

Summary

The subject of this thesis was virtue and honour in *signo temporis*. It means that I've tried to focus on the concept of virtue and honour in a certain time period. I have chosen three different literary periods and three works as their representatives. It was the bourgeois tragedy „Emilia Galotti“ by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, as the representative of the Enlightenment. For the first half of the 19th century I've chosen also a bourgeois tragedy „Maria Magdalena“ by Friedrich Hebbel. And as the third example I analysed the novella „Fräulein Else“ by Arthur Schnitzler.

All of the three heroines are daughters, who are strongly influenced by this fact. All of them find a tragic end. Two of them commit suicide and one persuades her own father to kill her. The fathers are also an important part of the plot, because they largely contribute to death of their daughters. Emilia in „Emilia Galotti“ is stabbed by her own father, after she persuades him to kill her, because she is afraid of losing her virtue, which is at that times related with religion and identified with chastity. In the first half of the 19th century the religious aspect was still a part of the concept of virtue and honour. But the honour was now perceived more in the way of reputation. Klara in „Maria Magdalena“, who lost her virtue by getting pregnant in an extramarital intercourse, is trying to save at least the honour of her father by committing suicide, which is covered as an accident. This attempt fails, and her father the joiner Anton gets confused by the new world. The last heroine Else in „Fräulein Else“ doesn't care much about virtue. The conflict appears when her father gets into serious financial trouble. Else has to save the family honour by selling her nudity. For Else this would be a loss of her own honour and freedom as part of honour. Therefore she commits suicide by taking an overdose of a sleeping drug.

In conclusion it can be said, that the concept of virtue and honour changed during the hundred and fifty years which passed from writing down „Emilia Galotti“ to „Fräulein Else“.