on a moral rigidity and he is unable to come to terms with contemporary political manoeuverings.

He has no comprehension of what is going on in his own household and never suspects Pirro's complicity in crime.

When Odoardo rushes to Dosalo to find his wife and daughter, Marinelli reminds him that he is not on the best of terms with the Prince, and so Odoardo's arrival must first be announced. Odoardo falls for this delay tactic.

He is also given to impetuosity and emotionality. When Marinelli leaves him alone with Orsina, she tells Odoardo:
She tells Odoardo that Emilia is worse than dead:

Sie wird nun erst recht anfangen zu leben. -
Ein Leben voll Wonne! Das schönste, lustigste
Scharaffenleben, - so lang' es dauert.
(IV, vii. 435)

Orsina can speak from experience. But in her bitterness towards the Prince and her desire for revenge, she twists the truth of Emilia's meeting with the Prince in an effort to enrage Odoardo:

Mit einer Vertraulichkeit! mit einer Innbrunst!
Sie hatten nichts Kleines abzureden. Und recht
gut, wenn es abgeredet worden; recht gut, wenn
Ihre Tochter freywilling sich hierher gerettet!
Sehen Sie, so ist es doch keine gewaltsame
Entführung; sondern blos ein kleiner - kleiner
Meuchelmord. (IV, vii. 435-436)

Odoardo stamps around, wild with anger. In his excitement he had forgotten to bring a weapon. Orsina, having achieved her goal, obtrudes her dagger upon him.

When Claudia arrives, Odoardo assumes an outward calm. She attempts to assuage his suspicions and importunes him to get all of them away. Odoardo decides to send his wife home in Orsina's carriage. Earlier, he was concerned about his daughter's going to church alone. Now he accompanies Claudia

It seems that in his high state of emotion Odoardo is rather unwilling to have to face the Prince and Marinelli. He cannot rush in on the Prince anyway. Perhaps, like Emilia, he figures that "Entweder ist nichts verloren: oder alles." (V, vii. 447). Perhaps he feels that by walking to the carriage and back he will be able to clear his mind enough to cope with the situation better. And indeed, he does walk back and forth in the arcade, finally returning to the antechamber:


Just as Emilia was thrust into a situation where lack of experience left her unable to act, except to run to the safety of home, Odoardo wishes to flee with Emilia to the protection of Sabionetta. But he is no match for Marinelli. The greater the urgency for Odoardo to act becomes, the more emotional he gets; the more obvious his inability to cope with the situation becomes, the more he relies on his abstract
concept of virtue.

When Marinelli returns from the Prince, Odoardo demonstrates his emotionality, lack of diplomacy and obstinacy. He insists that Emilia must not go back to Guastalla, but with him:

Was hat sie nun wieder in Guastalla zu tun? . . . (hitzig): Erwägen! erwägen! Ich erwäge, dass hier nichts zu erwägen ist. - Sie soll, sie muss mit mir. (V iii. 441)

Odoardo's intransigency where temporary co-operation might have opened other possibilities rather than cut them off only makes the situation more hopeless.

When the Prince finally comes, Odoardo reveals his plans: he is going to take his daughter away to a convent. Marinelli tells Odoardo that there is a rumor that Emilia has a rival in love who killed Appiani, and that Emilia must first be cleared of any suspicion of guilt in a hearing. In the meantime, neither Claudia nor Odoardo will be allowed to see her. Odoardo reaches for the dagger, but when the cajoling Prince approaches him, Odoardo is unable to bring himself to kill either of them. If Odoardo is inept at handling the situation, he at least manages to see Emilia alone.

The monologue of V, vi. reveals Odoardo's emotion, his doubts, his desire to do something -- but his inability to
He considers killing Emilia to save her virtue, but he is more concerned with the abstract concept of virtue than the entire person of Emilia. He must feel that all will be lost anyway: Emilia's future happiness, her virtue; his family, his sanity. The seeds of doubt have been sown by Orsina and Marinelli. He has already found that he is unable to kill either Marinelli or the Prince. His hopes of getting Emilia to safety have been ruined by his stubbornness. He wonders whether she is still worth "saving". But at the horrible thought of killing her, Odoardo is once again struck with inactivity. He submissively leaves her fate in the hands of God. When he is about to go, Emilia arrives, and so he decides, "Ah! er will meine Hand; er will sie!" (V, vi).

He asks her how she can be so calm. Emilia says: "Ruhig seyn können, und ruhig seyn müssen: kommt es nicht auf
eins?" (V, vii. 447). Odoardo tells her that Count Appiani
is dead. She is overcome with a sense of guilt at his death:

Und warum er todt ist! Warum! Ha, so ist es
wahr, mein Vater? . . . wenn er darum todt ist -
darum! (V, vii. 315)

How deep is Emilia's sense of guilt? She must blame herself
for not having told Appiani of the meeting with the Prince.
Perhaps she also feels that if she had effectively discouraged
the Prince at the outset, all would have been well. In any
case, she feels some measure of guilt.

How does Emilia's feeling of guilt relate to an actual
tragic guilt? Earlier, at a moment of great insight, Claudia
said about Minna:

Sie ist die Furchtsamste und Entschlossenste
unsers Geschlechts. Ihrer ersten Eindrücke
nie mächtig; aber nach der geringsten Ueber-
legung, in alles sich findend, auf alles
gefasst. (IV, viii. 437-438)

Very probably, Lessing received a hint from Richardson's
Clarissa, of whom Lovelace exclaims: "What a contradiction!
Weakness of heart with such a strength of will!"

But one may also align Emilia's character with Aristotle's defin-
ition of moral virtue as a mean between two extremes, and

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76 Clarissa Harlowe (London, 1811), IV, p. 221, letter 35:
quoted by Gustav Kettner, Lessings Dramen im Lichte ihrer
und unserer Zeit (Berlin, 1904).
observe that she misses the mark of self-reliant courage first through timidity, then through the nobler error of excessive resoluteness -- first "die Furchtsamste", then "die Entschiessenste". Precisely here, Hatfield points out, lies her tragic guilt.

With regard to Emilia's timidity, Steinhauer suggests that if Emilia's "sin" consists in showing too much respect for the authority that is vested in royalty, her transgression is not a crime, in the vulgar sense of the word. For the tragic conflict is really not between respect for authority, which is a "good" thing, and human dignity, which demands rebellion against authority in this situation.

I am inclined to go along with Hatfield's belief that the above statement by Orsina is a key to finding Emilia's tragic "guilt", if there is one. Her "timidity" at the start and her "resoluteness" in the end, taken together, can be traced back to the tragedy of her upbringing. Emilia's timidity inside the church and her fearfulness in the hall are based on a sense of piety and propriety in the house of God, on the one hand, and sense of inexperience and reverence towards royalty on the other. Her inability to act can be

77Hatfield, p. 296.
78Steinhauer, p. 184.
paralleled with her own father's character. And yet her
timidity is more a flaw of omission than commission.

As Steinhauer puts it, "Emilia is 'guilty' in her
innocence". But he goes so far as to say:

Her guilt is organically tied in with the
basic conflict, which is the struggle between
aristocratic corruption and bourgeois virtue.
Lessing has done more: he has illustrated, in
the figure of Emilia alone, the evolution of
bourgeois self-consciousness. . . . She was
never on the low level occupied by her mother.
But at the opening of the play she is still
far from attaining the lofty moral position held
by her father. The tragic events in which she
becomes involved by her "guilt", transform her
into the heroic woman whom we see in the last
scene. She becomes what her father has always
been. 79

I disagree on this point, for "the loft moral position"
of Odoardo is based on an abstract, impractical ideal, and
Emilia's resoluteness at the end in following this dehuman-
ing "virtue" is the "tragic" at the other extreme of her
timidity. Therefore Steinhauer's statement: "That her father
should punish her for her crime must seem to her a simple act
of justice; for he is her living conscience, the model of what
she should have been in this crisis through which she has
passed." , while attesting to the truth of Emilia's emulation

79Ibid., p. 183.
80Ibid., p. 182.
of the same abstract virtue, does not apply to the kind of heroism one traditionally would think of. Emilia's "heroism" is based on faulty principles and perhaps this in itself is tragic. Along similar lines, Hatfield remarks:

Emilia is the protagonist, not a mere victim. She asserts herself more actively as the drama enfolds . . . Her error is one of character or judgement or both; her downfall cannot therefore be primarily laid to the conflict between bourgeoisie and aristocracy, nor to the fact that she is possessed of a certain amount of sensuality. 81

Emilia's tragic qualities are, it seems, based on her upbringing. She lives by her father's strict moral code. Her "Furchtsamkeit" is a result of her seclusion from the larger world and her obedience at home and in church. These are "good" things in themselves but by her inactivity in this particular situation she sacrifices human dignity to authority.

This is only one side of the coin. Once Emilia fully realizes her "guilt" and its consequences, she goes to the opposite extreme of "Entschlossenheit". Her decision to die is again based on her strict moral outlooks. Does she feel that she must be punished for the death of Appiani or is it her determination to preserve her virtue? One must consider

81 Hatfield, pp. 287-288.
the events leading up to her death.

Odoardo seems to test the reactions of his daughter by telling her that she must stay "in den Händen deines Räubers" without her father and mother. Emilia expresses her determination to resist temptation, and thereby demonstrates to Odoardo that she is still as he had hoped:


Odoardo now is convinced of the respect that Emilia has for virtue. He pulls out the dagger, telling Emilia that he had almost decided to kill one or the other of the schemers. When Emilia wants the knife to kill herself, Odoardo tells her:


Odoardo is in a high state of emotion, but not irrationally so. He is unresolved as to what to do. She says to her father:

This statement by Emilia has caused a good deal of consternation and controversy among critics. Mathias Claudius was only the first of many to object that it is very strange if not monstrous for a young girl, just bereft of her bridegroom, to speculate about her future sensual reactions to his murderer. Weigand replies that Emilia cannot mean what she says; she is only goading Odoardo into killing her. Against this it is in turn objected that having Emilia lie about her own nature would mean misleading the audience in an unheard-of way.

Hatfield suggests that there is no conscious lie; Emilia speaks under almost unbearable stress, determined at all costs to force the end of the argument which comes to mind. That this particular one does occur to her may suggest its truth; Lessing's characters, after all, are often preternaturally intelligent and self-analytical.

Earlier, Emilia's timidity prevented her from taking

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82 Mathias Claudius, Werke (Weimar, 1924), I, pp. 139 ff.
83 Weigand, p. 480. "Es ist also sinnlos, der landläufigen Auffassung gemäss zu sagen: Emilia fürchtet die Verführung, darum will sie sterben. Es muss umgekehrt heissen: Emilia will sterben, darum beschwört sie die Gefahr der Verführung!"
85 Hatfield, p. 294.
a firm stand against the Prince. Later, her filial obedience and family trust caused her to conceal from Appiani her encounter with the Prince. It is quite likely that she feels a direct guilt at her fiance's death and, with the continuing efforts of the Prince, an increasing resoluteness to make up for her former inactivity. Whether it is a conscious, willful inducement or her bitter resignation and disappointment, Emilia does induce her father to kill her. In the monologue of V, vi., Odoardo already considered killing Emilia to "save" her. Although Odoardo's emotions run high, his present actions are not based on a total irrationality. He is still guided by his abstract ideal of virtue but, as usual, he is incapable of acting under stress.

I think that when Emilia says: "Auch meine Sinne sind Sinne. Ich stehe für nichts. Ich bin für nichts gut. Ich kenne das Haus der Grimaldi.", she speaks in general terms rather than only specifically for herself. It is also a good and convincing argument to induce Odoardo into killing her. Emilia's sense of guilt has grown in retrospect in her mind, and her striving for the dehumanized, abstract, impractical honor code of her father, who is her living conscience, leads to tragic results when she is confronted with practical life. Schneider observes: "Emilia was doomed to destruction because Lessing recognized the inherent tragedy of a character striving
for fulfillment as a biological being.

She is determined to become a martyr rather than suffer possible physical degradation:

*Nichts Schlimmers zu vermeiden, sprangen
Tausende in die Fluten, und sind Heilige;
Geben Sie mir, mein Vater, geben Sie mir
diesen Dolch. (V, vii. 449)

Her attitude here is that of a martyr sacrificing her life for the ideal of purity, the preservation of biological virtue.

It is Lessing's view that martyrs and stoic characters are not suitable heroes of tragedy:

*Aus diesem Grunde halte ich den Polyeukt des
Corneille für tadelhaft; ob er gleich wegen
ganz anderer Schönheiten niemals aufhören
wird zu gefallen. Polyeukt strebt ein Märtyrer zu werden; er sehnt sich nach Tod und Martern;
er betrachtet sie als den ersten Schritt in ein überschwenglich seliges Leben; ich bewundere
den frommen Enthusiasten, aber ich müsste befürchten, seinen Geist in dem Schoosse der
ewigen Glückseligkeit zu erzürnen, wenn ich Mitleid mit ihm haben wollte.*

Odoardo gives Emilia the knife but takes it away from her again before she can stab herself. Yet Emilia's death is a suicide of sorts in that she goads her father into

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killing her. Suicide conflicts with Lessing's concept of the essential tragic catastrophe. How might one reconcile Lessing's ideas on martyrdom and suicide with the death of Emilia?

Emilia does view death as a necessity and strives for it. Her death is based on her timidity, on the one hand, and her determination on the other -- an imbalance of extremes she never manages to correct. She dies because to her as well as to her father the preservation of a threatened virtue is more important than her own life. Her view that death is the only solution to her dilemma is tragic, and the strict moral outlook that works against her makes her "tragic" in a sense. But she is neither a tragic heroine nor the main character of the play.

Emilia plays on her father's sense of family honor and virtue:


Odoardo has already considered killing her to save her from the Prince, and it happens that the combination of her disappointment, her reference to family honor, her virtue
("fulfillment as a biological being"), and the outlook of hopelessness in the present situation provide the right combination of circumstances for the otherwise vacillating Odoardo to act.

Odoardo's last statement ("Gott, was hab' ich gethan!") seems to be expressed not so much out of utter despair at killing her on the passion of the moment, but rather out of the sorrow that matters have become so hopeless that, according to his way of thinking, he has really had to kill her.

That Odoardo's view should be regarded negatively is expressed by Lessing in a letter he wrote to Nicolai on Jan. 21, 1758. He writes:

Er hat geglaubt, dass das Schicksal einer Tochter, die von ihrem Vater umgebracht wird, dem ihre Tugend werter ist als ihr Leben, für sich tragisch genug und fähig genug sey, die ganze Seele zu erschüttern, wenn auch gleich kein Umsturz der ganzen Staatsverfassung darauf folgte.

There is nothing in the stage directions to indicate despair or even the height of emotion that Odoardo experienced just before Emilia entered. He still insists on his ideal of virtue, even at the moment of her death: "Nicht du, meine Tochter; - nicht du! - Gehe mit keiner Unwahrheit aus der Welt." (V, viii. 450).

When Emilia has died, he calmly but determinedly tells the Prince that he has killed her and will not himself commit
suicide, but hand himself over to prison where the Prince will have to judge him. "Und dann dort - erwarte ich Sie vor dem Richter unser aller!" (V, viii. 450). Odoardo seems more concerned with the guilt of the Prince than with any guilt that he himself might have. Guthke points out that there is a tragic element in Odoardo's contradictory relationship towards his God, whose command he fulfills on the one hand in his shrinking back from killing the Prince, but disobeys on the other hand when he autonomically kills his child and places himself under God's judgement after he has already usurped the role of judge.

Odoardo has a combination of virtue and weakness. He is involved in a situation which he has helped bring about, but which is beyond his control. This puts him in the kind of predicament that could make him the center of tragic suffering in this play. But the fact that he does not occupy a dominating position until Act IV makes this unlikely.

Stahl states that perhaps Lessing has written a drama that may be compared with Romeo and Juliet, in which the fortunes not of a single person, but of two human beings (Emilia and Odoardo) conjointly, linked together by bonds

of closest relationship, form the focal point of interest. However, this seems to be more an interesting intellectual invention than Lessing's intent for this play.

There is a flux of action and reaction by the characters, based on human weakness and vice, with Emilia's death as the outcome and a final sense of wastefulness and frustration because no one has gained anything.

Mention still needs to be made of the relationship between Marinelli and the Prince. Theirs could be called a "friendship" of sorts, but it is an unscrupulous relationship on the part of Marinelli and a dependency on the part of the Prince. Marinelli hides behind the mask of a sycophantic courtier, pretending to profer a sincere friendship, but in actuality applying trust towards his own ends. He has the mechanical dexterity of a highly-experienced artist when dealing with people and situations. He lives by a Machiavellian philosophy that seeks revenge by elimination. "Vorwärts! denkt der Sieger: es falle neben ihm Feind oder Freund." (V, i. 439).

The Prince considers Marinelli his friend. News of Emilia's impending marriage to Appiani causes the Prince to

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90 Stahl, p. xxviii.
91 Schneider, p. 354, states that Lessing has developed the tragedy "aus einer intuitiven Einsicht in die Gewalt des Triebhaft-Irrationalen über die menschliche Existenz."
complain:

Nur dass Sie, Marinelli, der Sie so oft mich
Ihrer innigsten Freundschaft versicherten - O
ein Fürst hat keinen Freund! kann keinen Freund
haben! - dass Sie, Sie so treulos, so hämisch
mir bis auf diesen Augenblick die Gefahr verhehlen
dürfen, die meiner Liebe drohte: wenn ich Ihnen
jemals das vergebe, - so werden mir meiner Sünden
keine vergeben! (I, vi. 389)

However, when Marinelli assures him that he knew nothing of
the marriage plans until that very morning, the Prince imme-
diately forgives him: "So verzeihen Sie, Marinelli; - (indem
er sich ihm in die Arme wirft) und betaueren Sie mich."
(I, vi. 389). He confidingly tells Marinelli about his love
for Emilia, begging him: "Retten Sie mich, wenn Sie können".

Marinelli cynically points out that it will be impossible
to see Emilia after her marriage. At a point where the Prince
is caught up in desperation over the situation and is seriously
hindered in his judgement, Marinelli slyly asks: "Wollen Sie
mir freye Hand lassen. Prinz? Wollen Sie alles genehmigen,
was ich thue?" (I, vi. 390). Without considering the range
of power he is passively granting Marinelli, the Prince agrees:
"Alles, Marinelli, alles was diesen Streich abwenden kann.".

Marinelli tells the Prince of his plan to send Appiani
as a messenger concerning the Prince's wedding in Massa, but
he mentions nothing definite about his alternate plan. He
says, "Wenn es mir nicht gelingt, den Grafen augenblicklich
zu entfernen: so denk' ich —" (I, vi. 391), and leaves it at that.

After Marinelli meets Appiani he is disappointed by the failure of his more convenient plan and angered by the latter's challenge to a duel. He now has as much personal interest in the death of Appiani as the Prince has in the seduction of Emilia.

Marinelli goes ahead with the attack on the carriage and the murder of Appiani without further consulting the Prince. Then he systematically forces the Prince to approbate the fait accompli while at the same time throwing the moral blame on the Prince:

Marinelli says that Appiani would not postpone his wedding. Then he lies, telling the Prince that he challenged Appiani to a duel:

Er versetzte, dass er auf heute doch noch etwas Wichtigers zu tun habe, als sich mit mir den Hals zu brechen. Und so beschied er mich auf die ersten acht Tage nach der Hochzeit.

(III, i. 273)

There is no witness to say otherwise. The seemingly brave and selfless effort on the part of Marinelli serves to embitter the Prince and to put him in a frame of mind to condone all his actions once again.

Marinelli caustically blames the Prince for seeing Emilia in church and thereby ruining his plans:

The Prince accepts full blame, and Marinelli adds dryly: "Daran thu' ich freylich sehr Unrecht - Sie werden verzeihen, gnädiger Herr -".

Mention should be made of the roles of Marinelli and the Prince in the last scene, over which differing views have been expressed. When Marinelli sees the dying Emilia, he exclaims: "Weh mir!". He is obviously shocked, but exactly what he is thinking is never revealed. So it also is with the Prince. He is filled with horror and desperation:


The meaning of the Prince's order is unclear. He tells Marinelli to pick "ihn" up, which could be referring either to Emilia's corpse or to the dagger. In any case, Marinelli does pick up the dagger, and the Prince takes it away from him. Perhaps the Prince wants Marinelli to kill himself,
thereby admitting his guilt and removing at least the outward blame from the Prince. On the other hand, the Prince might be asking Marinelli to pick up the corpse, and Marinelli instinctively takes the dagger to stab himself. I think that Lessing purposely left the ending ambiguous so as not to remove the full measure of guilt from either.

The Prince's final remark that "Fürsten sind Menschen" is a poor excuse for his actions. By shifting the blame to "Teufel in ihren Freund" there is no degree of remission for the actions originally instigated by his personal desires. One is left with the impression that the Prince's attitude of superficiality will extend beyond the play, and the events of the day will soon be forgotten. Perhaps Marinelli will even be recalled as soon as the Prince is overtaken by another whim.

The themes of love, friendship, and family deal with manifestations of emotion. Such terminology as ridicule (Verlachen) and laughter (Lachen), fear (Furcht, Schrecken) and pity (Mitleid), and demonstrated (vorgestellte) and aroused (erweckte) passions are basic terminology in the language of emotion in Lessing's dramas.

Damon's virtue is not evident at the outset, but is stylistically revealed and heightened in the last scene,
when he has demonstrated his sentimental ideals and virtue to the fullest. Although emotions are very important, one speaks about them and points at one's tears rather than unconsciously acting out emotion. Although there is a conscious perception of feelings ("Damon -- Urteilen Sie an diesen Thränen, ob ich gerühret bin?"), it is not based on a rational intellect or understanding, but rather on a spontaneous, emotional expression. In other words, Damon's virtue lies in his feelings, not in intellectual deliberation and deduction of the situation, nor a conscious dealing with it. Virtue lies in his naive "grosse Seele".

Friendship and love are on an almost equal level, except that friendship is considered above love. The love of the Widow is only secondary in the play, and she is won through the demonstration of true friendship. There is a potentially "tragic" situation, but virtue wins out over the "small infidelity". The term "Verlachen" can be applied to Oronte, a remnant of the Sächsische Komödie and the French classical tradition.

The relationship of repentance and forgiveness is worth mentioning once more. Leander tells Damon:

Wollte doch Gott, ja wollte doch Gott, dass Sie mich, je eher je lieber auf eine Art beleidigten, welche bey andern unvergeblich seyn würde! Wie vergnügt, wie entzückt wollte ich seyn, die süsse
Rache einer großmütigen Verzeihung an Ihnen auszutüben! (I, vi. 190)

Pikulik comments in regard to this:

Vergeben bedeutet also ein grosses Vergnügen, das wissen wir schon aus Leanders Mund. . . . Das bezeichnete Vergnügen muss sich auf den Akt des Verzeihens und auf den Verzeihenden selber beziehen. Es wurde früher gesagt, dass es sich beim Verzeihen um eine Art des Verzichts handelt, Verzicht auf Genugtuung für das erlittene Unrecht. Dann besteht das Vergnügen über das Verzeihen in einer Genugtuung über den Verzicht auf Genugtuung. . . . Das Ausmass der Lust ist dabei von der Grösse der Selbstlosigkeit abhängig.92

This presents an aspect of Damon's forgiveness of Leander that is not obvious today. Why, we might ask, is Damon so willing to forgive Leander when our inclination is to condemn his friend? Damon's selflessness, his virtue, his high-mindedness give him a degree of "Wollust" that is enviable to the sentimentalist.

In Minna von Barnhelm we know at the outset that Tellheim, unlike the perfect Damon, has a worthy character. There is not so much a test of virtue as a revelation of character in the sense that the proposition we have at the outset is proven through demonstrated action rather than mere rhetoric. There is a conflict between sentimental love and Tellheim's

92 Pikulik, p. 54.
inability to cope with emotion.

Here, too, rational logic in dealing with love is viewed as a weakness, if not a negative trait. It is only when Tellheim begins to approach love through the heart rather than the intellect that he reaches a maturity of outlook. True feelings are considered independent of intellect and will.

Friendship is secondary to love, but on the same basis. The change in Tellheim's mental attitude is brought about through love, and once he grasps the real meaning of it, he applies that meaning also to friendship. When Minna's ruse is uncovered, both she and Tellheim feel repentance, but it is more an aid in bringing them closer to an inner harmony of heart and mind rather than only a culmination of emotion, striven for in Damon.

There is a potentially tragic situation here, too, and it serves the intended effect of "Lachen" and "Rühren". Character, however, is not so much subordinated to stylistic goal, but is plausibly and compatibly developed to create personages who are alive and real.

A religious consciousness that is lacking in Emilia Galotti can be found in Minna von Barnhelm. Although we are not presented with a direct religious outlook, there is a moral, just world, where good is rewarded and injustices are rectified.
Much of the virtue of Minna is traced back to her upbringing away from urban life. The outlook towards the evil of the big world is apparent in all three plays but becomes especially pointed in *Emilia Galotti*, where ironically enough, Emilia's seclusion works against her.

At least the beginning of a family theme can be found in *Minna*. The uncle is represented as a loving, indulgent paternal figure. However, the theme of family is not developed at all.

Many of the parallels drawn between Lessing's early and late comedy do not apply to *Emilia Galotti*, a tragedy and a play not very easily categorized. Here, the arousal of fear and pity is important. These emotions are not only to be demonstrated on the stage but must be aroused in the audience. Character is revealed in the course of action and reaction. Within the framework of the play, there are traits of realism, especially weakness and vice. Unlike *Damon* and *Minna*, *Emilia Galotti* lacks an easily discernible main character, if there is one. There are several imperfect manifestations of love. None of them express the deepness of mutual attraction found in *Minna*. Part of the problem is the difference in social levels and moral outlooks. This is directly related to the theme of family, which is strongly developed here. The importance of the family in molding character and the
similarity of approach towards life of family members (father-daughter) is stressed. The urban world, the world of the court, is presented in an especially negative light.

On the other hand, there is also a disguised criticism, or at least an indication, of the social withdrawal of the contemporary bourgeois class -- its inability to stand up to the nobility. However, this is only a secondary theme for Lessing does not consider political overtures a worthy topic for the drama.

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93 For a political interpretation, see Friedrich Vogt and Max Koch, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur (Leipzig and Vienna, 1910), II, pp. 183 ff.
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