

The Myth of "Moonrise Kingdom": A Children's Tale

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“The universe is made of stories, not atoms.”—poet Muriel Rukeyser

“I can't offer you a legally binding union, it won't hold up in the state, the county or frankly any court in the world due to your age, lack of a license and failure to get parental consent BUT the ritual does carry a very important moral weight within yourselves - you can't enter into this lightly. Look into my eyes - do you love each other?” These are the words spoken to Sam Shakusky and Suzy Bishop, a 12-year-old boy and girl at the peak of their mythic journey in Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom*. This romantic and comedic film chronicles the adventures of Sam and Suzy as they face some pretty adult obstacles. While this quirky film may seem like mere entertainment, *Moonrise Kingdom* contains key ingredients that other stories have used to connect humanity to both the past and future. Of all the stories with which we are familiar, myths are the most symbolically potent, reflecting the workings of the culture that makes them. “Throughout the inhabited world, in all times and under every circumstance, the myths of man have flourished...It would not be too much to say that myth is the secret opening through which...the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation” (Campbell 20). This myth, which Wes Anderson has carefully constructed, does not contain the classic adult male hero on a quest to save his home and defeat evil, but instead features child heroes on a quest to save their childhoods. Children as heroes are not rare, but they are rarely discussed by scholars. As these kids struggle through childhood, Anderson allows them adult-like qualities that put them on an equal level with their barely competent adult “peers.” The world is well accustomed to the importance of stories, from the Ancient Greek myths to modern political figures. *Moonrise Kingdom* is a unique modern myth. The “narratives of child heroes” are ones that typically “stress the dangers inherent in childhood and making the transition to adulthood” (Pache 6).

Childhood is a universal experience, so it is a little shocking that it has not been explored further in regard to the portrayal of children in mythic stories.

Stories allow us to see the innumerable possibilities our lives might hold. We've heard thousands of tales that seem to illuminate and encourage the multitude of different avenues available to us. These reoccurring myths can function as instructions to our future members of society in ways to behave, and sometimes give lessons by sharing ways humanity has behaved in the past in hopes those future generations will not repeat the mistakes. Stories are a part of every culture on Earth; the patterns and similarities found within them demonstrate the commonalities we share as humans and reveal the complexities of our experiences. Stories and myths are forms which allow us to repackage old themes and ideas into new ones that fit into our present societal contexts. "The value of myth comes from an ability to both represent and constitute our past, present, and future" (Perlich 194). Stories can survive time, like the epic tale of the *Odyssey*, but many are forgotten. The stories of the past were relevant in their time but can contain elements that are still relevant now and will continue to be relevant in the future. Time has not changed the constant presence of storytelling. As we change, our stories change with us, yet they all seem to contain the same symbolic elements. Ancient stories hold similarities with modern stories which bond us to our past.

Myths began as oral traditions and were then documented in books. We all know of religious stories from the Bible or epic fantasy tales such as the Harry Potter series, but we can also have myths presented in film. Filmmakers like Steven Spielberg with *Indiana Jones* or *E.T.*, George Lucas with the *Star Wars* series, and Francis Coppola's *Godfather* trilogy draw heavily from what is known about the structure of myths when creating their epic stories. *Moonrise Kingdom*, as well as Wes Anderson's other films, is new, odd, and hyper-realistic, but this and

his other films rely heavily on recycled mythology to inform their characters and their journey. While *Moonrise* upholds many classic aspects of a hero's mythic quest seen again and again, it also differs from mainstream interpretations. Anderson's use of children in cinema is not common. Eric Lars Olson's film study from the 1980s reveals ideas that can be applied to this modern tale of two children with similar results. "Child heroes, through mythic quests they are tasked with, may be offering insight into the perceptions of their cultural guardians. To find that a similar function runs through modern stories with child heroes would mean that they could be unique, sharing the feature with their ancient brethren" (Olson 35). My research and analysis of *Moonrise Kingdom* will continue the study of films that Olson started with his popular 1980s film study.

Olson analyzes *The Goonies*, *Stand By Me*, and *E.T.*, all hugely popular movies in the 1980s, which included child heroes. *Moonrise Kingdom* is a modern example of this cinematic phenomenon and the functions of myth that Olson discovered through his studies are also seen in Anderson's film. Child heroes exist in modern day as well as in Ancient Greek myths. "The archaeological and historical record demonstrates the prevalence of child heroes, yet none of the scholarly literature gives more than cursory attention to baby and child heroes – a gap that results in skewed interpretations of the phenomenon" (Pache 5). By adding *Moonrise Kingdom* to the films studied in regards to child heroes I hope to add to the discussion started by Olson, Pache, and others. The role the child hero played in these films is very similar to the roles played by Sam and Suzy in regards to their hero's journey.

Description of Artifact

In the last decade, Wes Anderson has become a new cultural icon, writing and directing many well-loved films. His early films have been widely viewed and highly acclaimed. They include *The Royal Tenenbaums*, about the Tenenbaum family and their patriarchal struggles, *The Darjeeling Limited*, about three brothers on a trip through India reflecting on their childhood after their father's death, and *Rushmore*, the story of teenager Max Fischer and his developing crush on a teacher at his school. These films and the rest of Anderson's oeuvre address themes of interpersonal struggles and familial and childhood relationships as well as transitions in life, such as divorce, death, and leaving school. Anderson's newest release in particular, *Moonrise Kingdom*, presents these themes through an often overlooked perspective. The two children at the center of the tale provide a viewpoint that we can all relate to in some way, since we all experienced childhood.

Sam Shakusky and Suzy Bishop are the kids leading the narrative in *Moonrise Kingdom*. Sam is a khaki scout at summer camp on the (fictitious) island of New Penzance, where Suzy resides with her family. He is an orphan, labeled a nuisance by his foster parents and "the least popular kid" at summer camp by his peers; Suzy is equally "troubled," as she also has "no friends" and acts out against peers and authority figures. The two meet one day at Suzy's musical production of Noah's Ark. After meeting, the two plot to run away together through an intimate series of letters they exchange. The story that ensues is a unique romantic comedy in which the obviously incompetent adults remain in close pursuit of the fleeing children trying to bring them home. On their journey across the island, the lovebirds find their own private beach paradise, which they name "*Moonrise Kingdom*." Within their "kingdom" the two dance, kiss, and explore their new relationship. It is only when their parents arrive that this happy scene concludes and the two are

forced apart. Suzy goes home with her parents, and Sam is informed that his foster parents no longer want responsibility for him. Social Services is contacted, but before Sam is put into their custody his formerly estranged khaki scout peers decide to help him reunite with his love Suzy so that they may run away once more. Young love is always at the center of this film, but it is accompanied by the struggle between child and adult.

Early in the film a narrator is introduced, dressed in a bright red pea coat, a knit hat, weather resistant boots, and gloves. He is calmly preparing for a storm and matter-of-factly informs the audience that “The year is 1965. We are on the far edge of Black Beacon Sound, famous for the ferocious and well-documented storm which will strike from the east on the fifth of September – in three days’ time” (*Moonrise Kingdom*). This omniscient source of narration along with Anderson’s signature of dividing his films into chapters, presents the film in the style of a storybook. Film allows for things such as the aesthetics—the editing, sound, camera movement, etc.—to add meaning beyond just the plot. The children are storybook heroes and the audience is being “read” their story.

As the ominous storm hits the island at the climax of the story, Sam and Suzy face their final showdown with the ever-pursuing adults. They refuse to be separated and commit to sacrifice themselves to the swirling storm waters if they must be forced to do what the adults deem best. Finally, the parents relinquish control of their children’s fates; both are allowed to stay on the island and in each other’s lives. Sam paints watercolors and Suzy gazes at the scenery with her binoculars.

Moonrise Kingdom is certainly Wes Anderson’s most commercially successful film to date. It earned \$45.5 million at the box office and enjoyed a warm critical reception. On Rotten

Tomatoes, a website where films are rated by both audiences and critics, *Moonrise Kingdom* has 98% approval from Top Critics (Rotten Tomatoes). The screenplay, written by Anderson and Roman Coppola, was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay in 2013. Any of Anderson's films would be worthy of examination, and many have been studied in film journals. Mark Browning wrote a book titled *Wes Anderson: Why His Movies Matter*, dedicated to analyzing the director's work (2011). Anderson's evolution as an auteur makes his latest film seem the most clear in his vision, so it is the artifact I have chosen as best to view through a mythic lens.

Method

There are varying understandings and ideas surrounding myth, as used by Anderson. Carl Jung, psychologist and student of Sigmund Freud, is a noted figure in the study of mythic stories and the symbols they contain. His idea was that certain symbols are repeatedly expressed throughout time and attempt to connect us to the collective unconscious of human beings. These recurring symbols contain meaning for all of us, whether we know it or not. One important archetype is that of the child. Children can appear in different forms in stories, but "one of the essential features of the child motif is its futurity. The child is potential future" (Jung and Kerenvi 83). This symbol represents changes and hope. It represents innocence and a vibrant new perspective. This archetype is most central to *Moonrise Kingdom* since its protagonists are children.

Joseph Campbell is a well renowned mythologist who expanded upon the ideas of Jung. He noticed that while there seem to be many differing stories throughout history, most of them actually follow similar plot arcs and contain patterns that, when studied, can reveal things

beneath the surface linking them together. He looked at multiple stories and mapped out their similarities, naming the structure “the hero’s journey.” In his book, *The Hero with A Thousand Faces*, Campbell describes the typical stages that a hero encounters on his or her transformative quest: “A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man” (30). This story of a hero’s quest that Campbell has laid out is used in many films and is well known by Hollywood producers, directors and writers. *Moonrise Kingdom* is rooted heavily in mythic structures and symbols as this paper will reveal.

While there are popular understandings of myth, there are still conflicting schools of thought regarding the effects of myth. Roland Barthes, in his book *Mythologies*, understands myth almost opposite to the way of Campbell. While Campbell believes that myths provide meaningful lessons and perpetuate societal beliefs in a good way, Barthes asserts that myths are tools the bourgeoisie use to perpetuate ideas to keep their status quo, and can therefore be harmful to the minority. He fears that myths are only a tool society uses to perpetuate the same belief systems rather than delving deeper into the broad range of the human experience. But *Moonrise Kingdom* does not stick to status quo, and Anderson uses unique heroes and mythic allusions to open our focus rather than narrow it. It is drawn more from Campbell’s understanding of myth than from Barthes.

In *Moonrise Kingdom* we must look at the symbols and archetypes Anderson chooses to emphasize in his narrative. His portrayal of children in their role as heroes appeals to many experiences as human beings. Themes of innocence, individuality, and the magic and nostalgia of the past weave themselves within a tale of two young children in love. In modern times, the

status quo dictates that parents rule over their children under the pretense of care-taking and “knowing what is best,” and this is where Barthes’ concern about the lack of changes to myth that would allow for challenges to power structures could hold some weight. But *Moonrise* allows its young heroes to realize their own destiny without the guidance of the barely competent adults who attempt to control their fate. The construction of the archetypes and the hero’s journey in the film are presented in a way that challenges this status quo and offers a glimpse at the potential in empowering our young minds.

The hero’s journey is seen throughout history. The most well recognized hero’s tales are those of Jesus Christ, Siddhartha, Gilgamesh, and Beowulf. These tales all share the same formula, although conceived years apart in different areas of the world. While the archetype stems from our collective unconscious, linking stories from our past and present, the hero’s journey joins myths even further. Campbell takes it as far as to explore the idea of the monomyth: the idea that the same underlying hero’s journey structure permeates every myth.

Using Campbell’s hero’s journey to view *Moonrise Kingdom* brings to light some of the differences of Anderson’s heroes compared with past archetypes and the challenges they must face. These differences reflect the message that our present culture is sending forth to younger generations and the times we are living in. In films especially the monomyth structure is used. Hollywood producer Chris Vogler adapted Campbell’s “Hero with a Thousand Faces” into a seven page memo summarizing how the hero’s journey can be used to formulate successful film plots. George Lucas cited Campbell as a huge influence in his hugely famous *Star Wars* movies. Other films such as *The Lion King* and the *Matrix* series are obvious examples of Campbell’s ideas brought to life.

There are three large sections of the monomyth: the Departure, Initiation and Return. The Departure contains a call to adventure, when the hero has the choice between staying in his world without change, and leaving to venture into the unknown. “The familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand” (Campbell 56). The children in *Moonrise Kingdom* must depart on their adventure once they feel that their childhoods are threatened. They feel like outcasts and want a place to belong. Sam’s fellow Khaki Scouts speculate about his flight, guessing, “I heard he ran away because his parents died” and “I heard he didn’t have any parents to begin with” (*Moonrise*). When Sam and Suzy meet, they are revealed a world in which someone understands them and are consequently drawn into adventure because they desire this acceptance by another.

After the hero has decided to accept the call to adventure and embark on his journey, the story shifts to the Initiation phase. In this stage, the hero might meet with a goddess, and this is usually the place where the hero feels filled with love, which can also sometimes cause troubles. The hero “must survive a succession of trials. This is a favorite phase of the myth adventure. It has produced a world literature of miraculous tests and ordeals...it may be that he here discovers for the first time that there is a benign power everywhere supporting him in his superhuman passage” (Campbell 81). Also at this stage of the story, an “ultimate boon” occurs. In other words, the hero achieves the goal of his quest. If it was a search for the Holy Grail, the ultimate boon is when the hero has it in his hands at last!

Finally, the hero can begin his or her return. If the boon happens to be some magical place the hero may refuse to leave and return to normalcy.

When the hero-quest has been accomplished...the adventurer still must return with his life-transmuting trophy. The full round, the norm of the

monomyth, requires that the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds (Campbell 126).

If the boon was some greatly desired, heavily guarded object, the hero may need to escape daringly; such is the case when Sam and Suzy are fleeing from their pursuers. “If the trophy has been attained against the opposition of its guardian...then the last stage of the mythological round becomes a lively, often comical, pursuit. This flight may be complicated by marvels of magical obstruction and evasion” (Campbell 132). Once the hero has returned, he is often a Master of Two Worlds and can integrate his new knowledge into his old world. Jesus and Siddhartha are two heroes that gained knowledge on their journeys and were able to renew hope for their communities when they returned.

This is the basic hero’s journey, although steps can be added, subtracted, or shifted in order in innumerable ways. Whatever formula, these journeys are meant as analogies for the steps we each take in our lives, from childhood, adolescence, into young adulthood and later life. When we take the lessons we have learned from childhood and incorporate them into adult life, we become more knowledgeable of our world and are therefore free to live without fear of the world. I will now apply this map that Campbell has formulated to *Moonrise Kingdom*.

Analysis

To firmly establish *Moonrise Kingdom* as a hero’s journey, we must first determine its heroes. The “hero of the monomyth is...frequently unrecognized or disdained. He and/or the world in which he finds himself suffer from a symbolical deficiency. Typically, the hero of the

fairy tale achieves a domestic, microcosmic triumph” (Campbell 50). Sometimes these “triumphs” belong to a “despised child who becomes the master of extraordinary powers [and] prevails over his personal oppressors. Whether the hero be ridiculous or sublime, Greek or barbarian, gentile or Jew, his journey varies little in essential plan” (50). Instead of one “despised child” we get two and both serve as heroes in the film with journeys interwoven from the start. They are both categorized as outcasts, and both come from homes which lack the care they need and desire. The two rejects bond with each other over this void, and provide a more complete symbolic hero when viewed together rather than independently. Because there are two heroes, we have both male and female perspectives; we also have both a parentless hero and one with a family. In order to achieve the highest emotional impact, the more the audience relates to the struggles of the hero the better, and in this case, both heroes offer unique ways in which we can connect with them. They represent the universality of a shared childhood experience; they both seek out love and a place to belong. While they are somewhat stereotypical in their gender roles, they also break stereotypes. Sam wears a brooch that used to be his mother's and reflects, “It’s not meant to be worn by a male but I don’t give a damn.” The two are first and foremost humans and do not fall along commonly constructed lines such as children/adult, male/female, etc. If one does fall into one stereotype more than another, they have their counterpart to balance the equation out.

In Carl Jung’s studies of archetypes, he noticed recurrence of opposites. He noticed that men and women, whether they consciously identified as masculine or feminine, both also contained characteristics of the opposite gender. He called these two sides the “anima” and “animus” (Jung). These were sometimes in conflict with one another, because two opposing forces existing in one person can obviously cause tension. Jung noted that the solution to the

conflict within our unconscious mind was a “union of opposites.” “The underlying thought is clear: no white without black, and no holiness without the devil” (Jung 339). He believed that “...real liberation comes not from glossing over or repressing painful states of feeling, but only from experiencing them to the full” (Jung 335). Sam and Suzy do not repress how they feel when with one another. Instead they dance on the beach in their underpants. They embody the anima/animus and a union of these opposites. Sam even expresses this idea verbally when Suzy asks him about a pin he’s wearing on his uniform. Sam explains that it belonged to his mother and adds, “It’s not meant to be worn by a male, but I don’t give a damn” (*Moonrise*).

It is not specified by scholars that the hero has to be one person, although it may be implied by the lack of stories with multiple heroes or research on the topic. Co-heroes form a team that can function like one unified symbol; if the heroes are split apart, their journey could be about re-uniting with their other half. Suzy and Sam are a perfect example of this, although not split apart, their story revolves around a desperate attempt to remain together. By putting the burden of hero’s role on more than one person, they become more a holistic symbol and are able to represent something closer to a universal Truth. In the case of multiple people holding the title, the “hero” can be two opposing ideals at once, rather than being bound by one gender, one circumstance or other conventional binaries.

The two heroes in *Moonrise Kingdom* differ, but they are drawn together by their common childhood experiences. “Rather than being helpful to their counterparts due to previously travelling the road of trials, they are helpful because they find themselves on the same road at the same time, physically and emotionally” (Olson 30). Both Sam and Suzy feel let down by the authority figures in their lives. Suzy’s parents themselves even admit their failure in an intensely honest scene between Francis McDormand and Bill Murray.

Laura Bishop: Stop feeling sorry for yourself.

Walt Bishop: Why?

Laura Bishop: We're all they've got, Walt.

Walt Bishop: It's not enough.

As Olson discusses *The Goonies* he notes, “With the failure of the status quo system of the parents providing the best possible future for the children, the children undergo a quest to rescue their own fate” (Olson 18). This directly applies to *Moonrise Kingdom*, as the two children embark on a quest to take control of their own fate when their parents have failed them and the other authority figures in their life don’t help them, but instead are sources of negative scrutiny. In the case of the 1980s films as well as *Moonrise*, “these adolescents are seeking to restore, replace, or maintain these relationships [with their parents]. But, despite their efforts, the most common result is replacing authority figures with their fellow adolescents” (Olson 27). This suggests having multiple heroes is more common among child heroes, because they feel a sense of community and belonging.

Childhood is a unique but universal experience and one that bonds us all together. “Adolescence is meant to be a time when a person is cared for, when responsibility is still the realm of an authority figure. However, these communities, and adolescence itself, are threatened by a failure of the authority figures to take on responsibilities of protecting and encouraging the youth” (Olson 24). Because childhood is a shared experience, the audience can relate to the plight of the heroes and “as soon as [the audiences] identify with the innocence once theirs, as soon as they drop the defenses only learned through experience, they are struck by the threats set upon the young heroes” (Olson 35). The adults in this film fail to relate to the children in the way that will truly foster the children’s growth. This has dire consequences, which Anderson

symbolically demonstrates with the use of the Noah's Flood story woven into the climax of his own mythic tale.

“The flood myth is one of the most widely diffused narratives known” (Dundes 2). The account of Noah and the flood in the Bible, and the flood in the Epic of Gilgamesh, are two of the most recognized stories of this type. Anderson uses the flood myth in *Moonrise Kingdom*, helping the film fall into the category of monomyth. He is reusing the same elements of storytelling that have always existed, alluding to the flood myth in order to perpetuate a certain message. Flood myths are often associated with rebirth or “serves as a divine corrective (Salvador 50). Supernatural forces are interfering humans to correct a wrongdoing; In *Moonrise Kingdom*, the mistreatment and misunderstanding of the children by the adults must be remedied, and the storm story, in this case, is used as a symbol and a catalyst for this change. This film is packed with mythic archetypes ideas of a collective unconscious. It has a relatable effect because it is a visual manifestation of what it means to be human.

Sam and Suzy's heroic “call to adventure” is what begins their tale. Their childhood “paradise” is threatened by the adults that fail to recognize that the children are not getting the attention and support that they need. The two children meet at the musical production and their letters back and forth reveal to one another that they feel the same way about their individual lives. They meet in the woods and team up to begin the “Departure” phase of the journey. From this first meeting onwards the two are as one, and as their trials and obstacles try to pull them apart they struggle to stay together.

Next comes the Initiation phase. In this, Sam and Suzy overcome the majority of their obstacles, including navigating through the woods to set up camp. The two take an inventory of

their supplies.’ Sam has brought maps, food, water, tents, and all the necessary supplies for survival as he learned at his summer camp; Suzy has brought a few of her favorite library books, a battery powered record player, her kitten, a pair of left-handed scissors, and her binoculars, which she reveals make her feel like she has a magical power. This scene is also when the two bond over their failing relationships with those around them and Sam assures Suzy “I’m on your side” (Moonrise). Soon, the lovebirds encounter the group of khaki scouts that has been sent to bring them back “home.” The clash ends with Suzy stabbing one of the boys in the back with her left-handed scissors. Upon receiving this news, the adults are very upset, and their tendency to label Suzy as a very “troubled” girl increases. The two heroes escape from this temporary road block and continue to follow their map to a small tidal inlet.

Suzy and Sam are further bonded to one another in this sequence of the film: it is where they find their private beach “kingdom” and ask each other what they want to be when they grow up. They dance on the beach, jump into the ocean and declare their love for one another. As the ultimate boon of the quest is in their grasp, the adults tear it away and separate them after discovering their beach campsite. The Initiation phase is not over though, because the kids escape again and run off to get “married” by one of the khaki scout’s older cousins. Their marriage achieves their goal to make their own decisions and brings them to a place where they feel loved and accepted, something the authority figures in their lives have failed to give them.

After the two are married, the pursuit of the adults continues, and the two arrive at the final chase scene, which marks their Return. Sam and Suzy begin their flight from their parents as an epic storm approaches their island home. The narrator has already warned us of the storm’s arrival in the near future and as the children’s mythic journey reaches its peak, so does the storm. The children’s path runs parallel to the storm, the children reflected in nature and

nature reflected in the children. The entire adventure occurs outdoors, so the children's fates are closely tied to their environment. On the children's final attempt to run from their parents after failing in their first attempt, the storm hits. It begins to rain heavily and areas of the island are flooded. The children are reaching their final clash with the adults that have neglected their needs and their parental duties. Sam is struck by lightning as he declares, "On this spot I'll fight no more forever. Come and get me, you bastards!" When Sam confronts his enemies and announces his determination to end the struggle, nature answers by zapping him with energy. The lightning merely knocks Sam down, leaving him fried but back on his feet, running in his socks through the mud because the lightning strike set his shoes on fire. Sam and Suzy are reunited and the chase is on. This flight scene in the film fits with Campbell's description of the "Magical Flight" that occurs in his hero's journey. He says that "If the trophy (Sam and Suzy being with one another) has been attained against the opposition of its guardian, or if the hero's wish to return to the world has been resented, it becomes a lively, often comical, pursuit. This flight may be complicated by marvels of magical obstruction and evasion" (182). The lightning strike is Sam's supernatural assistance in this case. Instead of hindering Sam, the shock by nature hurtles him forward in the story. He is reunited with Suzy and those he can now call his friends and they escape by ladder over a fence. It is as if the lightning strike proves he cannot be stopped, and nature has acknowledged his mighty power by high-fiving him.

Finally, the chase comes to an end, returning once more to the church that held the "Noah's Flood" musical play where Sam and Suzy met. As flood waters rise, the adults are forced to take refuge inside the building. As the scared and helpless adults huddle together, lightning strikes, illuminating the children—Sam, Suzy, and the khaki scout gang they've acquired—all perched on the church's balcony with animal masks on. Anderson's film now

closely resembles the story of Noah's Ark. A flood is coming and the animals—the children—are inside, and they are the only hope of a future; they are the ones that will carry on. In this clever allusion to the popular flood myth, Anderson portrays his child heroes as symbols of hope and redemption in the future. For this reason, the voices of these small heroes should be heard. Spotted by their pursuers, Sam and Suzy scurry onto the roof for their final escape. Rain is pouring down, lightning is crashing, and the two kids make their way to the end of the roof. Looking down into the floodwaters below, the two estimate their chances of survival if they jump. From a window appear Mr. and Mrs. Bishop seeking Suzy, and a police-officer and social worker seeking Sam. The police-officer, depicted as dim-witted and slightly depressed, ventures onto the roof after Sam and Suzy, tying a rope to his waist for protection. He reaches the two, but must then negotiate between child and adult. Amidst the chaos they agree that Sam can stay on the island with him and with Suzy. However, before they can safely get down, lightning strikes the building, causing the three to fall, but luckily be caught by the safety rope. This scene seals the victory for the children and successfully saves their childhoods. The adults who have failed to recognize the validity and strength of the children now accept and allow them to return to their normal lives with the new addition of a loving and understanding relationship.

Conclusion

Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom* is a modern day adventure that follows a pattern of myth used for centuries to express the collective unconscious of humans. His heroes are children because they embody a universal, collective experience and hope for the future that we all share. As presented, Jung discovered that by accepting our binary traits, we can become more successful at finding love and understanding of others. Anderson illuminates this idea through his allusion to the flood myth, which brings a deeper understanding of the story to us and

affirmed his place as a mythic storyteller. Equally as critical to this allusion is Anderson's usage of Joseph Campbell's monomyth to encapsulate all of these ideas and bind them into a storybook on film for us to experience.

The film is not the only of its kind out there. Some of the world's most renowned directors have taken similar approaches to cinema in regards to mythic outline and the creation of child hero roles. By studying more of these classic films with child heroes perhaps an even greater patterns can be found. Within the last 10 years a flurry of films, such as *Super 8*, *Where The Wild Things Are*, and even *Harry Potter*, have appeared in which children protagonists must navigate through adult circumstances, *Moonrise Kingdom* being just one of them. It will surely be of interest to examine these movies in a similar light as to glean clearer picture of the roles that child heroes play in mythic journeys.

Sam and Suzy instill within us lessons of how to interact with other people and together represent a union of opposites. Just by being who they are and true to themselves throughout all their trials and tribulations, they succeed in attaining a happy life for themselves. Ultimately Mythic creations are stories that address something more substantial about the human experience and it is clear from my research that Sam and Suzy fall without a doubt into the same category as Beowulf or Gilgamesh. Our modern culture is one full of information and ideas, and myths help cut through the noise by using symbols and feelings already present within all of our unconscious minds. These stories use the past to inform our future and guide us towards a better place.

Anderson pulls from psychology and the symbols from our collective unconscious that Carl Jung identified. Besides using the archetype of the child, his characters embody the anima

and animus archetypes. Sam and Suzy represent two halves of a whole, expressing binaries that exist inside all of us. The ways in which these two children handle adult obstacles and emotions help demonstrate that the differences our culture may perceive as existing, such as the separation between childhood and adulthood, don't actually exist—at least not to the extent previously thought. Every member of humanity shares commonalities of existence and are connected to one another through these shared experiences. Our collective unconscious, when reflected through film or literature, speaks to our humanity. This myth does what I think all myths aim to do; it connects us.

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