

In contemporary society, the closest thing to that of a conqueror or a hero is someone with an indescribably large motivation for something. They view the world in an idealized form; what the world can be to them. However, with a motivation that intense, it is easy for them to forget about the obstacles. In fiction, these obstacles are often used to characterize the glamour of someone. However, what if they were so great that they seem impossible? What if the obstacle is to defy time itself? One outcome of this is that the “conqueror” may simply ignore them, and refuse to acknowledge that they exist. Yet another outcome is for them blindly try to overtake them, ignoring the impossibility of it. Through the character of Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* develops the idea that an individual’s truthful perception will be obscured in pursuit of an ideal world.

Although Daisy slowly drifts away from Gatsby after the climax, Gatsby’s pursuit of his ideal wife refuses to acknowledge the truth that Daisy is capable of loving Tom Buchannan. When Daisy admits to this, Gatsby’s perception breaks. The first instance in which his perception is shown to be skewed is when he meets Pammy, the daughter of Daisy and Tom. To Gatsby, this child is a symbol of Tom and Daisy’s love. Up until when he first meets Pammy, he partially does not believe in her, signifying how his pursuit of Daisy forces him to disregard the truthful love that Daisy and Tom shared. When he first encounters the child, Gatsby is described as: “looking at the child with surprise. I don’t think he had ever really believed in its existence before” (117). Because Pammy is a symbol for love between Tom and Daisy, Gatsby’s disbelief of her parallels his disbelief of Daisy loving another man. This further evidences how Gatsby believes in the ideal version of Daisy, which does not allow him to perceive truths that break the ideal version. Furthermore, during the climax of the novel, Daisy strays even further from Gatsby’s ideal of her by admitting that: “I did love him once-but I loved you too.” (132). Due

to both this and support from Tom, Gatsby does not take this well: “The words seemed to bite physically into Gatsby” (132). In a hysteria, he desperately tries to convince Tom but mostly himself that Daisy does not belong to Tom: “‘You don’t understand,’ said Gatsby, with a touch of panic. ‘You’re not going to take care of her anymore’” (153). The quotations describing Gatsby during the climax highlights the severity of his delusion. His unwillingness to recognize the truth that Daisy can love Tom, thereby breaking his ideal of her, forces an outburst of emotion out of him. Near the end of the novel, Daisy is described as drifting even farther away from Gatsby. She sends no signal to Gatsby the night after he took blame for her: “‘Nothing happened’, he said wanly” (147) and Nick describes that between Tom and Daisy, there was an “unmistakable air of natural intimacy about the picture” (145). In juxtaposition with all of these, Gatsby’s delusion is epitomized when he still desperately believes that Daisy will call for him: “‘I suppose Daisy’ll call too.’ He looked at me anxiously, as if he hoped I’d corroborate this” (153). In the end, his pursuit of an ideal Daisy fails him for the last time; he does not perceive the truth that Daisy has disregarded him, the truth that she will never call him back. Gatsby’s ideal of Daisy clouding his ability to see truthfully is distinctly demonstrated within his relationship with her. He chooses to ignore the truth, as that would cause him pain. Instead, he lives in blissful ignorance of the love that Daisy and Tom feel. When Daisy finally admits to this, the ignorance that Gatsby bottled inside of him burst, along with his emotions. Even despite this, he continually hopes that she will call him back. Again, she never does. This serves to show how an individual (Gatsby) can be blinded to truths when pursuing their ideal version of the world.

Gatsby’s ideal of Daisy altering his truth is elaborated on when exploring his relationship with time. He is obsessed with an ideal Daisy from five years ago, and the pursuit of her has manipulated his rationality to such an extent that he does not recognize the passage of time. This

theme is introduced in the passage from Gatsby: “‘Can’t repeat the past?’ he cried incredulously. ‘Why of course you can!’” (110). In this statement, Gatsby expresses something that neither Nick nor the reader believes is true; his mind is stuck in viewing Daisy as someone from the past. This is emphasized by the certainty in which he says it. This theme is reinforced through the use of symbolism when Gatsby knocks over a clock in Nick’s house: “the clock took this moment to tilt dangerously at the pressure of his head” (86). In this example, the clock is used as a symbol of the constant passage of time. By having Gatsby knock it over with his head, it demonstrates how Gatsby wishes to go against the flow of time in order to fulfill his perception of the ideal Daisy from the past. In order to further describe this phenomenon, Nick states that: “Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us” (180). In this quotation, the green light is used as a symbol of Daisy. This symbolism is stressed when considering the first appearance of Gatsby, when he is reaching out towards the light the island where Daisy lives. Nick emphasizes that Gatsby will never reach the green light because it only exists in the past: “that year by year recedes before us”. This is precisely where Gatsby wants to go for the entire novel; his ideal of Daisy from the past left him chasing that version of her. He refuses to acknowledge that the light is behind him too, his ideal version of Daisy is so great that he can not see it. Throughout the Great Gatsby, the concept of time is shown either through dialogue defying it, symbolism (the clock), and Nick’s direct comparison between it and Daisy, however they all reflect back onto Gatsby. His chase for the ideal Daisy left him to ignore the fundamental passage of time. Through this, F. Scott Fitzgerald distinctly uses Gatsby’s disbelief of time to reference how far Gatsby’s perception has been altered by his idealistic view of Daisy. Although The Great Gatsby is viewed as a tragedy, it can be fitting to consider it as a cautionary tale. It serves to demonstrate how an individual can become so infatuated with an ideal that they

become blind to the truth. The protagonist Gatsby, goes to extreme lengths to chase an ideal version of Daisy that is impossible. He attempts to defy time in order to achieve this, and when Daisy eventually admits that she did love Tom, that she is not the same person from five years ago, Gatsby's obscuration of the truth comes form in an outburst. This explosion of emotion represents the first instance in which he comes into contact with the truth that Daisy is not the same as his ideal version of her, demonstrating the blindness that he has been viewing Daisy with for the past five years. At the same time as Daisy disappears and never calls him back, he still holds on to the notion that she is going to. As a reader, once the delusion of Gatsby is acknowledged, it is interesting to note the outcomes of it. Gatsby's intense motivation caused him to become extremely wealthy, while holding on to his good nature. If something motivates an individual to constantly feel like they are achieving their dreams, whether it be delusion or not, a fundamental question is posed. Is there such a thing as "bad" motivation?