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**REVIEW ARTICLE**

**SELF-REALIZATION OF AMORY IN  
FITZGERALD'S THIS SIDE OF PARADISE**

# Self-Realization of Amory in Fitzgerald's This Side of Paradise

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F. Scott Fitzgerald is the most representative writer of the jazz age. Glenway Wescott regards Fitzgerald as "a kind of king of our American youth." (323) His fiction presents the rootless, directionless and visionless youth of America of the 1920's. He revived *The Romantic Egoist* in 1919 for the third time and he titled it *This Side of Paradise*. This novel examines the lives and morality of the youth of the jazz age. *This Side of Paradise* was published in 1920, and in the novel the protagonist, Amory Blaine, came to be read as a person who did not have clear vision and direction. The novel explains how Amory goes through different situations, emotional and spiritual circumstances, and how he finally realizes his true self, and with this self realization he rediscovers a new Amory within himself.

*This Side of Paradise* is the debut novel of F. Scott Fitzgerald. In this novel, the protagonist, Amory Blaine, is a versatile mind in a restless generation. James E. Miller Jr. points out that, "In spite of the apparently blurred and mixed purposes in the novel, the sexual, social and literary restlessness of the younger generation came through clear enough to capture the imagination of the decade." (31) It reveals the ideas of youth of 1920s and timeless truth about humanity, its need and fear of change. Amory represents the confused, restless youth of 1920. He can not control his emotion, his desires. In the novel, Amory admits: "I'm a slave to my emotions, to my likes, to my hatred of boredom, to most of my desires." Clara, too, sees the fact about Amory: "You're a slave, a bound helpless slave to one thing in the world, your imagination." (TSOP: 138)

Amory Blaine, in *This Side of Paradise*, tries to adapt himself to the present, to the established social systems. His sophisticated education sets him apart from his peers. In the beginning of the novel we come to know that Amory and his mother Beatrice live an unconventional life. Amory is shaped by his mother from a very early age to such extent that he is different from those around him. He intends from his early youth to know himself and to know where he fits in and wants to distance himself from past. One of the main themes of the novel is Amory's relationship with convention. He tries to behave like others. He has no resolution, no commitment.

His chief disadvantage lay in athletics, but as soon as he discovered that it was the touchstone of power and popularity at school, he began to make furious, persistent efforts to excel in the winter sports.... (TSOP: 14)

Amory lives an inauthentic life, i.e. without having any knowledge of his nature, dreams and imagination. He does not live on his own. He opts to be conventional and in order to achieve the same, he distances himself from the influence of his mother. When Amory returns from his uncle's home to his mother in Lake Geneva, he announces that he has become "conventional" and wants to go to boarding school.

'Beatrice', he said suddenly. I want to go away to school. Everybody in Minneapolis is going to go away to school. (TSOP: 26)

He struggles socially and academically at St. Regis. Amory's class-mates think that he is conceited, and his teachers consider him lacking in discipline, though quite bright. But Amory tries to apply himself to football and to become a star of the team and somewhat of a hero on campus. He suffers from his individuality at school. That is why he attempts to conventionalize himself, without realizing his true nature. He strives for popularity, so throws himself into football. He does not know what he should do, he fears to do something different and in this way he does what others are doing. He does not have his authentic self.

All what Amory does, he does it for the sake of doing only, and that is why, he is never satisfied. Amory always observes social boundaries not on his own but as others observe, tries to be fit somewhere into them. He wants to know from early youth to know who he is and to know where he fits. Many incidents in the novel reveal Amory's quest to understand his place in the world. He still disregards convention; his mother's influence is still on him. Yet he tries to be like other boys at his school:

He had realized that his best interests were bound up with those of a certain variant, changing person,

whose label, in order that his past might always be identified with him, was Amory Blaine. (TSOP: 23)

It is observed that Amory Blaine is a character, who wishes to be successful, to be famous, but he does not understand what he himself can do. He does not know his own self. Many times Amory realizes that he is different from other boys, yet he always is in crowd without his own identity. Lack of commitment and resolution is always in Amory, which defeat him again and again. He never realizes the possibilities of the past, but sticks himself to the present. He accepts what is acceptable, never dares to do something different. Amory's ideas, thoughts, love, behavior changes according to the situation:

... but at fifteen it made him consider himself a great deal worse than other boys... unscrupulousness... the desire to influence people in almost every way, even for evil... a certain coldness and lack of affection, amounting some – times to cruelty... a shifting sense of honor ... an unholy selfness... a puzzled, furtive interest in everything concerning sex. (TSOP: 23)

In this way, he becomes a being-in-the world, not that he is born in it but that he cares for it. The world always haunts him because he is concerned about it. Amory's desire to be conventional makes him unaware to realize what he is, and he becomes a mere slave to his own moods and he feels that though he is capable of recklessness and audacity, he possesses neither courage and perseverance, nor self-respect.

Everyone wants to be socially graceful, but for this purpose resolution and commitments are necessary. We can learn from mistake, we did in the past, we can realize our possibilities. What deters Amory from owning himself is his fear - fear of death, fear of losing someone, fear to be alone etc. He has a fascination to become famous without knowing his true strength, always depends on other people. He involves with a person on the behalf of his intelligence, social status, but does not be his own, always deterring away. His idealization of Dick Humbrid provides another key to understand his fascination with social grace. Amory wants to be what Dick is. He loves the way Dick acts, without concerning about Dick's social credentials. Through Amory, Fitzgerald represents himself. Like Amory he ruined himself. Had he realized the possibilities of his potential, his life could be different.

All the efforts made by Amory to be popular fail. Amory confesses before his uncle that "my career's gone up in smoke; you think it's petty..." (TSOP: 101) Darcy understands Amory's state of mind, so he says:

You are bound to go up and down, just as I did in my youth, but do keep your clarity of mind, and if fools or sagas dare to criticize don't blame yourself too much. (TSOP: 105)

Amory swings between two worlds, and he is quite confused about what he wants to do with himself and

knowing exactly what he wants to do. In the case of his career, he is not sure. At first he opts for political career, then he decides to be a writer, but he is not certain about anything. He enters into war dutifully – but not enthusiastically. This shows that he is still swept into the conventional currents around him. Darcy also writes to Amory that he had entered into the war without emotion, but out of a sense of duty only. Amory seems lost. He decides to play football to be famous and he shows his interest in reading also. It means he has no resolution. He thinks what happens let it happen whether it is his career or his love for women etc. Only for Rosalind he again tries to be conventionalized. His relationship with Eleanor also fails. Encountering a girl that he may have loved deeply but finding himself too spent emotionally, he becomes more dejected. Love has hurt him and has not filled the sense of confusion with which he is overwhelmed.

Amory's vision of the Dick's devil is difficult to dissect. It stands a reminder of his young age, his morality that sets Amory apart from his peers. Seeing the devil, Amory sees his past, how he used to copy other people, how he tried to be conventionalized. Amory strikes himself only in present but image of devil gives him a chance to look into his past. K.G.W. Cross observes that Amory "undergoes a series of emotional and spiritual crisis, including an encounter with the devil in... His quest, however inconsequential and, at times, absurd, epitomized that of the rising generation, and his gesture of revolt, however indefinite, awoke many echoes..." (24) Now Amory has a sense of reality that material things can never give him what he has been seeking for. In this way, he realizes that he is going on wrong path. "...I'm a product of versatile mind in a restless generation – with every reason to throw my mind and pen in with the radicals. Even if, deep in my heart, I thought we were all blind atoms in a world as limited as a stroke of a pendulum..." (TSOP: 264)

In the end of *This Side of Paradise*, we find that Amory has to look deep within for guidance. He searches again for his roots in the past. He concludes that he has no more goodness to lose. He does not regret the choices he made but he regrets that they have already been made. He regrets that people he knew and the decisions he made did not become what he wished them to become. He looks into his past and sees his decisions - his mother, the unconventional, Dick, the conventional, and his beloveds, the goals, and he finally gets reconnected with his past and has a conscience now:

Until the great mobs could be educated into a moral sense, some one must cry: 'Thou shalt do!'... He wanted time and the absence of ulterior pursuer. He wanted to keep the tree without ornaments, realize fully the direction and momentum of this new start. (TSOP: 267)

Amory hopes not to repeat the mistakes of the past. The three elements conventions, women and money

fail him. Amory gets back on the path of rediscovering who he is, i.e. "hero's attempt to arrive at an understanding of 'the fundamental Amory'." (Cross: 25) He realizes his own self and learns the true meaning of life. It shows that how the experience of finitude, "forces people to see that they cannot pursue an infinite diversity of paths and dedicate themselves to it. People accept responsibility when they are answerable for their choices." (Schroeder: 219) Hence, Amory in the end experiences a deep sense of self-realization.

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