**F Scott Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby***

Write about the ways in which F Scott Fitzgerald tells the story in this extract.

In your answer you should:

* Explore the narrative techniques used in this extract
* Consider the extract in the context of a novel as a whole and its genre

This extract comes at the end of the novel, and therefore, within it, Fitzgerald is tying up and resolving many narrative strands. The plot lines are also being concluded: Nick is writing this two years after the death of Gatsby; he has “turned away” from Jordan, reached an understanding of what Tom and Daisy stand for, and is now disillusioned with the values and the people in the East of America, and has decided to move back to the West.

There is a feeling of emptiness that he feels as he talks to Tom just before this extract, and realises that Tom is like a “child”. There is no reverence here that there was in Chapter 1 where he described the Buchanan’s house with the imagery of fire and precious metals, and when he almost seemed to respect the power of Tom Buchanan who is defined by his “hulking” presence, and who moves Nick around like a pawn on a chess board.

By Chapter 9 Nick recognises that the old money that Tom represents is no more meaningful than the new money which bought Gatsby’s house and lifestyle. The contrast is obvious then in comparison with Gatsby’s house in Chapter 3, with its blue gardens. The lights that blazed like the “World’s Fair” in Chapter 5 are gone, as is the “inexplicable dust” that lay everywhere in Chapter 8, and without Gatsby, the house is truly “empty”. Fitzgerald has used the motif of the house to emphasise this sense of emotional emptiness.

Characteristically, the setting here has an analogical and symbolic function. Its analogical function is to show the moment when Nick truly perceives the truth about the superficiality of Gatsby’s persona. This is represented most clearly in the image of the “incoherent failure of a house”. It reflects Nick’s own sense of failure. However, it is also a symbol of the incoherence of Gatsby’s personality, and also his failure to achieve the American Dream. Symbolically, the image of the grass that has also been repeated throughout the novel to represent the cultivated artificiality of Gatsby’s life style is now uncut, again indicating Gatsby’s absence. Fitzgerald emphasises this absence through the silence in the first paragraph, with Nick not wanting to hear the taxi driver’s story, and the sound exists only in his head. The adjective “incessant” implies that this is something that he cannot control.

The author continues to create a sense of confusion, as he echoes the imagined sound of the cars, with the actual car that drives to the front door. The symbol of the car that has been so prominent in the rest of the novel to represent a dangerous social and physical mobility is now so insignificant that Fitzgerald pre-modifies it with the adjective “material”. It is almost as though Nick has to consciously separate dream from reality.

The first person narration of Nick allows the reader to see his subjectivity. Fitzgerald often seems to point towards the way in which Nick is making sense of things: this is not an objective factual account of events. This is a written account that has been recollected after two years. The words “perhaps” and “probably” in this extract demonstrates this partial understanding. Here, the phrase “perhaps he made a story about it all his own” suggests that any one of the characters could have made different story from the one that Nick made. It can be said that this novel is all about how to construct a story, about what to leave out and what to include, and about how to piece together a person through gossip and hearsay. Nick seems to allude to this in the next line, where he reveals his partiality in the words “I didn’t want to hear it.” The image of the word “scrawled” on the step repeats this preoccupation. Here, Fitzgerald uses the verb “scrawled” to suggest the carelessness and the speed with which the word was written. The image also captures the idea that this novel is all about Nick writing a story of a life. Nick re-creates Gatsby’s life in words, as Gatsby re-creates his own, but we realise that he cannot re-create his past any more than he can repeat it. Significantly, in this image Nick “erases” the word with his shoe. The act of erasure is effortless. As if to emphasise the effortless nature of the words being written and Nick’s eradication of it, the verbs “scrawled” and “sprawled” are linked phonetically.

In this section, the focus moves onto one aspect the history of America. It is clear that Fitzgerald does not adhere to the genre of tragedy at the end of this novel, where a new hero should take over from the one that has died. Instead, he creates almost a moral, instructional tone, or at least a reflective one. In this time of reflection, the focus moves away from Gatsby’s house to a reflection on those settlers who first arrived in America with “wonder” and “dreams”. In one of the early drafts of *The Great Gatsby*, this was originally in Chapter 1, but it was decided that the mournful tone would dictate how the reader approached the novel and so it was moved to the final chapter. The tone is predominantly created through two sets of adjectives that contrast with one another. The first set (“closed”, “shadowy”, “inessential”) relate to the world of Nick’s disillusion, and the second set relate to the hope that the settlers had (“fresh”, “green”, “new” “transitory enchanted”).

The verb “brooding” also relays to the reader the melancholic nature of Nick’s thoughts, and his unsettled state of mind is reflected in the way that his thoughts unfold in a disjointed, non-chronological way. He moves from the moment he left Gatsby’s house, to the time he spend in New York, back to an unspecific time when he heard a car approach, to the last night again, to thoughts on the original settlers, to thoughts about Gatsby, and finally to a reflection on the human condition.

This moment has been anticipated throughout the novel from Chapter 1, where Gatsby stretches his arms across the dark water, to Chapter 5, where he finally stands with Daisy, looking across the sound at the green light. Fitzgerald, himself, recognised that *The Great Gatsby* was intricately patterned, and the symbol of the green light that represents hope, appears at the start, directly at the centre, and at the close of the novel.

In the final two paragraphs, there is a change. The past tense of Gatsby who “believed” in the green light, moves to the present tense. For the first time in the novel, Fitzgerald uses the first person plural pronoun “we” and it seems as though Nick is addressing the reader directly. The use of the hyphens and the ellipses increase the sense that this is the spoken voice. Perhaps the reader judged Gatsby throughout the novel and found him naïve in his pursuit of a dream, but now Fitzgerald repeats the verb “stretch” and this time it is the reader who is the agent. There is no answer to this endless desire to dream, the unfinished elliptical sentence “And one fine morning –“ suggests. However, the verb “beat” connotes hard work, and the adverb “ceaselessly” implies that humankind will endure this forever.

*This is a higher level response that demonstrates an ability to use linguistic and literary concepts and terminology, in what is a coherent and fluently expressed answer. There is detailed analysis of the ways in which the author uses narrative technique, in an exploration of non-linear narrative, the first person narrative voice, and the function of setting, for example. While this answer does not examine the significance of the genre, the passage is placed accurately in the context of the novel as a whole, and its function is clearly explained.*