

COMPELLING COMMENTS

Wes Anderson's 'Exceedingly Lovely' Face

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In Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, Agatha is a baker with a defining feature of a facial birthmark. Protagonist Gustav describes Agatha, "I must say, I find that girl utterly delightful. Flat as a board, enormous birthmark the shape of Mexico over half her face, ...Yet without question, without fail, always and invariably, she's exceedingly lovely."¹

Agatha is depicted as sweet with her Mexico birthmark noted as her only "flaw." Yet, Agatha's appearance is a far cry from the protagonists and love-interests in classic cinematography. Heroes and heroines are portrayed with flawless skin, while villains are typically depicted with marred features.² Most often, the villains are troubled with scars and vascular deformities that become a visual representation of their heinous acts and poor self-worth. The contrast of perfect and flawed skin often underscores the dichotomy between good and evil, with concerns of developing a prejudice against skin diseases.²

While Agatha's defining facial feature is not remarked upon more frequently in the film, the striking spot of beauty is likely a port-wine stain. The capillary malformation on her right cheek following the V2 branch of the trigeminal nerve. Over time, these cutaneous vascular malformations typically do not regress and instead, grow and darken into

adulthood. Later in the movie, Agatha's love, Zero Mustafa, notes that she succumbs to disease, dying in a few years. While not overtly stated, a potential cause of Agatha's death could be related to complications of her Mexico birthmark, a cutaneous presentation of Sturge-Weber disease. This congenital vascular disease commonly includes vascular malformations in the brain and eyes; Agatha may have succumbed to a seizure with poor vascular perfusion to her cerebral cortex. Nevertheless, Agatha charms viewers and protagonist Zero with her shy kindness; her slight, albeit grandiose facial imperfection making her even more human.

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