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Emotional incongruence in 18th –Century American Fiction- A Review

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ABSTRACT :

The 18th century was a time when fiction became the most important type of writing, and it was also a time of change in American writing. The main goal of the study is to look into the moral and psychological issues that people have in a society that is changing quickly. Both American fiction and 18th-century fiction were about times when people's wants and society's expectations were at odds with each other. These feelings came from gender roles, social norms, and changing morals, which were very common in Gothic and sentimental novels.

There was also a battle between duty and desire. People were stuck between what they wanted to do and what their family and society wanted them to do. People, especially women, were told to put their own happiness aside for the sake of their family. In *Charlotte Temple* by Susanna Rowson and *The Coquette* by Hannah Webster Foster, women had to pay for putting their desires ahead of their duties. These were, in fact, examples of how women felt bad because of the rules society made them follow. In the 18th century, people also liked to write about gender and the struggle between love and honor. The way psychological conflicts are shown is realistic and reflects the bigger moral and philosophical debates of the time. This paper looks at these works of fiction to show how 18th-century literature challenged social norms by giving readers a glimpse into what life was like in a society that was changing quickly.

Keywords: Conflict, insight, emotions, social expectations, evolving virtues, obligations

Introduction

The rise of fiction in the 18th century was due to changes in society, politics, and culture that were happening at the time. Gender roles and class consciousness were two of the most important ideas at this time. A lot of women had to deal with the emotional conflict between their duty and their passion, which was also shown in most of the novels. The characters had to choose between what they wanted to do and what society wanted them to do. The Gothic novel also had a bigger effect on the novels, making them more complicated in terms of psychology. Charles Brockden Brown's books, such as *Wieland* and *Edgar Huntly*, dealt with themes of fear, doubt, and insanity that were common in a society that was changing quickly. The main characters in the book showed how reason and superstition can be at odds with each other. Also, the rise of sentimental literature helped people deal with their emotional problems by encouraging them to express their feelings deeply and think about their morals. It was possible to see what characters were thinking at this time. There were a lot of changes in society, politics, and philosophy at the time that had a big effect on these emotional problems. Gothic and sentimental writing made it easier to say how you felt than other kinds of writing.

Charlotte Temple (1791) is a book about Charlotte's fall from grace, which happens because she can't balance her duty and her passion. She leaves her home and ends up poor and betrayed. Her death is a warning about how people lived and how moral they were in the 18th century. Eliza Wharton talks about the conflict between personal freedom and duty to society in Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette*. She couldn't put her duty first, which is what led to the deadly results. His sad death is also a warning about putting duty ahead of passion. The problems between the men are not the same as the problems between the women. For instance, in Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798), duty is shown through religious and family obligations, while passion is shown through acting on strong feelings and doing things that don't make sense. People in the 1800s were very worried about their own freedom, morality, and the way society worked.

The American Revolutionary movement also grew during this time. Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Paine, and Thomas Jefferson all wrote important books about politics. People also think that William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy* is one of the first novels of this century.

The Rise of Emotional Conflicts in 18th-Century American Literature

The 18th century American novel became a strong literary form that dealt with people's mental and emotional issues. During this time, people's ideas about society changed, people became more individualistic, and Enlightenment ideas had an effect. All of these things made writers write about problems within themselves. Novels from this time were different from earlier didactic or religious texts because they were more about personal

experiences, moral dilemmas, and the complicated relationship between reason and emotion.

One big reason why emotional conflicts became more common in American novels was that women's roles in society were changing. Young women had to follow strict moral and social rules, so books often showed how they struggled with love, virtue, and freedom. Sentimental novels like *Charlotte Temple* by Susanna Rowson and *The Coquette* by Hannah Webster Foster showed how women who didn't follow social norms felt bad about it. This added to the theme of the struggle between personal desires and societal pressures.

The Gothic novel also had a big effect on American literature because it made characters more complex. In books like *Wieland* and *Edgar Huntly*, Charles Brockden Brown wrote about fear, doubt, and insanity. These themes showed how worried people were about a society that was changing quickly. The main characters in these books had problems that were like the problems of the time, like the fight between reason and superstition.

The rise of sentimental literature also helped people deal with their emotional problems by focusing on deep emotional expression and moral reflection. This type of writing became popular in both American and British literature. It gave writers a chance to explore the mental and emotional burdens their characters faced, especially when it came to love, duty, and honor.

The rise of emotional conflicts in 18th-century American novels was closely tied to the changes in society, politics, and philosophy that were going on at the time. Writers of sentimental and Gothic fiction were able to show how complicated human emotions are and how people deal with changes in the world around them.

Duty and passion are two of the most common emotional conflicts in 18th-century American literature. People often have to choose between what society wants them to do and what they want to do, especially when it comes to love and marriage. Sentimental novels are the best at showing this conflict because the main characters have to deal with the tension between doing what feels good and doing what is right or expected of them.

Charlotte Temple (1791) by Susanna Rowson shows how Charlotte's love for Montraville and her duty to her family are at odds with each other. She leaves her home because of love and feelings, but in the end, she is alone and poor. Her death is a warning about how dangerous it is to let your feelings take over and not think about your responsibilities. This goes along with the morals of the 18th century, which said that women should put virtue above their own happiness.

Like Eliza Wharton in Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette* (1797), she shows the conflict between personal freedom and duty to society. Eliza is stuck between Reverend Boyer's safe but boring offer and Major Sanford's exciting but risky advances. It's hard for her to find a balance between what she wants and what society wants from her. Her sad death is a warning about how bad things can happen to women who put love before duty.

For male characters, the conflict between duty and passion often shows up in different ways. In Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798), duty is shown by religious and family obligations, and passion is shown by feelings that are out of control and don't make sense. The main character's descent into madness shows how dangerous it is to let your emotions take over and stop thinking and doing what you know is right.

These books show how worried people were in the 1700s about their own freedom, morals, and the way society worked. The conflict between duty and passion is still a strong theme that shows how hard it was for people to do the right thing in a society that was changing quickly.

A lot of 18th-century American literature, especially stories with female main characters, deals with the conflict between love and honor. Even if it meant giving up their own happiness, women were expected to keep their virginity and good name. The clash between romantic love and social honor often ended in tragedy, which made the strict moral codes of the time even stronger.

In *The Coquette* (1797), Eliza Wharton wants love and freedom, but society says she should marry to keep her honor. She chose excitement over safety, which led to her downfall. This shows how few options women had if they wanted to find love outside of what society thought was acceptable. Eliza's fate shows how hard women were judged when they put love ahead of their duties.

Charlotte Temple (1791) shows that Charlotte's love for Montraville is more important to her than her duty to her family and what society expects of her. Her tragic death and eventual abandonment are a warning to women about what can happen when they choose love over honor. The book talks a lot about the strict moral code that women had to follow, which backs up the idea that honor was the most important thing.

For male characters, the struggle between love and honor often meant staying true to themselves while also going after the people they loved. In *Wieland* (1798), Clara Wieland's fight is not just with love; it's also with the moral and mental issues that threaten her sense of honor. The gothic parts of the book make the emotional and moral chaos surrounding this conflict even worse. These American novels from the 18th century show how love and honor fought with each other and how that affected people's choices and fates. They also show that people were worried about their morals, their reputation, and their ability to make their own decisions.

The battle between reason and feeling is another important emotional conflict in American novels from the 1700s. The Enlightenment stressed reason, but sentimental literature praised strong feelings, which caused a conflict between these two ideas.

In his book *Wieland* (1798), Charles Brockden Brown talks about the dangers of letting your emotions run wild. The main character goes crazy because

of religious extremism and uncontrolled emotion. This is a criticism of blind faith and giving up reason. The book says that feelings should not take over reason, and it shows how too much emotion can be bad.

Sentimental books like *Charlotte Temple* and *The Coquette*, on the other hand, show how important emotions are when it comes to making moral decisions. Their heroines suffer because they either hide their feelings to fit in with what society wants or are too passionate. This shows how hard it is to find a middle ground between logic and emotion.

18th-century American novels show this conflict because they ask how much people should rely on logic or emotion to get through life.

The Role of Gender in Emotional Conflicts

In 18th-century American novels, gender played a big role in how emotional conflicts were shown. Women had a harder time getting what they wanted and needed because of what society thought about virtue, marriage, and obedience. *Charlotte Temple* and *The Coquette* are two books that show how women had to deal with big problems when they put love or freedom ahead of what society wanted them to do. A big part of their emotional problems were the strict moral codes that were put on them, which reinforced traditional gender roles.

Men, on the other hand, had emotional problems that were not the same as women's. They were usually allowed to do what they wanted when it came to love and moving up in society, but they were also expected to be responsible, logical, and honest. For instance, in *Wieland*, the main character's descent into violence and irrationality shows how dangerous it is to ignore your feelings or misinterpret your duty. Male characters often had to choose between what they had to do in public and what they wanted to do in private. This showed a different but just as strong kind of emotional struggle.

18th-century American novels show how societal pressures affected people's lives by looking at these gendered emotional conflicts. These works are important for early American literary exploration because they not only show how gender roles were in the past, but they also criticize how they made people feel.

Conclusion

Authors of 18th-century American novels used emotional conflicts to show how people dealt with living in a society that was changing quickly. Duty vs. passion, love vs. honor, and reason vs. emotion were all part of the bigger moral and philosophical debates of the time. These books taught people the difference between right and wrong. They also showed how people feel when they have to choose between what society wants them to do and what they want to do.

Gender was a big part of these emotional fights because women often had to deal with worse consequences for their choices, which made strict social norms even stronger. But these stories also showed how limited these strict structures were, subtly criticizing the limits that were put on both men and women.

In the end, 18th-century American literature showed how people felt about living in a society that was about to change. These books are still good for learning about early America's culture and emotions because they show how people dealt with the stress of the outside world.

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