

Presentation script on Mise en scene in The Grand Budapest Hotel

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The Grand Budapest hotel recounts the adventures of Gustave H, a well known concierge at a famous European hotel between the wars, and Zero Moustafa, the lobby boy who becomes his most trusted friend. The story involves the theft and recovery of a priceless painting and the battle for an enormous family fortune, all against the back-drop of the beginning of the world war.

The scene I will be analyzing from Grand Budapest hotel is "We must go to her". Throughout this scene the aspect ratio is 4:3. Anderson has done this because at this part of the storyline it is 1932, so the aspect ratio takes us back to this time representing how cinematography was shot back then. Anderson is one of the few directors to change the aspect ratio at various points of a film for example; the 16:9 establishes both present day and 1985; 2.35:1 widescreen aspect ratio represents 1968 and finally the 4:3. These varied aspect ratios helps the audience to visualise what films were like at those different times, allowing us to jump between the timelines meaning the older Zero can act like a narrator throughout the film for himself, Gustave and Zero's love interest Agatha.

In this scene Zero, the lobby boy Zero, makes a shocking discovery when looking at newspapers that a close friend Of Gustave, the Dowager Countess has been found dead in her own home. The scene follows zero running Back to the hotel, to tell Gustave about this tragic news. Various shots are displayed throughout however most are usually centralised. The centralisation of each shot is one of Anderson's main attributes that he brings to each of his films. There are 7 individual centralised shots in this scene that have no camera movement, the only movement is Zero running to Gustave in various shots. Most of the shots that include tracking in, have the subject centralised in frame to keep them as the key focus of the scene. Anderson also uses symmetry throughout the scene and film to represent Gustaves need of everything in the Budapest hotel being perfect. However there is one shot in the scene that isn't symmetrical for a reason, which is the realisation that the Countess is dead. The camera tracks his movement still keeping the subject central, but when he comes to a sudden stop Zero is positioned to the left hand side of the screen. It is the only shot that does this within this minute long clip and it's because it represents confusion. All the shots are centralised throughout except this one which is strange as it's one of Wes Anderson's main traits. Also because of this anomaly in the subject placement, it leads the viewer to feel confused too as the style of the film has changed only slightly. Although once Zero reaches Gustave, every shot goes back to having the subject

central to the frame. This is because before hand Zero wasn't with Gustave therefore didn't have a mentor to help him which is why Zero was placed to the left of the screen. However as soon as he reaches Gustave, he now has a feeling of structure and control with Gustave telling him what needs to be done.

The opening establishing shot shows various uses of mise en scene through the use of colours, such as blue, white and cream colours shown on the buildings. The blue buildings colours surrounding Zero foreshadows the sad news of the Countess' death. In addition to this, the dull colours used on the rest of the buildings create a sense of discomfort to the audience as Wes Anderson usually uses bright, strange and vibrant colours in his films. E.g. The hotel being pink, the carpet being a bright red, and all the hotel workers wearing bright purple. So the strange change in bright to dull colour causes the audience to feel the same discomfort as the character. Furthermore the same shot in this scene contains bright red signs with a silhouette in between, this can also convey danger or death because of the colour red, as well as the mysterious unknown figure visible through the window which after finding out about the countess' death the silhouette could represent murder.

Throughout this scene, eyes and head movement play a key part to the mise en scene in this scene. As soon as Zero realises the countess was dead in the newspaper, his eyes widen and he runs back to the hotel. When he enters the shot of the front of the hotel, the workers turn tracking Zero's movement. The next shot then shows him running through the lobby again with everyone following him with their head/eye movement. The last running shot includes a maid in the background who again looks round at him when he's running. These three examples are presented by Anderson in order to keep the audience's eyes on him in his desperate attempt to be as quick as he can get back to Gustave. The entire scene up until he reaches Gustave, the viewer has no idea as to why he is in panic. The eye/head movements from the extra characters confuses the audience further as they act just the same as the viewer... constantly watching Zero run in panic wondering what he's so worried about.

Music has been edited very carefully into this scene. The opening shot to the scene has no music, only atmospheric sounds of Zero walking so that the focus is instantly brought to him as well as creating a sense of normality to the viewer as Zero gets on with his normal jobs. However, as soon as he sees the newspaper, his eyes widen and non-diegetic music begins. The music is supposed to represent both Zero's reaction to the news and to create tension so that the audience wonder why he's in shock. This music continues all the way through until he reaches Gustave's door. When the speech begins there is no music, however part way through there conversation, the shot

changes from shot reverse shot, to a close up of the newspaper with the news of the Countess' death and as this is shown the music enters again for a few seconds but then goes back to none as soon as the dialogue continues. The music only plays for those few seconds to make sure to the audience that the attention should be on the information on the newspaper and nothing else.

In addition to this, the entirety of the film shows Zero in his work outfit clearly stating that he is the lobby boy, where as Gustave has both a white shirt and bowtie with his outfit. Showing his 'importance' over Zero and that he is a man of high reputation, as well as Gustaves slicked back 'posh' hair/accent still representing a sense of dominance between the two of them. Zero also draws on his own mustache each morning trying to prove to him that he is a man who can grow facial hair like Gustave himself. Throughout the film Gustave acts like a mentor to Zero and Zero definitely sees him as one which is why he is constantly trying to impress him/be just like him e.g. the moustache. Gustave also addresses Zero with no manners in this scene saying "What is it?" he uses no manners towards him as he is seen as a lower class to him. On the other hand as soon as he greets a guest or some of the other workers, he does so in respect and being such a lovable person on the stage. Gustave also ends the conversation with no manners, he simply closes the door in front of him without saying thankyou or anything... again showing that he believes he is higher up in class to Zero. Although these views completely change later on in the film where Gustave and Zero form a special bond partly because Zero helped Gustave escape from prison.

The colour red is placed vibrantly in 4 of the shots in which Zero is running, everytime being carpet that he is running on. The red colour may represent his need of urgency as well as the death of the Countess, like an alarm Zero is trying to get back as quickly as possible. The use of this colour being repeated like a motive helps the audience to understand his need of urgency becoming bigger and bigger. When Zero reaches gustave the colours go back to normal except for the close ups on the news paper which again have the red in the background, matching to the news of the death.

In conclusion I think that Anderson uses mise en scene fantastically throughout this scene using colour, wardrobe and shot composition as a way of taking the audience through the characters emotions. The aspect ratio was a key feature of both this scene and the entire movie as it reflects on what time of year the scene was set in and also amplifies this through using the same aspect ratio as they were using in those individual points in history.

Reference:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pyHqCJEljc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FI1qIj0fuk0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pyHqCJEljc>

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2278388/?ref_=nv_sr_1?ref_=nv_sr_1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCaMMfp8C10>