



PROSPERITY AS REFLECTED IN FITZGERALD'S THE GREAT GATSBY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to shed light on the prosperous era that occurred in America during the 1920s, as depicted in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. In conducting this research, the writer uses a qualitative method in which the data are in the form of words and the writer is the key instrument. The sources are taken from the work itself and other relevant books supporting the analysis. The writer employs a mimetic approach to data analysis, which holds that literary work is a reflection and imitation of aspects of the universe. As a result of remaining neutral during World War I and the occurrence of migration, America can now concentrate on economic mobilization. Prosperity is marked by the rise of consumerism, business fortune, and residence, but it also has a negative impact on the American people in terms of the rise of a new way of life and the decline of morality, such as a proclivity for free life, alcoholism, and free sex.

Keywords: Prosperity, Consumerism, *The Great Gatsby*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan era kemakmuran yang terjadi di Amerika pada tahun 1920-an, seperti yang digambarkan dalam *The Great Gatsby* karya F. Scott Fitzgerald. Dalam melakukan penelitian ini, penulis menggunakan metode kualitatif dimana datanya berupa kata-kata. dan penulis adalah instrumen kuncinya. Sumber-sumber diambil dari karya itu sendiri dan buku-buku lain yang relevan yang mendukung analisis. Penulis menggunakan pendekatan mimetik dalam analisis data, yang berpandangan bahwa karya sastra merupakan cerminan dan peniruan dari aspek-aspek alam semesta. Akibat tetap netral selama Perang Dunia I dan terjadinya migrasi, Amerika kini dapat berkonsentrasi pada mobilisasi ekonomi. Kemakmuran yang ditandai dengan maraknya konsumerisme, rejeki bisnis, dan pemukiman, selain itu juga berdampak negatif bagi masyarakat Amerika berupa munculnya cara hidup baru dan merosotnya moralitas, seperti kecenderungan hidup bebas, alkoholisme, dan seks bebas.

Kata kunci : Kemakmuran, Konsumerisme, *The Great Gatsby*

1. INTRODUCTION

Literature talks about human life and nature. The richness of human and natural conditions creates the richness of issues presented in literature. In the forms of fiction, drama, and poetry, literature proposes various themes that are rooted in human life. The discussion of these human and natural themes positions literature as a fascinating

and challenging object to investigate.

One type of literature in which an author explores and presents his or her ideas about life as well as his or her social surroundings. One of the novels that, in the writer's opinion, displays the reflection of life in a certain social environment is Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, which was written in 1925.

The middle twenties were the age of prosperity, where the American economy soared and brought unprecedented levels of prosperity to the nation. Cities attracted millions of Americans, white and black, from small towns and farms. They were centers for business opportunity, for better jobs, for cultural enjoyment, and for greater personal freedom. In this age, prosperity provides enjoyment, freedom, and wealth to American society, but it also has a negative impact on people's morals and culture, which is fascinating to uncover and study.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Literature

Literature is not only for entertainment but also for knowledge. In this case, people increase as well as enrich their views on life. By increasing their view of life, they will be able to get along with hundreds of people and face every struggle in life.

The simple truth is that literature will never make you rich in money, but it will certainly make you richer in mind. For it multiplies the necessarily limited experiences of the individual's life, and it depends on understanding of others and of oneself. It is a source of interest and pleasure when others fail, and it creates a store of wisdom that can become a reservoir of strength (<http://www.literature.org/JosepSatin/htm>).

In the simplest term, it is good writing that has a truth to tell about people and their world and tells that truth in a way that compels the sensitive reader to share the writer's experience and response, and it conveys both. It does so through native talent and the required skill of working with content form and style to create tone.

As human, its purpose is the transmission of the highest and best feelings about art itself and life. Literary works are part of art. Literature not only entertains readers but also teaches us about the importance of aesthetics and perception.

2.2 Elements of the Novel

Plot

Nick Caraways, a young man from Minnesota, moves to New York in the summer of 1922 to learn about the bond business. He rents a house in the West Egg district of Long Island, a wealthy but unfashionable area populated by the new rich, a group who have made their fortunes too recently to have established social connections and who are prone to garish displays of wealth. Nick's next-door neighbor in West Egg is a mysterious man named Jay Gatsby, who lives in a gigantic Gothic mansion and throws extravagant parties every Saturday night.

Nick is unlike the other inhabitants of West Egg; he was educated at Yale and has social connections in East Egg, a fashionable area of Long Island home to the established upper class. Nick drives out to East Egg one evening for dinner with his cousin, Daisy Buchanan, and her husband, Tom, an erstwhile classmate of Nick's at Yale. Daisy and Tom introduce Nick to Jordan Baker, a beautiful, cynical young woman with whom Nick begins a romantic relationship. Nick also learns a bit about Daisy and Tom's marriage from Jordan, who tells him that Tom has a lover, Myrtle Wilson, who lives in the valley of ashes, a gray industrial dumping ground between West Egg and New York City. Not long after this revelation, Nick

travels to New York City with Tom and Myrtle. At a vulgar, gaudy party in the apartment that Tom keeps for the affair, Myrtle begins to taunt Tom about Daisy, and Tom responds by breaking her nose.

As the summer progresses, Nick eventually gets an invitation to one of Gatsby's legendary parties. He encounters Jordan Baker at the party, and they meet Gatsby himself, a surprisingly young man who has an English accent, has a remarkable smile, and calls everyone "old sport." Gatsby asks to speak to Jordan alone, and, through Jordan, Nick later learns more about his mysterious neighbor. Gatsby tells Jordan that he knew Daisy in Louisville in 1917 and is deeply in love with her. He spends many nights starting at the green light at the end of her dock, across the bay from his mansion. Gatsby's extravagant lifestyle and wild parties are simply an attempt to impress Daisy. Gatsby now wants Nick to arrange a reunion between himself and Daisy, but he is afraid that Daisy will refuse to see him if she knows that he still loves her. Nick invites Daisy to have tea at his house without telling her that Gatsby will also be there. After an initially awkward reunion, Gatsby and Daisy reestablish their connection.

After a short time, Tom grows increasingly suspicious of his wife's relationship with Gatsby. At a luncheon at the Buchanans' house, Gatsby stares at Daisy with such undisguised passion that Tom realizes Gatsby is in love with her. Though Tom is himself involved in an extramarital affair, he is deeply outraged by the thought that his wife could be unfaithful to him. He forces the group to drive into New York City, where he confronts Gatsby in a suite at the Plaza Hotel. Tom asserts that he and Daisy have a history that Gatsby could never understand, and he announces to his wife that Gatsby is a criminal whose fortune comes from bootlegging alcohol and other illegal activities. Daisy realizes that her allegiance is to Tom, and Tom contemptuously sends her back to East Egg with Gatsby, attempting to prove that Gatsby cannot hurt him.

When Nick, Jordan, and Tom drive through the valley of ashes, however, they discover that Gatsby's car has struck and killed Myrtle, Tom's lover. They rush back to Long Island, where Nick learns from Gatsby that Daisy was driving the car when it struck Myrtle, but that Gatsby intends to take the blame. The next day, Tom tells Myrtle's husband, George, that Gatsby was the driver of the car. George, who has leapt to the conclusion that the driver of the car that killed Myrtle must have been her love, finds Gatsby in the pool at his mansion and shoots him dead. He then fatally shoots himself. Nick stages a small funeral for Gatsby, ends his relationship with Jordan, and moves back to the Midwest to escape the disgust he feels for the people surrounding Gatsby's life and for the emptiness and moral decay of life among the wealthy on the East Coast. Nick reflects that just as Gatsby's dream of Daisy was corrupted by money and dishonesty, the American dream of happiness and individualism has disintegrated into the mere pursuit of wealth. Though Gatsby's power to transform his dreams into reality is what makes him "great," Nick reflects that the era of dreaming both Gatsby's dream and the American dream is over.

Characters

In this novel, Fitzgerald has divided the characters into two kinds: the main characters and the minor characters.

-Major Characters

Jay Gatsby

The protagonist of the novel, Gatsby, is a fabulously wealthy young man

living in a Gothic mansion in West Egg. He is famous for the lavish parties he throws every Saturday night, but no one knows where he comes from, what he does, or how he made his fortune. As the novel progresses, Nick Dakota learns that working for a millionaire made him dedicate his life to the achievement of wealth. When he met Daisy while training to be an officer in Louisville, he fell in love with her. Nick also learns that Gatsby made his fortune through criminal activity, as he was willing to do anything to gain the social position he thought necessary to win Daisy. Nick views Gatsby as a deeply flawed man, dishonest and vulgar, whose extraordinary optimism and power to transform his dreams into reality nonetheless make him "great."

Daisy Buchanan

Gatsby's cousin and the woman Nick adores. As a young woman in Louisville before the war, Daisy was courted by a number of officers, including Gatsby. She fell in love with Gatsby and promised to wait for him. However, Daisy harbors a deep need to be loved, and when a wealthy, powerful young man named Tom Buchanan asked her to marry him, Daisy decided not to wait for Gatsby after all. Now a beautiful socialite, Daisy lives with Tom across from Gatsby in the fashionable East Egg district of Long Island. She is sardonic and somewhat cynical, and she behaves to mask her pain at her husband's constant infidelity.

Nick Carraway

The novel's narrator, Nick, is a young man from Minnesota who, after being educated at Yale and fighting in World War I, goes to New York City to learn the bond business. Honest, tolerant, and inclined to reserve judgment, Nick often serves as a confidant for those with troubling secrets. After moving to West Egg, a fictional area of Long Island that is home to the newly rich, Nick quickly befriends his next-door neighbor, the mysterious Jay Gatsby. As Daisy Buchanan's cousin, he facilitates the rekindling of the romance between her and Gatsby. The Great Gatsby is told entirely through Nick's eyes; his thoughts and perceptions shape and color the story.

-Minor Characters

Tom Buchanam

Daisy's extremely wealthy husband, who was a member of Nick's Yale social club. Powerfully built and hailing from a socially solid old family, Tom is an arrogant, hypocritical bully. His social attitudes are met with racism and sexism, and he never even considers trying to live up to the moral standard he demands from those around him. He has no moral qualms about his own extramarital affair with Myrtle, but when he begins to suspect Daisy and Gatsby of having an affair, he becomes outraged and forces a confrontation.

Jordan Baker

Daisy's friend, a woman with whom Nick becomes romantically involved during the course of the novel. A competitive golfer, Jordan represents one of the "new women" of the 1920s: cynical, boyish, and self-centered. Jordan is beautiful but also dishonest: she cheated in order to win her first golf tournament and continually bends the truth.

Myrtle Wilson

The lifeless George, Tom's lover, owns a run-down garage in the valley ashes. Myrtle herself possesses a fierce vitality and desperately looks for a way to

improve her situation. Unfortunately for her, she chooses Tom, who treats her as a mere object of his desire.

George Wilson

Myrtle's husband, the lifeless, exhausted proprietor of a run-down auto shop on the outskirts of the Valley of Ashes, George loves and idealizes Myrtle and is devastated by her affair with Tom. George is consumed with grief when Myrtle is killed. George is comparable to Gatsby in that both are dreamers, and both are ruined by their unrequited love for women who love Tom.

Owl Eyes

The eccentric, bespectacled drunk whom Nick meets at the first party he attends at Gatsby Mansion Nick finds Owl Eyes looking through Gatsby's library, astonished that the books are real.

Klipspringer

The shallow freeloader who appears to almost live at Gatsby's mansion, exploiting his host's money. As soon as Gatsby dies, Klipspringer disappears; he does not attend the funeral, but he does call Nick about a pair of tennis shoes that he left at Gatsby's mansion.

Setting

It's true that setting is the wholeness of the story's circumstance, including the culture, customs, and the character's view of life; or, in other words, setting is the place and time of action in which the characters, events, or actions will become more concentrated if they are related to the time, place, condition, or any cultural aspects. As stated by Griffith, "setting" is concerned with the physical, social, and temporal environment in which literary work takes place (56).

Theme and Style

The theme is the central subject or idea of the work that the writer would like to convey to the reader through the characters, plot, or setting (Griffith, 49). Basically, love is the main theme in this novel. This theme can be developed as a central concept in the story that the novelist wishes to convey to the audience or readers through the characters, plot, setting, and style in which it is told.

The Middle Twenties

For millions of middle-class Americans, the 1920s were a golden age of prosperity and peace. Overall, the country had prospered like never before, both materially and in the fields of letters, arts, science, and education. The booming of the new era in industrialism began with the good mobilization in economics; it created the booming in industrialism, where new jobs were being created and better opportunities were being provided to the middle class. (A History of American Life and Thought, 469).

It means that America will prosper because a prosperous economic and business climate brings wealth to nations and society. It can be said that the wealth of the nations led the people into the new era of consumerism. As stated by Williams:

In the 1920s, newer consumer durable goods, such as automobiles' radios, washing machines, and telephones, were manufactured using modern mass-production techniques that allowed firms to make large profits while keeping prices affordable for consumers. At the time, consumers purchased 23 percent more in 1929 than six years earlier, and they bought 33 percent more durable goods like automobiles and furniture. The industrial growth of the decade centered on the automobile. Automobile production jumped from a million and a half cars in 1921

to four and a quarter million in 1929. By then, automobiles were responsible, directly or through countless ramifications, for the employment of over three million people (435).

And here are some of the phenomena that occur in America's mid-twenties:

When prices began to fall sharply in 1920, Cotton, which sold for 37 cents a pound in mid-1920, fell to 14 cents by year's end. By 1921, net farm income was down more than half from the year before. Land values also dropped, wiping out billions in capital investment (Williams, 433).

Cities expanded both vertically and horizontally during these years. Skylines around the country were remade as architects took advantage of steel-skeleton construction technology to build skyscrapers. By 1930, New York City boasted nearly 400 buildings more than 20 stories tall. The New York Empire State Building, completed in 1931, was the tallest building in the world. Greatly expanded credit for home buying was available from commercial banks, savings and loan associations, and insurance companies (Faragher, 728).

Cities attracted millions of Americans, white and black, from small towns and farms. They were centers for business opportunity, for better jobs, for cultural enjoyment, and for greater personal freedom (Faragher, 728).

After World War I ended in 1918, the generation of young Americans who had fought the war became intensely disillusioned, as the brutal carnage that they had just faced made the Victorian social morality of early twentieth-century America seem like stuffy, empty hypocrisy. Additionally, the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919, which banned the sale of alcohol, created a thriving underworld designed to satisfy the massive demand for bootleg liquor among rich and poor alike (<http://etextlibrary.adeleide.edu.au/f/Fitzgerald-fs/Gatsby/Gatsby/zip>).

At the time, the sociological surveys also suggested that genuine changes in sexual behavior occurred, beginning in the prewar years, for both married and single women. Katherine Davis' surveys of 777 middle-class females in 1938 found that among those born after 1910, the figure dropped to 34 percent. Women born after the turn of the century were twice as likely to have experienced premarital sex as those born before 1900. The critical change took place in the generation that came of age in the late teens and early 1920s. Male and female "morals" were becoming more alike (Faragher, 735).

Scott Fitzgerald

F. Scott Fitzgerald was born on September 24, 1896, and named after his ancestor Francis Scott Key, the author of the Star-Spangled Banner. Fitzgerald was raised in St. Paul, Minnesota. Though an intelligent child, he did poorly in school and was sent to a New Jersey boarding school in 1911. Despite being a mediocre student there, he managed to enroll at Princeton in 1913. Academic troubles and apathy plagued him throughout his time at the college, and he never graduated, instead enlisting in the army in 1917.

Fitzgerald became a second lieutenant and was stationed at Camp Sheridan, in Montgomery, Alabama. There he met and fell in love with a wild seventeen-year-old beauty named Zelda Sayre. Zelda finally agreed to marry him, but her overpowering desire for wealth, fun, and leisure led her to delay their wedding until he could prove his success. With the publication of *This Side of Paradise* in 1920, Fitzgerald became a literary sensation, earning enough money and fame to convince Zelda to marry him. Many of these events from Fitzgerald's early life

appear in his most famous novel, *The Great Gatsby*, published in 1925.

Fitzgerald fell into a wild, reckless life of parties and decadence after becoming a celebrity, all while desperately trying to please Zelda by writing to earn money. However, Zelda suffered a nervous breakdown, and Fitzgerald battled alcoholism, which hampered his writing. He published *Tender is the Night* in 1934 and sold short stories to *The Saturday Evening Post* to support his lavish lifestyle. In 1937, he left for Hollywood to write screenplays, and in 1940, while working on his novel *The Love of the Last Tycoon*, he died of a heart attack at the age of 44.

Fitzgerald was the most famous chronicler of 1920s America, an era that he dubbed "the Jazz Age." Written in 1925, *The Great Gatsby* is one of the greatest literary documents of this period, during which the American economy soared, bringing unprecedented levels of prosperity to the nation. Prohibition, the ban on the sale and consumption of alcohol mandated by the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution (1919), made millionaires out of bootleggers, and an underground culture of revelry sprang up. Sprawling private parties managed to elude police notice, and "speakeasies," secret clubs that sold liquor, thrived. The chaos and violence of World War I left America in a state of shock, and the generation that fought the war turned to wild and extravagant living to compensate. The staid conservatism and timeworn values of the previous decade were turned on their ears, as money, opulence, and exuberance became the order of the day.

Fitzgerald portrays the 1920s as an era of decayed social and moral values, evidenced in its overarching cynicism, greed, and empty pursuit of pleasure. The reckless jubilation that led to decadent parties and wild jazz music—epitomized in *The Great Gatsby* by the opulent parties that Gatsby throws every Saturday night—resulted ultimately in the corruption of the American dream, as the unrestrained desire for money and pleasure surpassed more noble goals.

Prosperity

Prosperity: the condition of being successful or thriving, especially economic well-being (<http://www.w-w.com/dictionary/prosperity>). The writer deduced from that term that prosperity is the result of an improving economic situation. which are the nations that had a good economic condition, raising the power in business, and it's emerged to the new industries, and it increases the opportunity for the middle class people to get a better living. From that point, it is clear that prosperity offered opportunity in business, better jobs, cultural enjoyment, and personal freedom in the nations. The effects of freedom, enjoyment, and wealth in nations could change the entities of culture and social values. The good mobilization of the economy during World War I had carried America into business to an unprecedented extent at the time. It created a good climate in American business, where workers shared in prosperity, new jobs were created, wages were rising, and working conditions were improving; however, this was also the era when the generation of Americans who had been disillusioned by national wealth and prospered in economic conditions led the society into a decline in moral and social values.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

Since the study is concerned with a novel, the writer used a qualitative method. It implies that qualitative research is the gathering of data in the form of words. Therefore, in this study, it is reasonable for the writer herself to be the research instrument and the

novel the source of data.

3.2.Data Collection

The writer divided the data into two categories when gathering it: primary sources, such as the novel itself (in this case, *The Great Gatsby*) written by Francis S. Fitzgerald, and secondary sources, such as books and the internet, which were related to the topic.

3.3.Data Presentation and Analysis

In analyzing the data, the writer used mimetic theory. According to Abram, "mimetic orientation" is "the explanation of arts as essentially an imitation of aspects of the universe" (8). This theory holds that literature is the imitation and combination of reality and the imagination of the playwright, or the result of his or her imagination that comes from reality.

The data analysis relates to the data that the writer collects and questions. The writer used a mimetic approach in analyzing the data. M.H. Abrams stated that mimetic orientation is "the explanation of art as essentially an imitation of aspects of the universe" (1953:8). Through this approach, the writer is trying to reveal the social life, morality, and lifestyle of the American people. So it is clear that the writer analyzes the data from this perspective in order to reveal the truth, the true condition that existed in America in the 1920s.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1.Actions

In an attempt to reveal the cause and impact of prosperity, the writer focuses on literary facts in the novel, including the discussion on prosperity, which is defined as "the condition of being successful or thriving, especially economic well-being." It is divided into three parts: the background of prosperity, a sketch of prosperity, and the impact of prosperity.

4.2.The Prosperity Background

The Neutrality

On June 28, 1914, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, by Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb and a Bosnian citizen of Austria-Hungary against Serbia, activated a series of alliances that set off a chain reaction of war declarations, and within a month, much of Europe was in a state of open warfare. The situation is also portrayed in the novel *The Great Gatsby*, as stated below:

New Haven in 1915 Just a quarter-century after my father, and a little later, I took part in the Great War (3-4), a delayed Teutonic migration.

The statement above portrays the migration that happens in 1915 because of the Great War (also known as World War I, the First World War, or The War to End All Wars). When war was declared in Europe, America adopted a policy of neutrality. Neutrality: the state of not supporting either side in a disagreement, competition, or war (Hornsby, A.S. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Sixth Edition). America's neutrality during World War I provided opportunities for them to control their economy and benefit from both sides of the conflict: war.

On August 4, 1914, President Wilson declared America's neutrality in World War One, which included a "fairness" policy in which American bankers could lend money to both sides of the conflict. Overseas trade is permitted, and merchant ships cross the Atlantic to trade.

The announcement by Wilson that America would not participate in World War I gives the American government an advantage. where they can lend money to both sides of the war and trade with them. It can be said that being neutral in the war brings a great

change to America's focus on economic mobilization. Blake stated that:

Economic mobilization during World War I had carried the government into business to an unprecedented degree. Thousands of plants had received war contracts. The flow of critical raw materials had been controlled through priorities and price fixing. The trade in food and fuel had been carefully supervised to prevent hoarding and assure adequate supplies (469).

Following World War I, America focuses on economics, according to the statement above. It leads America into booming new industries. *The Great Gatsby* portrays this phenomenon.

West Egg, especially, still figures in my more fantastic dreams. "a hundred houses, at once conventional and grotesque, crouching under a sullen, overhanging sky and a lusterless moon," I see in an EL Greco night scene (150).

According to the statement above, West Egg depicts a thriving era in new industries in America, which is described with a hundred houses. It is supported by Blake: Booming new industries; widespread construction of office buildings, apartment houses, and suburban homes; and a soaring market for Florida real estate (469)

This means that cities grew rapidly during these years, particularly in industries. Faragher reveals this act: "cities grew both vertically and horizontally." Skylines around the country were remade as architects took advantage of steel-skeleton construction technology to build skyscrapers (728).

The statement above indicates the development that occurs in cities as a result of the rapid development of industries, as related to the U.S. policy being neutral.

The Migration

Migration: the movement of a large number of people, birds, or animals from one place to another. The middle twenties were the golden age of prosperity and peace for millions of middle-class Americans. It attracted a lot of people to migrate to the cities where they could afford better opportunities and better jobs. It is supported by Faragher:

Cities attracted millions of Americans, white and black, from small towns and farms, as well as immigrants from abroad. They were centers for business opportunity, for better jobs, for cultural enjoyment, and for greater personal freedom (728).

The era of prosperity that happened in the mid-twenties It drove millions of Americans away from small towns and into cities. It means this era offered people better opportunities for getting better jobs, for cultural enjoyment, and also for greater personal freedom.

His family was enormously wealthy; even in college, his freedom with money was a matter of reproach, but now he'd left Chicago and come east in a fashion that rather took your breath away. For instance, he'd brought down a string of polo ponies from Lake Forest. It was hard to realize that a man in my own generation was wealthy enough to do that. Why they came east, I don't know. They had spent a year in France for no particular reason and then drifted here and there, causing full unrest wherever people played polo and were rich together (TGG, 6).

According to the statement above, wealthy people travel to the east (east of New York City, TGG, 5), searching for cultural enjoyment and personal freedom. There are so many aspects that attract American people to come to the cities. One of the factors that drew people to America's cities was the ease with which they could obtain money. Credit is readily available from commercial banks, savings and loan associations, and insurance companies at the time. It also reveals in the novel:

For one thing, there was so much to read, and so much fine health to be drawn

down from the young breath-giving air, that I purchased a dozen volumes on banking, credit, and investment securities, and they stood on my shelf in red and gold like new money from the mint, promising to reveal the shining secrets that only Midas, Morgan, and Maecenas knew (4-5).

People can now obtain bank credit more easily. As pointed out by Williams, "greatly expanded credit for home buying was available from commercial banks, savings and loan associations, and insurance companies" (430).

It can be said that cities had something that attracted American people to come there. According to the statement above, one of the factors that drew people to cities was the ease with which they could obtain bank credit to purchase a home. It, of course, helps people easily establish their own businesses, which explains the drive to migrate to cities.

4.3. The Sketch of Prosperity

Consumerism

Through Hornby, A.S. Oxford Learner's Dictionary, Sixth Edition, consumerism is defined as "the buying and using of goods and services; the belief that it is good for society or an individual person to buy and use a large quantity of goods and services" (265). Sustaining the good times of the twenties was the demand of millions of Americans for relatively new conveniences like automobiles, electrical appliances, and radios. Importantly, it had an effect on the economy because of the amazing growth of the automobile industry, where Ford, Buick, Cadillac, and Chevrolet have completed producing their vehicles with a new style and new features (Blake, 470). The novel *The Great Gatsby* also portrays this phenomenon: "They got into automobiles, which bore them out to Long Island" (37). It means that almost everyone at the time had a car; they used cars for their daily lives, and also because at the time, people in America loved to consume durable goods. As William states:

In the 1920s, newer consumer durable goods, such as automobiles' radios, washing machines, and telephones, were increasingly manufactured using modern mass-production techniques that allowed firms to make large profits while keeping prices affordable for consumers. In 1929, consumers spent 23 percent more than six years of education and furniture. The industrial growth of the decade centered on the automobile. The number of automobiles produced increased from a million and a half in 1921 to four and three-quarters million in 1929. By then, automobiles were responsible, directly or through countless ramifications, for the employment of over three million people (435).

Consumption of durable goods and automobiles increased dramatically in the mid-twenties. At the time, Americans purchased durables such as car radios, washing machines, and telephones. Furthermore, American consumerism is the result of low prices and overproduction, and it influences a society where many automobiles are groceries, attracting people to buy a car. It is supported by the line in the novel that states, "And the grocer's automobile rounded Gatsby" (80). It means that there were grocery stores and automobiles everywhere. It can also be said that the purchase of a car by the people of America was a defining feature of modern life. It stresses the depiction of the consumerism trend of the time.

Fortune in Business

"Business," according to Hornby, is "the activity of making, buying, and selling supplies of goods or services for money." "It can be said that fortune is the way to make fortune in buying or selling goods or services for money" (160). The middle twenties were a prosperous era that provided opportunities for Americans to make fortunes in

business. Blake stated that:

Big business became bigger during the era of prosperity. It was the era of mergers, when small businesses were constantly falling under the control of larger ones. Much of this concentration was achieved through the organization of holding companies. Some of these effects on operations and management are beneficial to the entire country. But others seemed to have little reason for existence, as expected from devices for selling stock to the public and permitting insiders to gain control of huge economic empires with relatively small investments (473).

Moreover, the era of prosperity in America was the period of mergers, when small firms were constantly controlling the large mergers, and it attracted people to try their fortune in business. The overproduction in the automobile industries and the existence of devices for selling stock to the public created employment in the sales sector. As portrayed in the novel:

All were well-dressed, all appeared hungry, and all spoke in hushed tones to the solid and prosperous Americans. I was sure that they were selling something—bonds, insurance, or automobiles. They were at least agonizingly aware of the easy money in the vicinity and convinced that it was for a few words in the right key (37).

The preceding statement depicts the job of a salesman. They should be well dressed and talk a little low to attract people to buy their product. There are a lot of Americans who do this type of job at the time; the easy money and the motivation of being rich drew a lot of Americans to do this type of job. As a result, they rely on their daily businesses to make fortunes in order to live the American Dream: the pursuit of happiness.

Residence

A residence is "a house, especially a large or impressive one: a desirable family residence for sale" (Hornby, 1086). The middle twenties were an era of prosperity, with a lot of people living in big houses. "I see it as an El Greco night scene: a hundred houses, conventional and grotesque, crouching beneath a sullen, overhanging sky and lusterless moon" (TGG, 50). The statement portrays an era of prosperity where a hundred houses have their own architectural style. It is also portrayed in the novel through the main character, Jay Gatsby, who lives in the big mansion.

My house was at the very tip of the egg, only fifty yards from the sound, and squeezed between the huge places that rented for twelve to fifteen thousand a season. The one on my right was a colossal affair by any standard—it was a factual imitation of some Hotel de Neville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, a marble swimming pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden. It was Gatsby's mansion (TGG, 5–6).

The above statement about Gatsby's mansion is made by Nick, one of Gatsby's friends; Gatsby lives in the vast spaces Nick depicts. It's like an imitation of some Hotel de Neville in Normandy; he has a swimming pool and a large garden. Blake states that the war created housing shortage, which provided golden opportunities for the postwar construction industry... Promoters purchased large tracts of land, bestowed fancy names upon them, and sold them to purchaser's eager to own their own house (472). The quotation describes the development of the construction industry because of the eagerness of American people to have their own houses. As Jay Gatsby experiences in the novel, prosperity clearly created a new standard of living in a society. It shows; Gatsby paints the prosperity of the era.

4.4. The Impact of Prosperity

The New Life Style

The wealth of the nation raises a society's standard of living. This is the condition in which people can enjoy luxurious living and all of the entertainment or other benefits that come with it, as people in wealthy countries do. In this era, the American people love to watch movies and read newspapers and magazines as their new habits. As Faragher stated:

New media of communication reshaped American culture in the 1920s. The nickname "roaring twenties" makes the most sense as a shorthand description for the explosion of image and sound-making machinery that came to dominate American life. Movies, radio, new kinds of journalism, the recording industry, and a more sophisticated advertising industry were deeply connected with the new culture of consumption. They also encouraged the parallel emergence of celebrity as a defining element of modern life. As technologies of mass impression developed, the media established national standards and norms for much of our culture's habits, dress, language, sounds, and social behavior. For millions of Americans, the new media radically altered the rhythms of everyday life and redefined what it means to be "normal." to be sure. Most working-class families had only limited access to the world of mass consumption, and many had only limited interest in it. But the new mass culture helped redefine the ideal of the good life and made the images, if not the substance, of it available to a national community (730).

The statement above indicates the habits of the American community. It reflects the situation of people who are confronted with new mass cultural consumptions. Furthermore, this is actually asserted in the novel:

Tom and Miss Baker sat at opposite ends of the long couch, and she read the Saturday Evening Post to him. In a soothing tune, the words murmurous and uninflected run together. "The lamplight, bright on his boots and dull on the autumn-leaf yellow of the hair, glinted along the paper as she turned a page with a flutter of slender muscles in her arms" (TGG, 18). Also, at this time, the people of America enjoy watching movies. "Those big movies around Fiftieth Street are cool" (TGG, 118).

This case is also asserted by Faragher in *Out of Many*:

The early movie industry, centered in New York and a few other big cities, had made moviegoing a regular habit for millions of Americans, especially immigrants and the working class (730).

Fitzgerald depicts the way of life of the majority of Americans through the novel's main character, Jay Gatsby: he appears surrounded by luxury, courted by powerful men and women, lives in the mansion, drives an expensive car, and loves to party.

He typically has a swimming pool and a large garden. Gatsby lives in huge places, and almost every week he throws a big party in his mansion.

The light gets brighter as the earth lurches away from the sun, and now the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music, and the opera of voices pitches a key higher. Laughter comes easier by the minute, spilled with prodigality and spilled out at the cheerful word. The groups change more quickly, swell with a new arrival, dissolve, and form in the same breath; there are already wanderers, confident girls who weave here and there among the shouters, and more stable ones who, from the sharp, joyous moment, become the center of the group, and then, excited with triumph, glide on through the sea change of faces, voices, and color under the constantly changing light. Suddenly, one of the gypsies, dressed in trembling opal, grabs a cocktail from the air, dumps it down for courage, and dances out alone on

the canvas platform, a momentary hush; the orchestra leader varies his rhythm obligingly for her, and there is a burst of chatter as the erroneous news that she is Gilda Gray's understudy from the FOLLIES spreads. The party has begun (36).

The preceding statement describes the scene at a Gatsby party, where people dance to yellow cocktail music. Indeed, Gatsby's way of life represents the American people's new way of life in the mid-twenties. the way of life that most people in that era imagined, as Gatsby does. In this case, the Gatsby lifestyle, which loves to party, represents the lifestyle of the people in this era.

Her gaze was drawn to the lighted top of the steps, where "there was O'Clock Morning," a clever phrase. The sad little waltz of that year was drifting out the open door. After all, in the very casualness of the Gatsby party, there were romantic possibilities totally absent from her world; what was it up there in the song that seemed to be calling her back inside? What would happen now in the dim, incalculable hours? Perhaps some unbelievable guest would arrive—a person infinitely rare and to be marveled at—some authentically radiant young girl who, with a fresh glance at Gatsby and one magical encounter, would blot out those five years of unwavering devotion (TGG, 99).

It is clear that Gatsby's personality and lifestyle represent the majority of the American people who lived in a prosperous era, when people could enjoy luxurious living and all the entertainment, or other things, as the result of people who lived in wealthy nations do.

The Decline of Morality

For millions of middle-class Americans, the 1920s were a golden age of prosperity and peace. As a whole, the country had prospered as never before, both in material ways and in letters, arts, science, and education. However, this is also the era in which a generation of Americans disillusioned with the country's wealth and prosperity has led to a sudden decline in moral and basic character. Fitzgerald portrays this phenomenon through the character in the novel, Jay Gatsby, who states:

I found out what "drug stores" were. He turned to us and spoke rapidly. He and his Wolfsheim bought up a lot of side streets here and in Chicago and sold grain alcohol over the counter (122).

The statement above portrays Gatsby's profession as an illegal one. It was easy money and a big opportunity that attracted a lot of American people to this kind of profession. Gatsby represents a man who will do everything to get what he wants, even if that means dealing with illegal things. Gatsby became an ambitious man as a result of his desire to be wealthy. Furthermore, the legality of selling alcohol in these times attracts a lot of American people to this kind of profession. It is possible to argue that the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment, which prohibited the sale of alcoholic beverages, was one of the factors that influenced the moral and social values of the American people. Furthermore, the novel *The Great Gatsby* portrays the 1920s as an era of decaying social and moral values. In this novel, he portrays an American woman who loves the pleasures of life and is very ambitious to pursue material things.

For Daisy was young, and her artificial world was redolent of orchids, pleasant, cheerful snobbery, and orchestras, which set the rhythm of the year, summing up the sadness and suggestiveness of life in new tunes. The saxophones wailed the hopeless comment of the Beale Street Blues all night. while a hundred pairs of golden and silver slippers shuffled the shining dust. At the gray tea hour, there were always rooms that throbbed incessantly with this low, sweet fever, while fresh faces drifted here and there like rose petals blown by the sad horns around the

floor. Through this twilight universe, Daisy began to move again with the season; suddenly, she was again keeping half a dozen dates a day with half a dozen men and drowsing asleep at dawn with the beads and chiffon of an evening dress tangled among dying orchids on the floor beside her bed. And all the time, something within her was crying for a decision. She wanted her life shaped now, immediately, and the decision to be made by some force—of love, of money, of unquestionable practicality—that was close at hand (133).

Daisy is a woman who loves pleasure and is very ambitious in pursuing material things. In the novel *The Great Gatsby*, Daisy is portrayed as a woman who loves the pleasure of life and is very ambitious in pursuing material things; she will do anything to get what she wants. Furthermore, Daisy is depicted as most American women do in this era. The middle twenties as a period of deteriorating social and moral values. It is supported by Faragher:

Sociological surveys also suggested that genuine changes in sexual behavior occurred, beginning in the prewar years, for both married and single women. Katrine Bernet Davis's pioneering study of 2,200 middle-class women, carried out in 1918 and published in 1929, revealed that most used contraceptives and described sexual relations in positive terms. A 1918 survey of 777 middle-class females in 1938 found that, among those born between 1880 and 1900, 74 percent were virgins before marriage; for those born after 1910, the figure dropped to 34 percent. Women born after the turn of the century were twice as likely to have experienced premarital sex as those born before 1900. The critical change took place in the generation that came of age in the late teens and early 1920's. By the 1920's, male and female "morals" were becoming more alike (735).

According to 1938 sociological surveys, women in the 1920s preferred to have sex before marrying; this is supported by Katherine Bernet Davis's sociological surveys, which stated that women born in 1910 and living up to 1930 preferred to have sex more than women born the year before. It can be said that the middle twenties were an era of decaying moral and social values in American society. In other words, prosperity has resulted in a decline in morality, such as the proclivity for free life, alcoholism, and free sex.

5. CONCLUSION

Prosperity that occurred in America during the 1920s as a result of good economic mobilization. Actually, the American government's policy of neutrality during World War I allows them to focus more on economic mobilization, and they can also experience migration from both sides of the conflict. It is advocated by the occurrence of migration to cities, which reflects the availability of labor to support economic activity, which means the creation of prosperity.

Such circumstances pushed America to unprecedented heights in business. It is marked by the emergence of consumerism, business fortune, and residence, but at the end, prosperity has a bad impact on the declining morality of the American people, as shown by the tendency toward free life, alcoholism, and free sex.

6. SUGGESTION

The writer suggests that the readers of literary works do not only appreciate or take pleasure in reading them, since there are so many points or values revealed in them. We should also focus on its messages.

It is suggested that the reader learn a few things. In this case, whether we live in a wealthy or poor country, we must maintain the moral and social values that existed in the society

and not change the entities or character of the people if we maintain the moral and social values. And as people, we have to keep our purity and good morality, whatever the consequences. Finally, resist the temptation to go down the wrong path in order to satisfy our desire for wealth, social status, or material things.

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