

REVIEW – GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL BY PETER BRADSHAW

5 This delirious operetta-farce is an eerily detailed and very funny work from the
savant virtuoso of American indie cinema, Wes Anderson. It is set in the fading grandeur
of a preposterous luxury hotel in an equally preposterous pre-war central European
country, the fictional Zubrowka. This kind of milieu – the hotel spa or sanatorium
occupied by mysterious invalids, chancers or impoverished White Russians – was loved by
Thomas Mann and Vladimir Nabokov, but the closing credits reveal that the director has
10 been specifically inspired by Stefan Zweig, author of *Beware of Pity* and *The Post Office
Girl*. In fact, the movie's moustachioed star Ralph Fiennes does rather resemble Zweig.

Stefan Zweig, never entirely happy with movie adaptations of his work, might
however have been baffled by this personal homage, just as Roald Dahl might have been
by Wes Anderson's *Fantastic Mr Fox*. The way that Anderson supersaturates every square
15 inch of his film's intricate fabric, every sofa covering, every snow-capped peak, every word
of every sans-serif lettered notice, with loving comedy is something that the author might
not have understood or cared for. But Anderson's brilliantly crafted forms are something
other and something better than pastiche.

Ralph Fiennes is on glorious form as Monsieur Gustave, the legendary concierge of
20 the Grand Budapest Hotel in the early 1930s: a gigantic edifice in the mountains. It's a
cross between Nicolae Ceausescu's presidential palace in Bucharest and the Overlook
Hotel in Kubrick's *The Shining*. In fact, the huge and staggeringly realised interiors of the
Grand Budapest really have given Kubrick's place a run for its money. It is a superb
cathedral of eccentricity, with a gorgeous dining hall the size of a football field, a gasp-
25 inducing canyon of a lobby area, with corridors and rooms encircling an exquisitely ornate
galleried central space which is to be the location of an extraordinary gunfight. The hotel
looks like something a very lonely, clever 13- year-old boy might have designed while
never leaving his bedroom.

Gustave is energetic and exacting, taking a passionate pride in the high standards
30 of his establishment and ruling the staff with a rod of iron. Like them, he is kitted out in a
Ruritanian purple livery which matches the hotel's decor. Gustave affects an air of genial
worldliness and deferential intimacy with the hotel's grander clientele, and despite the
quasi-military correctness of his bearing in dealing with his subordinates, Gustave can
also lapse into high-camp familiarity with the guests. Fiennes is absolutely brilliant in all
35 this. I can imagine Christoph Waltz or Dirk Bogarde in the role, but neither would have
been as good.

For reasons best known to himself, Gustave decides to mentor the hotel's vulnerable
lobby boy, orphan immigrant Zero Moustafa, played by 17-year-old Tony Revolori. It is to
Zero that Gustave reveals the engine that drives his hotel's wellbeing: his ready,
40 enthusiastic appetite for servicing the intimate needs of thousands of aristocratic old
ladies who come back every year. (In choosing to call his lobby boy "Zero", Anderson may
have been subconsciously influenced by Zero Mostel, a great pleaser of little old ladies in

The Producers.)

Gustave's greatest amour is the ancient and cantankerous Madame D, played by Tilda Swinton with wrinkly prosthetics and strange pale-blue contacts to show her near astigmatic blindness. The infatuated Madame D infuriates her sinister son Dmitri (Adrien Brody) by leaving Gustave, in her will, a priceless Renaissance portrait belonging to her family. Gustave is thus to face the family's fanatical attempts to disinherit this counter jumper, involving her butler Serge (Mathieu Amalric) and Zero's courageous fiancée, Agatha (Saoirse Ronan), who works in the local Viennese-style patisserie. Gustave calls on the assistance of a secret professional society, a bit like Jeeves in The Code of the Woosters. There are numerous cameos for all Anderson's repertory players, and many more.

As ever, Anderson's world is created like the most magnificent full-scale doll's house; his incredible locations, interiors and old-fashioned matte-painting backdrops sometimes give the film a look of a magic-lantern display or an illustrated plate from a book. He and the cinematographer Robert D Yeoman contrive the characteristic rectilinear camera movements and tableaux photographed head-on. The film has been compared to Hitchcock and Lubitsch; I kept thinking of Peter Greenaway. It makes the audience feel like giants bending down to admire a superbly detailed little universe: I can't think of any film-maker who brings such overwhelming control to his films. Alexandre Desplat's score keeps the picture moving at an exhilarating canter, and the script, co-written by Anderson and his longtime collaborator Hugo Guinness is an intelligent treat. Watching this is like taking the waters in Zubrowka. A deeply pleasurable immersion.

delirious	nepřičetný, blouznící
eerily	tajemně
savant	znalý
grandeur	velikost, vznešenost
preposterous	nesmyslný, absurdní
chancer	bezohledný prospěchář
impoverished	ožebračený
baffled	zmatený, bezradný
pastiche	napodobenina
to be kitted out	být vybavený
livery	livrej, uniforma
deferential	uctivý
high-camp	rafinované užití kýčů
cantankerous	hašteřivý
wrinkly	vrásčitý
to infuriate	rozzuřit
sinister	zlověstný, hrozivý
will	závěť
to disinherit	vydědit
rectilinear	přímočarý
canter	cval
immersion	pohroužení (se)

