

The Economics of Abundance and Scarcity Food Consumption and Class Distinction in Selected Iraqi and American Narratives

Tara Khaled

College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon, Iraq

Corresponding Author: Tara Khaled tarakhale660@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how food and drink articulate class hierarchy, bodily vulnerability, and political authority in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Inaam Kachachi's *Al-Nabeeza* (2017). Through comparative close reading, it treats abundance and scarcity as unequal relations within each fictional world. Veblen's account of conspicuous consumption and Bourdieu's sociology of taste are brought into dialogue with scholarship on gastro-politics and commensality. The analysis uses coercive consumption to describe participation in eating or drinking under a credible threat associated with refusal. Attention to narrative perspective distinguishes outward compliance from appetite, judgement, and consent. Fitzgerald's parties expose the uncertain conversion of expenditure into social legitimacy; Kachachi's drinking and banquet scenes reveal how intimidation restricts the bodily expression of refusal. Taji's encounters with elite hospitality complicate this comparison by placing culinary pleasure and paternalistic patronage alongside her subsequent criticism of bread scarcity. Across the selected scenes, material provision supplies an incomplete measure of advantage. The capacity to judge an offering, express displeasure, or leave the table helps determine what access to food permits a character to do. The study thus connects literary representations of consumption with the unequal distribution of recognition and agency.

INTRODUCTION

A table can be crowded with food while the people seated around it possess very different freedoms. One guest chooses a drink, another waits for permission, and a third accepts an offering because refusal would attract unwelcome attention. The quantity served cannot settle the meaning of the occasion. Food enters a relationship already shaped by money, familiarity, employment, gender, and authority. Literary narratives can make these relationships perceptible by recording a glance, an interruption, a withheld invitation, or an appetite that disappears at the moment of eating.

The *Great Gatsby* and *Al-Nabeeza* offer different settings for examining that problem. Fitzgerald places the reader among wealthy households whose expenditure does not eliminate distinctions between inherited position and recently acquired money. Kachachi's narrative moves through political upheaval and displacement, including encounters in which proximity to a powerful host offers little security. The present comparison concentrates on selected meals and drinking scenes. These episodes allow attention to remain on the relation between material provision and social position without requiring either novel to stand for an entire national economy.

The distinction matters from the outset. *Gatsby's* parties cannot establish that everyone in his society enjoys abundance. Equally, luxury in a scene set against deprivation does not disprove scarcity elsewhere. A concentrated supply of desirable goods may reveal unequal access precisely because those goods are difficult for others to obtain. Abundance and scarcity therefore operate here as relational categories. They identify differences within represented social worlds as well as contrasts between the two works. Their interpretation requires a specified setting, a group of participants, and an account of who can obtain what.

The article asks how food acquires the power to distinguish its consumers. It also asks what happens when people refuse the meaning assigned to an offering, or cannot safely register their refusal. These questions connect literary analysis with an economic concern about the relationship between resources and the choices available to their holders. An expensive meal can purchase attention without securing esteem. A meal provided without payment may impose obligations that the guest cannot renegotiate. In both cases, the transaction extends beyond the transfer of edible goods.

Fitzgerald's narrator repeatedly makes wealth legible through arrangements of service and display. Nick notices deliveries, domestic workers, drinks, and the different atmospheres of private and public hospitality. Yet his perception is neither neutral nor complete. He belongs close enough to the wealthy characters to enter their houses, while presenting himself as capable of judging them. His descriptions must be read as narrative decisions, including decisions about whose labour receives a sentence and whose experience remains outside the scene. That mediation is central to the argument, rather than an obstacle to be removed.

Kachachi's scenes require comparable attention to the position from which an event is remembered or recounted. A character's disgust can disclose the experience of humiliation without providing a chemical analysis of the drink. A remembered encounter with an influential figure can carry affection, dependence, embarrassment, or retrospective criticism. Economic interpretation becomes persuasive when it works through these differences. It becomes less persuasive when it treats every meal as confirmation of an already complete theory of domination.

The article locates the economic force of these meals in the relation between expenditure, bodily response, and the possibility of refusal. Its comparative contribution is to show how narrative perspective exposes a fracture between the public performance of appetite and the judgement of the person eating. A guest can consume what is offered while withholding esteem, suppressing disgust, or calculating the consequences of resistance. Reading these differences closely makes hospitality a site where resources and agency are distributed on unequal terms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Expenditure and the recognition of status

Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* supplies a useful starting point because it connects consumption with public evidence of standing. His concern is not exhausted by the amount someone owns. Possession must become socially legible, and expenditure can make it so. In a scene of hospitality, this directs attention to the audience, the scale of service, and the effort devoted to a display. Guests contribute to the occasion's value by recognising its cost, discussing it, or carrying its reputation elsewhere (Veblen, 1899, chs. 3-4).

Conspicuous waste requires particular care. Veblen's technical use is broader than discarded food. Expenditure can sustain a competitive claim to reputation even when the item has practical use and the consumer experiences satisfaction. The existence of leftovers is therefore neither necessary nor sufficient to identify conspicuous consumption. A party may display wealth through staffing, quantity, and duration without every dish being thrown away. Conversely, the peel produced by eating or juicing fruit does not independently prove deliberate destruction of useful food (Veblen, 1899, ch. 4).

This distinction changes the reading of *Gatsby's* kitchen. The important question is how its repeated provisioning and service become evidence of a host's resources. The argument need not invent uneaten mountains of food to establish conspicuous expenditure. It can examine the visible capacity to support a gathering, the repeated labour that sustains it, and the uneven recognition that follows. More expenditure does not necessarily produce more secure membership. The novel's treatment of that uncertainty becomes a contribution to the comparison.

Veblen should also not be confined to an ideal world of free consumer choice. His account discusses inherited rank, dependency, and institutions with coercive histories, including predatory distinctions between occupations. It would be inaccurate to announce that domination enters consumption only when

an Iraqi example is added. The task is to specify how a particular scene combines display with threat, and whether a concept centred on reputability explains the whole encounter (Veblen, 1899, chs. 1–4).

Bourdieu's account of classification adds a second concern. Taste involves socially formed ways of differentiating people and practices, often enacted through ordinary bodily conduct rather than explicit declarations. Judgements about what is suitable, vulgar, refined, or out of place can reproduce distance while appearing personal. This makes the evaluator's position part of the evidence: describing a meal as excessive can classify its host and establish the speaker's own claim to discernment (Bourdieu, 1984, conclusion).

For this article, the consequence is methodological. A critic cannot simply adopt a character's disgust as an objective judgement of another group's inferiority. The response requires interpretation. Does it reject the food, the company, the setting, the obligation, or some combination of them? A person may recognise a luxury item yet refuse the occasion's claim to refinement. Another may consume an unwanted offering without endorsing its quality. The analysis must leave room for these differences instead of treating behaviour as a transparent report of preference.

Bagwell and Bernheim (1996) give the economic discussion a more specific point of comparison. Their model identifies conditions under which consumers pay more for goods that signal wealth without being intrinsically superior. The distinction between quality and signalling value matters here. Nick's imperfect but impressive wine and Gatsby's expensive hospitality separate sensory satisfaction from social effect. Yet a literary scene cannot test the model's equilibrium conditions. Its contribution is to show how an audience interprets a display and why recognition of expenditure may coexist with rejection of its owner.

Food scholarship also changes the unit of attention. Fischler (1988) connects the incorporation of food with identity and with the classifications through which an eater recognises or distrusts a substance. His account helps explain why disgust requires more than a ranking of flavours. An unwanted drink can implicate the recipient's sense of self and the relationship through which it is offered. In his later discussion, Fischler (2011, pp. 533–539) distinguishes commensality from conviviality: eating together can establish inclusion while reproducing hierarchy and dependence. A shared occasion therefore cannot be assumed to distribute equal standing.

Jönsson et al. (2021, sections 2–3) sharpen this caution by examining the idealisation of shared meals and the varied relations they sustain. Their critical review makes it difficult to treat the common table as inherently beneficial. This article follows that distinction between a valued social ideal and the particular arrangements through which people actually participate. Gatsby's crowd and the Yacht Club guests occupy collective settings with markedly different freedoms. The comparison concerns how those freedoms are narrated, not whether one national culture values sociability more than another.

Appadurai's (1981) gastro-politics provides a more direct account of food as a medium of conflict. His analysis of Hindu South Asia identifies food transactions that can establish commonality or mark difference. The present comparison takes that tension as a question for the novels: what kind of relationship does an offering enact? The answer depends on its participants and circumstances. A feast may gather people into one space while preserving sharply unequal powers within it.

Literary food studies also require attention to how a sensory object becomes a narrated sign. Piatti-Farnell and Brien's (2018) edited companion situates food and literature in a transnational field; Parasecoli's (2011) work places food within intercultural communication. These are adjacent frames rather than interchangeable methods. Here, the practical task is to retain the local specificity of a food term while tracing what its placement, description, and reception contribute to the scene. A bottle or a piece of bread acquires significance through the encounter in which the narrator places it.

Korsmeyer (1999) gives literal, bodily taste a place in philosophical inquiry alongside its symbolic and aesthetic dimensions. That distinction matters when a novel describes an unpleasant drink: sensory aversion and social judgement may overlap without becoming identical. Ferguson's (2004) study of French cuisine and Julier's (2013) study of eating together offer further contexts for thinking about culinary culture and inequality. Their settings remain distinct from those of the two novels. The comparison therefore draws its claims about particular hosts and guests from the narrated encounters themselves.

These approaches bring expenditure and embodied response into the same analytical frame. The comparison asks how narration makes compulsory participation perceptible when the visible act of eating could be mistaken for consent. A reserved bottle, a controlled facial expression, or a hand extended in fear gives that problem a specific form. The argument follows such details through the scene, attending to who observes them and whose account supplies their meaning

METHODOLOGY

A bounded comparative method

The study uses qualitative close reading organised around food-related encounters. The relevant unit is a scene: a sequence in which food or drink, participants, and a social response can be identified. A scene may show preparation, serving, consumption, rejection, or the aftermath of a meal. Treating the scene as the unit prevents isolated nouns such as champagne or bread from carrying an argument that depends on the circumstances of their appearance. An imported bottle means something different when shared, withheld, displayed, or used to impose an obligation.

The two novels are compared because their selected scenes connect consumption with unequal membership and authority. Their difference in publication date and historical setting remains part of the analysis. There is no claim of direct influence between the authors, nor an assumption that their economic environments are interchangeable. Comparison proceeds through

common questions: who provides the meal, what distinction is made visible, how does the recipient respond, and what evidence identifies the cost of declining? The answers are allowed to differ.

Scene selection must also admit inconvenient evidence. In *Gatsby*, a description of impressive but defective wine complicates the association between price and quality. An untouched meal may register anxiety as readily as indifference. In *Al-Nabeeza*, an abundant banquet can coincide with fear, so the presence of food does not establish the participant's well-being. Such cases are analytically useful because they prevent a simple division between desirable consumption and deprivation. A comparative argument gains strength when it explains an exception instead of quietly excluding it.

Four questions guide the reading of each episode. The first concerns access: who receives the goods and who is separated from them? The second concerns evaluation: who has authority to call the meal tasteful, vulgar, generous, or inadequate? The third concerns participation: can a person choose, leave, decline, or express distaste? The fourth concerns narration: whose account makes the event available, and how do description and sequence shape its meaning? Together these questions connect the material and formal dimensions of the novels.

The analysis distinguishes textual observation from interpretation and historical explanation. A narrator's description of a reserved bottle is an observation available within the work. Reading that reservation as a boundary of privilege is an interpretation requiring explanation. Claiming that the bottle arrived through a particular trafficking route is a historical assertion requiring separate evidence. These levels cannot be substituted for one another. The same discipline applies to food prices, nutritional consequences, and state institutions: a novel may evoke them, but a contextual claim must be supported independently if it is presented as historical fact.

For Fitzgerald, chapter references identify passages in the Project Gutenberg text. References to *Al-Nabeeza* follow the printed Arabic pagination of the *Dar Al-Jadid* Arabic text, rather than the PDF viewer's page count. English translations of the quoted Arabic passages are provided for this analysis; they are not quotations from a published English translation. Short Arabic expressions are retained where their wording carries the argument. The reading distinguishes Widyan's first-person recollection of the Yacht Club gathering from Youssef's desert account embedded within her narration. It also distinguishes both from the third-person account of Taji's encounters with Nuri al-Said. These differences determine who witnesses an event and whose language gives it meaning.

The economic vocabulary is similarly bounded. Abundance refers to plentiful provision within a specified scene; it does not by itself denote an aggregate surplus. Scarcity concerns restricted availability or access relative to need in the represented situation. Class distinction concerns the production and recognition of social distance. Political coercion identifies pressure backed by authority or a credible threat. These categories sometimes intersect, but their intersection must be demonstrated. A powerful official's cruelty cannot automatically be treated as the behaviour of every member of an economic class.

Defining coercive consumption

Coercive consumption is used here for an encounter in which a person participates in eating or drinking under a credible threat associated with refusal. The threat may be spoken or made intelligible by the scene's organisation. This is an operational description for the comparison, not a claim to have coined an unprecedented concept. Its purpose is to identify when the act of consuming cannot safely be interpreted as approval, enjoyment, or aspiration.

Three boundaries keep the term useful. A limited budget can force difficult dietary choices without placing a coercive host at the table. Customary politeness can make refusal uncomfortable without making it dangerous. Food can be revolting to a character without being medically toxic. A claim about coerced ingestion therefore requires evidence of constrained refusal, while a claim about poisoning requires a different kind of evidence. Combining all these conditions into a single vocabulary of violence would conceal the mechanism that the analysis seeks to explain.

The distinction also protects the interpretation of the guest. Compliance may involve judgement, calculation, and the effort to avoid escalation. It does not necessarily indicate acceptance of the host's superiority. Nor should discomfort automatically be celebrated as resistance. A suppressed reaction can remain private and leave the immediate hierarchy intact. Fiction allows the reader access to that difference between outward conduct and inward response; the analytical task is to describe it without inventing consequences beyond the scene.

Shiller's narrative economics provides a neighbouring concern rather than the article's method. His 2017 account examines the circulation of stories and their relation to economic behaviour. The present study does not measure the diffusion of either novel or demonstrate its effects on spending. It examines represented economic relationships through literary form. Keeping those projects distinct allows an exchange between economics and criticism without treating the shared word narrative as proof of methodological equivalence (Shiller, 2017).

The following readings develop a specific proposition: access to food and authority over the terms of its consumption are separate dimensions of advantage. They may coincide, but they need not. The guest at a plentiful table may possess less freedom than its appearance suggests, while a wealthy host may lack the recognition he seeks. Reading these discrepancies through the details of particular scenes offers a firmer basis for comparison than assigning a single economic character to each country.

RESEARCH RESULT DISCUSSION

Provisioning and recognition in The Great Gatsby

The work behind the party

Nick introduces the scale of Gatsby's hospitality through an inventory of preparation. Before the reader knows the host well, the house acquires a rhythm: fruit arrives, workers prepare the grounds, food appears, guests assemble, and the property requires attention again. The repetition matters. Gatsby can finance an occasion whose social reach extends beyond his personal relationships, and he can do so repeatedly. Wealth becomes visible through the maintenance of that rhythm rather than through a balance sheet (Fitzgerald, 1925, ch. 3).

Nick concentrates that rhythm into a movement between two doors: Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York—every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves. (Fitzgerald, 1925, ch. 3)

Between delivery and removal stands the juicing machine and the butler's repeatedly pressing thumb. Nick gives an unusually precise account of capacity: the appliance can process two hundred oranges in half an hour, provided someone presses its button two hundred times. The precision interrupts the glamour with a small calculation of service (Fitzgerald, 1925, ch. 3).

The machine does not eliminate labour. Its operation still depends on the servant, whose body enters the description through a single repetitive movement. This narrowing of attention makes the action appear almost effortless from the guest's perspective while allowing the reader to recognise an employee's continued involvement. The scene offers grounds for discussing the relation between machinery and domestic service. It supplies no evidence about the servant's wages, the fruit's agricultural origin, or the route by which it reached the retailer. Those questions remain outside this passage.

The discarded halves require an equally careful reading. They are the remains of fruit that has been processed for consumption. Their presence can make the scale and material consequences of the party visible, but it does not establish that the extracted juice was unused. The image turns ordinary residues into something monumental, making a weekend's consumption striking through its accumulation. Its force lies in proportion and repetition. To describe the scene as deliberate destruction of edible food would replace the narrator's evidence with a stronger allegation.

The temporal arrangement contributes as much as the machine. Friday's delivery and Monday's removal bracket leisure with provisioning and cleanup. Guests encounter the middle of that sequence, when the labour has yielded a ready environment for pleasure. Nick's retrospective account restores its edges. He makes the party depend on work that its participants can overlook. That difference between the experience of the guest and the account given to the reader is one way the novel connects consumption to social position without explaining the relation in theoretical terms.

Veblen's approach helps identify why the scale is relevant. A host's expenditure can establish reputability through what an audience sees and repeats about it (Veblen, 1899, ch. 4). Gatsby's supplies announce his ability to maintain an unusually large social occasion. Nevertheless, the relationship

between display and reputation remains unsettled. An audience may recognise that something is expensive while continuing to doubt the person who paid for it. The subsequent scenes test precisely that gap. The machinery can produce juice; it cannot manufacture a settled judgement of the host.

The buffet and the audience

The buffet description gives food the density of a display:

On buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors-d'oeuvre, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold. (Fitzgerald, 1925, ch. 3)

The sentence accumulates dishes rather than following a person through a meal. Its colours and crowded arrangement supply a view of abundance that the reader can survey almost as a guest would survey the tables. "Bewitched" momentarily turns preparation into enchantment: food appears as the finished effect of work the sentence does not describe. This aesthetic organisation of plenty places visual impact ahead of any account of nutritional intake.

The theatrical vocabulary does not remove the food's ordinary usefulness. The dishes can nourish and impress at the same time. What changes is the descriptive priority: appearance occupies the foreground, while preparation and eating are less individually represented. Calling the meal conspicuous consumption depends on that larger setting of expenditure and display, not on the claim that ornament makes nourishment disappear. This reading allows the food to remain material even as it participates in a performance of status.

The social audience is unstable. People circulate, repeat stories, and enter conversations whose intimacy does not last. Gatsby's name moves among guests who are uncertain about his history. Hospitality brings them onto his property without giving him control over what they say about him. The host finances an occasion that becomes a site for speculation about his legitimacy. This is a poor exchange if measured only by the acquisition of secure esteem, although it may still achieve visibility, proximity, and the possibility of meeting Daisy.

The point becomes clearer if entry and belonging are separated. An open gathering can accommodate people without dissolving their judgements of one another. It may even intensify those judgements by placing unfamiliar participants within a setting rich in opportunities for appraisal. Gatsby's abundance temporarily gathers an audience; acceptance remains distributed among people whose approval he cannot purchase as directly as he purchases supplies. The distinction between a commodity and an acknowledgement is important to the article's economic argument. Both may matter to the purchaser, but they do not respond identically to expenditure.

Nick's own position prevents the account from becoming a transparent report about anonymous consumers. He selects the rumours, describes the crowd, and makes Gatsby emerge from the setting he has constructed. His account can grant the host dignity while making the guests appear careless. The resulting contrast must be analysed as a feature of narration. It is not a reliable basis for declaring that every participant lacks fellowship, or that no encounter at the party has meaning beyond extraction.

Quality and the authority to judge

The first dinner at the Buchanan house offers a smaller but revealing difficulty for any equation between wealth and sensory quality. Nick calls the claret “corky but rather impressive.” The judgement contains two criteria. A defect can be noticed while prestige remains effective. The wine’s social impression is not fully cancelled by its taste. Reading the phrase closely avoids the assumption that privileged consumers necessarily receive perfect goods and that the language of refinement simply records their objective superiority (Fitzgerald, 1925, ch. 1).

This small qualification has consequences for the later comparison. A critic who sets immaculate American alcohol against degraded Iraqi alcohol would lose a distinction already present in Fitzgerald’s prose. Reputation and sensory response can diverge within the affluent household itself. The question is how people negotiate that divergence. Nick can name the defect in his account, even while registering the wine’s impressiveness. The analysis of Al-Nabeeza will ask what happens when a guest cannot express an adverse response with comparable freedom.

The same dinner establishes that domestic privilege is vulnerable to disturbance. A telephone call interrupts the occasion and reveals the intrusion of Tom’s relationship outside the marriage. Service, candles, drinks, and polite conversation cannot secure an untroubled household. Material comfort is visible, but so are embarrassment and unequal gender relations. The scene prevents the private table from functioning as a simple picture of achieved harmony. Its order has to be maintained by people whose interests do not coincide (Fitzgerald, 1925, ch. 1).

Daisy’s discomfort with Gatsby’s party later introduces the authority to reject a display. Her reaction cannot be reduced to an assessment of how much it cost. The atmosphere and its company matter. Gatsby can arrange the occasion and invite her into it, but he cannot dictate the criteria through which she experiences it. A larger expenditure would not necessarily correct the problem. Indeed, further display could reproduce the very features she dislikes. The scene makes the limits of monetary access available through response rather than through an abstract statement about class (Fitzgerald, 1925, ch. 6).

This reading is compatible with treating taste as socially consequential, while leaving room for the particular desires and tensions of the characters. Daisy’s position gives her response weight for Gatsby, but she is also implicated in a relationship whose demands exceed the party. The narrative does not require a choice between a wholly personal reaction and a wholly structural one. Its interest lies in their connection. The analysis should preserve that connection rather than turning Daisy into a spokesperson for a complete social class.

Hospitality changes before the confrontation

At the beginning of Chapter Seven, Gatsby's public hospitality has ceased and his domestic staff has changed. The sequence is decisive. These developments precede the confrontation at the Plaza Hotel. Gatsby explains: "I wanted somebody who wouldn't gossip. Daisy comes over quite often—in the afternoons." The immediate narrative evidence therefore connects the reorganisation of his household with privacy and repeated access to Daisy, rather than with a defeat that has not yet occurred (Fitzgerald, 1925, ch. 7).

The change permits a more precise interpretation of expenditure. The public party has served one arrangement of his desire; the quieter household serves another. Its supplies and employees are reorganised as the relationship changes. Hospitality does not simply expand until failure forces it to collapse. Its form responds to the kind of access Gatsby now seeks to preserve. This makes consumption purposeful without turning every expense into a calculated financial investment or claiming knowledge of an accounting process absent from the novel.

The dismissal of servants also complicates the treatment of labour. Employees do more than operate appliances. They observe, talk, and carry knowledge across the boundary of the household. Gatsby's concern recognises that service does not entail complete control over the worker's social agency. The apparently secondary problem of gossip becomes central once the house must protect a private relationship. A reading confined to mechanical alienation would miss this change in the significance of domestic employment.

Nick's image of an ended public career gives the transition dramatic shape. Yet the narrator's compressed image should be read alongside Gatsby's explanation. Together they show a shift from visibility to discretion, with the same property accommodating both. The parties made a host conspicuous; the changed staffing attempts to make a relationship less observable. That movement gives the comparison a useful distinction between spending to attract an audience and spending to regulate what an audience can know.

The untouched chicken

Later in Chapter Seven, Nick sees Tom and Daisy seated across a kitchen table with cold fried chicken and bottles of ale between them. Neither has touched the food or drink. The setting differs sharply from Gatsby's buffet: modest provisions, a domestic interior, and a pair whose conversation excludes the observer. Nick concludes that "anybody would have said that they were conspiring together." The wording locates conspiracy in an observer's inference rather than in an overheard agreement. The meal's force comes from its place after the day's violence and from the narrator's limited view through a window (Fitzgerald, 1925, ch. 7).

The untouched chicken cannot alone prove that the couple feel contempt for sustenance. Anxiety, distraction, and urgent conversation are plausible immediate explanations for not eating. Nor does a simple meal establish humility. The significant conjunction is their material security and their ability to withdraw into a protected domestic space while consequences unfold elsewhere.

Food helps locate that withdrawal in an ordinary household scene, making protection appear familiar rather than ceremonial.

Nick does not hear a complete plan through the window. His language marks an interpretation of gestures and proximity. That limitation matters because the reading concerns complicity. It is possible to argue that the scene suggests renewed solidarity between Tom and Daisy without presenting an imagined agreement as spoken fact. Literary analysis can retain the suspicion generated by the scene while respecting the difference between what the narrator sees and what he concludes.

The contrast with *Gatsby* is therefore one of secure and insecure belonging, not simply large and small meals. *Gatsby*'s public provision seeks a recognition he cannot settle. The Buchanans can occupy an ordinary kitchen without advertising their standing to its observer. Their security does not depend on the current meal's magnificence. To interpret this as a form of privilege is to connect the scene to the novel's larger distribution of protection, rather than to claim that cold chicken has an inherently upper-class meaning.

The limits of the American case

Fitzgerald's geography also prevents the wealthy tables from representing everyone. The movement between the Eggs, the city, and the Valley of Ashes places privilege beside labour, material deterioration, and exposure. The contrast establishes unequal conditions within the represented society. It does not provide sufficient evidence for diagnosing particular nutritional deficiencies among its poorer characters. The analysis can identify exclusion and insecurity without inventing the diets of people whose meals the narrator does not describe (Fitzgerald, 1925, ch. 2).

That absence is itself relevant to narrative form. The reader receives detailed descriptions of wealthy hospitality but comparatively little knowledge of everyday provisioning elsewhere. Nick's access and attention shape the distribution. Acknowledging this imbalance avoids treating the novel as an exhaustive social survey. It also suggests a critical question about visibility: which forms of consumption become memorable spectacle, and which conditions remain the background against which spectacle is perceived?

Across the scenes examined here, expenditure produces several outcomes. It supports service, gathers spectators, offers pleasure, and makes wealth visible. It does not invariably buy esteem, privacy, intimacy, or protection. Those outcomes depend on relationships whose terms exceed the price of goods. The novel's economic interest lies partly in this uneven conversion. The next part develops the comparison by examining a different failure of equivalence: the provision of food that does not secure the guest's freedom to enjoy it, judge it openly, or refuse.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Two novels cannot establish the prevalence of a practice across nations or periods. The selection favours encounter in which hospitality and authority are unusually visible; it gives less attention to household budgeting, agricultural production, or routine subsistence. The conclusions concern the represented relationships and the interpretive distinctions they require. Extending them to actual consumption patterns would demand other evidence and an appropriate empirical design.

The temporal difference also matters. These are not simultaneous observations of equivalent institutions, and no direct influence between the works is claimed. The comparison rests on a question that each narrative answers differently: what can food confer, and what remains beyond its power to secure? Historical context clarifies those answers when the novel identifies it, as with the embargo reference. It cannot supply a price series, a trafficking route, or a physiological diagnosis absent from the evidence.

Translation introduces a further limit without making close reading impossible. The Arabic distinguishes fear from desire, inferior bread from spoiled bread, and a frightened group from a literal designation as prisoners. Keeping these differences visible disciplines the English analysis. The retained expressions permit the reader to examine the relation between the translation and the interpretation, rather than relying on a more dramatic English sentence whose force exceeds the source.

Abundance finally emerges as something differently usable. Gatsby's resources sustain a spectacle whose audience does not guarantee him belonging. The Buchanans' uneaten food accompanies a more secure withdrawal. Kachachi's club scenes show provision stripped of the guest's freedom to receive it willingly, while Taji's bread article prevents patronage from becoming an explanation of total submission. The comparison preserves conspicuous consumption, class distinction, and coercive consumption as related but differentiated terms.

A supplied meal tells us too little about the person who receives it. The terms of access, the power to judge, and the consequences of refusal give the act its social meaning. Literary criticism contributes by tracing those terms through particular words, objects, gestures, and sequences. The economics of abundance and scarcity is therefore approached here through unequal consumption as the novels represent it, with every extension of the argument answerable to the scenes that sustain it.

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