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PSYCHOLOGICAL ANGUISH: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SELF REALIZATION OF AMORY IN  
*THIS SIDE OF PARADISE BY FRANCIS KEY SCOTT FITZGERALD*

S.SANGAVAI<sup>1</sup>, Dr.T.K.HEMALATHA<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of English, Nirmala College For Women, Coimbatore

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of English, Nirmala College For Women, Coimbatore



ABSTRACT

*This Side of Paradise* (1920) is the debut novel of Francis Key Scott Fitzgerald, which elevated him to a literary prowess of his age. Written with a well-organized structure in two books and an interlude, the novel serves as a premise for Fitzgerald's later, more successful novels. M. Lee Huffaker defines Psychological anguish as :

Black's Law Dictionary defines "mental anguish" or "emotional distress" as an element of damages, including "the mental suffering resulting from the excitation of the more poignant and painful emotions, such as grief, severe disappointment, indignation, wounded pride, shame, public humiliation, despair, etc." (1003)

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* points out the huge change in the protagonist Amory's psychology from his childhood to adulthood. Amory Blaine the protagonist of the novel suffers with such anguish throughout the novel. The paper focuses on the failed relationships as the source of Amory Blaine's psychological anguish.

Keywords: Oedipal, narcissism, disillusionment

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DISCUSSION

The novel opens with the life of the mother and son, how they live in an unconventional wealthy climate, separate from most of the people. Amory is shaped by his unique mother from a very early age to such a degree that he is different from those around him. The novel underscores Amory's relationship with convention. At the beginning, he is operating quite outside of it. Amory's relationship with Myra St. Claire reveals Amory's difference, which both infuriates and attracts the young girl. The first kiss initiates the neglect of feeling towards Myra because of his ego and his failure to find gratification in romance. Thus, his romantic illusion is shattered.

In this context romance can be viewed as a "clearly sexual side of this unresolved Oedipal conflict in Amory" (Stavola 81). The scene in which Amory kisses Myra depicts his obsession with the hidden romantic fantasy: Amory "leaned over quickly and kissed Myra's cheek. He had never kissed a girl before, and he tasted his lips curiously, as if he had munched some new fruit" (22). The scene is somewhat ridiculous and exhibits

Amory's desire to grasp the romantic moment as quickly as he can. However, once he achieves it, he wants to ruin it right after this first kiss: "Sudden revulsion seized Amory, disgust, loathing for the whole incident. He [Amory] desired frantically to be away, never to see Myra again, never to kiss anyone" (22). As Stavola points out, "the psychoanalytic source of Amory's sexual disgust after kissing Myra is an Oedipal failure [as] his abnormal closeness and identification with his mother compels Amory to treat every female he gets close to as his mother" (83). Amory's romance exhibits his desire to distance himself from the shadow of his mother. His reaction to Myra, however, shows the instability of his gender formation. He obviously cannot escape from the distracting influence of his mother and his childhood obsession as well. There is disgust and severe disappointment in Amory with his first love encounter. Thus, the psychological anguish of Amory is evident. Thus, this failure in relationship for the first time with a young girl is revealed.

Another romantic moment is repeated and ruined Amory at the age of eighteen. This romance can be seen as Amory's first real love. During his vacation in his sophomore at Princeton, he falls in love with a sixteen-year-old girl, Isabelle Borge, and Stavola suggests, "Isabelle embodies Amory's yearning for popularity and power" (90). Like the previous romance with Myra, Amory quickly "was in love and his love was returned" (81) in his other romance with Isabelle. Moreover, he supposes, "their love was to be eternal" (80). However, their romantic affair also quickly ends for genuine reason at all. While he embraces her, his shirt-stud hurts her neck and leaves "a little blue spot" (82). They quarrel incessantly over this and she accuses him of being egocentric, conceited and critical. He realizes that they actually do not love each other and leaves quickly. Later, he thinks, "she [Isabelle] spoiled my year" (85). As a consequence he loses his ability to become a mature man eventually taking him to boundaries beyond his mother's creation. For Amory, Isabelle might seem like "a dream, a projection of Amory's imagination, and possessing her has convinced him of her insubstantiality" (Pelzer 44). His love affair stands on a sand platform of a wind castle. Amory therefore cannot manage his relationships effectively in adulthood.

Amory's experiences with Isabelle show his capacity to love. In a moment, he is in love and throws himself wholly into the role of lover, embracing romance with eagerness and innocence. His affair with Isabelle ends abruptly the way it began. The fact that such a trivial matter could mar their affair reveals the shallowness of Amory's love and romance and the extent to which he was playing the role of a lover; he was not truly in love. There should be no reason for a quarrel for a petty incident. But when it touches the wounded pride of Amory, the immediate break out of his anguish was his getting away attitude from his loved one. Here again his failure in relationship with a woman leads to mental anguish. Amory had no time loving Myra or Isabella Borge because the dominant factor in their relationship was complaining each other and not loving each other. Amory undergoes all symptoms of psychological anguish, with no food and sleepless nights, eventually ending up in emotional crisis.

Though his breakup with Isabella was temporary, it never prevented him from pursuing his goal. Amory wants to marry Clara Page, his third cousin who has been widowed for six months, with two small children, little money, and, worst of all, a host of friends. Clara, whom Amory refers to as St. Cecilia, is regarded as the patroness of musicians, and possibly symbolizes the protector of Amory and Clara's relationship. In addition, Clara seems to acquire a religious status, as Amory confesses, "that if I lost faith in you I'd lose faith in God" (125). Therefore, Clara might play a dual role in their relationship - Amory's lover and his mother. Becoming Clara's husband, Amory believes, is a way to find his identity and his power. In addition, Amory wants to take Joseph's (Jesus's father's) role in their relationship: he wants to become a father of two children without engaging in physical relationship. In addition, Clara is "the first fine woman he ever knew and one of the few good people who ever interested him" (122); therefore, Amory tries to prove that he has become a mature personage and can be a model for Clara's children.

Although Amory falls in love with Clara and is "jealous of everything about Clara: of her past, of her babies, of the men and women who flocked to drink deep of her cool kindness and rest their tired minds as at an absorbing play" (122), Clara just sees Amory as a "weak character" of "no will" (124) who does not have "much self-respect" (123). Moreover, she observes that, there is "lack of judgment" (124) in him and his

imagination “will play you false, given half a chance” (124). Her observations show that he is just egotistic, suggesting excessive love for himself, and his love, if he has any, for her is the only way to gratify himself and to fulfill his conceit. It seems to her that Amory cannot give her security, as he lacks self-confidence and giving way to narcissism.

Being Clara’s husband would mean that he could replace her missing husband and save her children. Amory confesses that “I am a slave to my emotions, to my likes, to my hatred of boredom, to most of my desires” (124), but she objects and from her viewpoint he is a slave of his “imagination” (124). She refuses him and asserts, “I’d never marry again. I’ve got my two children and I want myself for them” (126). Ironically, one can see once again the image of Beatrice in Clara’s appearance; the independent woman wants to devote her life to her son without any help from another man. Clara becomes something like a substitute for Beatrice when Amory says, “I love you—or adore you—or worship you—” (126). Therefore, it is apt to conclude that he can never escape the childhood trap.

Clara sees through a number of Amory's other poses. She opines that he is egotistical because of his diffidence, and that his thought concerning his lack of willpower stems from lack of good judgment. Clara is an independent woman and, in refusing Amory, reveals that he is not the most perfect match for any woman. Thus, Amory fails in his third relationship

Chapter 1 of Book Two, “The Debutante”, depicts the romance between Amory and Rosalind Connage, Alec’s sister, which can be considered as Amory’s most important romance and has the greatest impact on his life. In this romance, Amory idealizes his romance in his own way and strives to gain Rosalind’s love without realizing that he is going to “break his heart over somebody who doesn’t care about him” (152). Amory is always fearful of losing Rosalind as he wishes this romance would last forever, for Rosalind it is “life and hope and happiness” (175). Compared to his previous relationships with Myra and Isabelle, Amory feels that, his affair with Rosalind exhibits his lack of control. He decides never to love again as he loved Rosalind, and he is shattered by her decision.

Amory seeks to heal, or at least to forget, his broken heart by going on a three-week bender. He tells nobody of his troubles as he loses himself night after night in an alcoholic haze, an action that emphasizes the private nature of his loss. Amory no longer feels emotionless, but rather must drink to quell his powerful emotions.

Amory really feels lost because it is “the first real unselfishness I’ve ever felt in my life” (161). This romance clearly changes his concept about marriage and family. He tries in desperate hope but he cannot grasp his love again: “he clenched his teeth so that the tears streamed in a flood from his eyes” (168). As Dick Diver in *Tender Is the Night* and Anthony Patch in *The Beautiful and Damned*, Amory falls into a world of disillusionment and alcohol after the loss of his love. Stavola makes the protagonist’s situation clear when he writes, Amory “finally leaves, once again defeated and deserted by a woman [and] after the affair with Rosalind, Amory undergoes an intense attack of inferiority and identity confusion” (98). Thus, the fourth failure in love is also revealed.

However, Amory’s sexual illusions continue; his obsession with sex and beauty surfaces again when he is encountered with Eleanor Savage. Stavola emphasizes that “Eleanor represents everything Amory has feared and consciously rejected: sex, the unfettered romantic will, materialism, uncontrolled passion” (98).

Amory and Eleanor share their love for literature, and both are personalities who disregard convention, but the relationship fails. It fails partially because of the season, as Amory utters “I never fall in love in August or September”(191) and because of Amory's former heartbreak. Like Clara, she is a strong and independent who is incapable of submitting herself to a man.

The episode, Amory's last romantic interchange of the novel, has little impact on Amory beyond making him turn away from romance for sustenance. Amory becomes more dejected. Love has hurt him and has not filled the void or the sense of confusion with which he is amazed. Thus, one could understand the mental anguish of Amory is rekindled again through a failed relationship.

## CONCLUSION

Amory is wholly dejected from his romances, pining for his lost love, wishes to reconnect with his past. As he continues his walk to Princeton, he concludes that he must embrace his selfishness and no longer try to banish it. He knows that he can act unselfishly, but only because they are expressions of himself and his own selfishness. This moment brings together many of his personal realizations throughout the novel. He accepts what he has been through, who he has become, and even who he will be in the future. He embraces his knowledge of himself and seems content to know nothing more for the time being. Though he experiences psychological anguish through all his romantic encounters, yet he finds in every failed relationship an opportunity for self-realization. Fitzgerald posits:

... he could not tell why the struggle was worthwhile, why he had determined to use to the utmost himself and his heritage from the personalities he had passed...  
He stretched out his arms to the crystalline, radiant sky.  
'I know myself,' he cried, 'but that is all.' (233)

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