

The Poetics of Ending in Lessing, Goethe, and Kleist

The art of ending a literary work is a crucial aspect often overlooked. In the case of German literature, three prominent writers, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and Heinrich von Kleist, have explored the intricacies of ending a narrative in their works. Each writer brings a unique perspective to the topic, showcasing their mastery of storytelling and leaving a lasting impression on the reader.

Lessing's Exploration of Closure

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, a prominent figure during the Enlightenment, was highly interested in the principles of reason and logic. In his influential play *Nathan the Wise*, he offers a thought-provoking ending that emphasizes the importance of tolerance and understanding. Lessing's closing scene, where Christians, Jews, and Muslims gather together, presents a vision of unity and harmony, leaving the reader with a sense of hope and optimism.

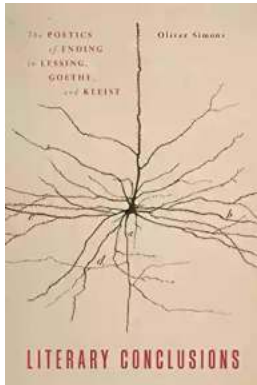
Furthermore, Lessing's play *Emilia Galotti* explores the concept of tragedy and the inevitability of downfall. The ending of the play, where the protagonists meet their tragic end, serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of passion and power. Lessing's skillful use of dramatic tension throughout the story ultimately leads to a cathartic ending that leaves the reader contemplating the human condition.

Literary Conclusions: The Poetics of Ending in

Lessing, Goethe, and Kleist by Oliver Simons (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language : English



File size	: 1823 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 238 pages



Goethe's Mastery of Open-Endedness

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, known for his masterpiece *Faust*, demonstrates his skill in crafting open-ended s that invite interpretation and reflection. The ambiguous ending of *Faust*, where the protagonist's fate remains unresolved, raises profound philosophical questions about the nature of redemption and the human desire for knowledge. Goethe's deliberate choice to leave the ending open to interpretation is emblematic of his belief in the continuous pursuit of knowledge and personal growth.

Similarly, Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* showcases a tragic that captivates and haunts the reader. The ending, where Werther takes his own life, explores themes of unrequited love and the depths of despair. Goethe's vivid descriptions of emotional turmoil and his ability to elicit empathy from the reader make the ending a poignant reminder of the complexities of human emotions.

Kleist's Unconventional Endings

Heinrich von Kleist, known for his innovative and often unconventional approach to writing, provides a unique perspective on endings. In his play *The Broken Jug*, the ending unfolds with a surprising revelation that exposes the corruption of

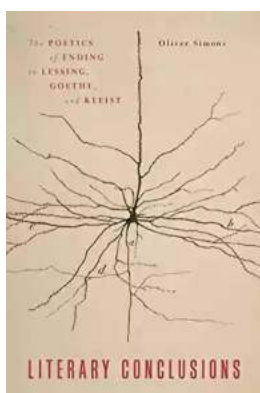
authority. Kleist's use of satire and irony highlights the social and legal injustices of the time, leaving the reader both amused and enlightened.

Kleist's famous novella, *Michael Kohlhaas*, features an ending that is both tragic and thought-provoking. The eponymous character's pursuit of justice ultimately leads to his downfall, raising questions about the nature of revenge and the limits of morality. Kleist's exploration of the complexities of human nature and the consequences of one's actions make the ending a powerful statement on the human condition.

The Poetics of Ending

Lessing, Goethe, and Kleist each offer unique perspectives on the art of ending a literary work. Whether it's the emphasis on unity and tolerance in Lessing's works, the thought-provoking openness of Goethe's s, or the unconventional twists in Kleist's narratives, these writers demonstrate a deep understanding of storytelling that leaves a lasting impact on the reader.

The poetics of ending in Lessing, Goethe, and Kleist exemplify their mastery of crafting powerful s that resonate with the reader long after the final page. By exploring the intricacies of human nature, morality, and the pursuit of knowledge, these writers have contributed significantly to the German literary tradition and continue to inspire new generations of readers and writers alike.



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Endings are not just singular moments in time but the outcomes of a process. And whatever a book's , its form has a history. Literary s presents a new theory of textual endings in eighteenth-century literature and thought. Analyzing essential works by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and Heinrich von Kleist, Oliver Simons shows how the emergence of new kinds of literary endings around 1800 is inextricably linked to the history of philosophical and scientific concepts.

Simons examines the interrelations of Lessing's literary endings with modes of logical ; he highlights how Goethe's narrative closures are forestalled by an uncontrollable vital force that was discussed in the sciences of the time; and he reveals that Kleist conceived of literary genres themselves as forms of reasoning. Kleist's endings, Simons demonstrates, mark the beginning of modernism. Through close readings of these authors and supplemental analyses of works by Walter Benjamin, Friedrich Hölderlin, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, he crafts an elegant theory of s that revises established histories of literary genres and forms.



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