



## **THE MYTH OF THE RAT AND THE RAT MAN IN WES ANDERSON'S THE RAT CATCHER**

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### ***Abstract***

*This study aims to understand the myth of the rat and the 'Rat Man' through their behavior in the film The Rat Catcher. The research employs a qualitative method with data collection through note-taking. The researcher watches the film and records dialogues related to the research theme. The data analysis technique is conducted by analyzing the dialogues and behaviors in The Rat Catcher1 in relation to the concept of myth within Claude Levi- Strauss's structuralism. Myths are often associated with events in society that influence customs or lifestyles of those who believe in them. Through Levi-Strauss's structuralist analysis, it was found that the failure of the Rat Man to catch the rat highlights the irony of the myth. The various methods he employs to catch the rat, ranging from ordinary to unique and even extreme, yield no results. In conclusion, the Rat Man remains trapped in an illusion that does not prove the myth he believes in, thus the myth about the rat continues to linger in his mind. The contribution of this study is to provide an understanding of how the myths of the rat and the 'Rat Man' can be analyzed through the lens of Claude Levi-Strauss's structuralism to reveal the irony and failure in the application of these myths.*

**Keywords:** *claud levi-strauss; myth; the rat catcher; wes anderson*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Literary works are expressions and opinions regarding the feelings and thoughts of an author. In the created work, there is an effort by the author to internalize and absorb the meaning of everything that happens in their environment, whether experienced by the author themselves or by a group of society. The result of the author's imagination will be expressed in a literary work and presented to the readers, so that society can enjoy it. One example of a literary work is found in the film entitled The Rat Catcher adapted from Roald Dahl's short story (Anderson, 2023; Das, 2023; Sherlock, 2023). This 17-minutes film stars Ralph Fiennes as a professional rodent exterminator sent by the Health Department. The Rat Catcher was published in 2023 and directed by Wes Anderson as a short story that tells a terrifying tale about the dark side of human nature.

Here, the rat catchers have a very unusual way of dealing with this rat pest, which would even be incomprehensible to the average human. The film begins with the appearance of Rat Man, who has been sent by the Health Officer and start

explaining the difficulty of outsmarting rats and the various approaches that will be taken to exterminate them. Rat Man is confident that he will eradicate the rats at the filling station (Anderson, 2023; Das, 2023; Sherlock, 2023). However, at the end of this story, he was surprised because not a single mouse died from his trap. Rat Man was unable to prove the belief he had held all this time.

The Rat Man is closely associated with the Myth that he believes. Myth is a folk tale that contains elements of truth, but its truth has not yet been proven. Anthropologists like Claude Lévi-Strauss state that myths are a form of human thought that represent social, cultural, and belief realities (da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Humayun & Chang, 2024; Júnior et al., 2023). Myths become a means for society to convey values, norms, and beliefs that are firmly held. Myths are not just fictional stories, but also representations of the life and beliefs of society that are believed to be real and have an influence on daily life.

Generally, society believes that myths are stories that actually happened, even though most myths are considered fictional or imaginary tales (Adijaya, 2024; Rafiuddin et al., 2025; Risaldi et al., 2021). The term myth is known by the surrounding community as a tradition passed down through generations in the form of a special story from oral literature. Also based on the accurate scheme contained within the myth, it becomes possible for us to implement integration in problemsolving within the systematically pre-formulated construction

There are some previous researches that have been done regarding Wes Anderson's *The Rat Catcher* and the concept of myth. The first research is done by Rabika Binte Humayun and Woo Jin Chang in 2024 entitled *Wes Anderson's Approach of Storytelling Using Narrators With Four Short Films: "The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar," "The Swan," "The Rat Catcher," and "Poison"* (Humayun & Chang, 2024). This research focused more on the storytelling aspect that Wes Anderson brings in the matter of adaptation studies from Roald Dahl's short stories into film. The second research is composed by Esther Zaplana in 2024 entitled *Allegories of Aging Masculinity: The Myth of Don Quixote in Albert Serra's Honor of the Knights* (Zaplana, 2024). This research mostly indicated how myth may enrich understandings of literary works, especially in the character of Don Quixote. The third research is written by Nia Liska Saputri, Agustina Ramadhianti, and Irfan Hadi in 2024 entitled *Myth in Pride and Prejudice* (Saputri et al., 2024).

The gap in previous research lies in the limited exploration of the mythological elements in Wes Anderson's *The Rat Catcher*, specifically regarding the myth of the rat and the rat man. This research, therefore, aims to fill this gap by specifically investigating how myth is portrayed through the characters of the rat and the rat man in *The Rat Catcher*, thus contributing a new perspective to the existing literature on mythological themes in film.

This article aims to investigate how myths and human psychological creativity intertwine in a unique and fascinating way by examining Rat Man's thoughts and the meaning of the rat as a myth. Rat Man's approach to catching rats reflects a deep understanding of the nature and behavior of these creatures. He believes that each type of rat requires a different trapping method. Rat Man starts the film with movements

resembling a rat. This is not just about trapping techniques, but a myth about the effort to understand the world of mice. By identifying himself with the rat, Rat Man shows that to truly catch the rat, he must understand their behavior and habits (Anderson, 2023; Das, 2023; Sherlock, 2023). This creates a myth that a deep understanding of the world of rats can lead to success in catching them.

In addition, Rat Man also believes that each type of rat has unique characteristics that require different trapping methods. This reflects that myths are often based on experience and are believed to always happen (da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Júnior et al., 2023; Valipoor, 2016). However, by the end of the film, Rat Man cannot prove what he believes about rat trapping. Rat Man's failure to catch the rat can be seen as a crisis of faith in the myth he has held onto all this time. He believes that by understanding mice deeply, he can control them. However, the reality faced proves that the myth cannot always be substantiated with tangible results.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Myths are an important part of society culture, serving as a way to explain difficult-to-understand phenomena, provide moral guidance, or strengthen group identity. Myths reflect the view that humans must live in harmony with nature and understand the behavior of other creatures. Myths cannot be explained in terms of objects or their material, because any material can be supported by meaning, serving as a marker or signpost (Firzatullah et al., 2025; Napitupulu et al., 2024; Pramayoza, 2021; Rahmah & Puspitasari, 2024). Myths are also not determined solely by the object of their message, but rather by how the message itself is conveyed. In addition, myths are usually based on the belief of the surrounding community that these myths are true. Indeed, it is starting from word of mouth until it is finally trusted by many people.

According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, the essence of myth is the effort to find a solution to the empirical contradictions it faces and that cannot be understood by human reason (da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Júnior et al., 2023; Valipoor, 2016). Basically, a myth is a cultural message to the members of a society. Myth or mythology is a collection of traditional stories passed down through generations by a nation and discusses human beliefs about events and occurrences. Myths are born based on societal beliefs. When people start thinking in a modern way, most of them might abandon those seemingly unreasonable myths. However, by thinking, humans create structures of reality especially in classifying things. Myths then also work as logical frameworks to explain the various contradictions experienced by humanity.

In general, myths are often associated with events or phenomena that occur in society and serve as explanations for things that cannot be fully understood by human reasoning. Myths can also influence various aspects of life, including customs, beliefs, and lifestyles of the communities that believe in them, which are reflected in the traditions and habits passed down from generation to generation (de Oliveira, 2023; Pillai & Kaushal, 2021; Segal, 2021). One interesting example is how the myth about the abilities of Rat Man in the film *The Rat Catcher* by Roald Dahl illustrates how society's belief in the character ultimately ends in open-ending scene, showing that

sometimes myths widely accepted by society do not always contain truths that can be proven rationally.

Moreover, myths, through structuralism, are not just stories or legends, but also phenomena that can be analyzed through human reasoning. Levi-Strauss argued that myths carry deeper messages that can be understood as representations of the structure of the human mind and how humans perceive the world through certain symbols. Therefore, myths have a depth of meaning that needs to be uncovered in order to understand the culture and mindset of the societies that believe in them (Afifa & Nugraha, 2023; Juliant, 2024; Mashuri et al., 2024). It is also understood that myths express the tensions that exist in society, for example the tension between nature and culture, or between the individual and the collective.

By analyzing the structures and patterns in myths, further insights into how certain societies understood their relationships with the outside world and how they created systems of meaning to deal with the chaos and uncertainty in life can be examined. Levi- Strauss views myth as a language of everyday experience that connects the universe with the human mind, containing the order and balance needed to understand the world more holistically (de Oliveira, 2023; Pillai & Kaushal, 2021; Segal, 2021) . Basically, myths are the way ancestors tried to understand and give meaning to things in the world that could not be explained by science at that time. As the time goes, those phenomena expand into part of culture because they reflect the way of thinking, beliefs and creativity of humans in the past that transcends time. A myth always refers to events alleged to have taken place in time as such phenomenon is always related to time and space, and therefore is cultural.

Myths are an important part of human culture that function as a way to understand and give meaning to the world around us. In the context of society, myths are often seen as a means of explaining things that are difficult to understand through scientific knowledge at that time. Even though they are illogical from a modern perspective, myths help shape the mindset and values held by a community (da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Pasopati et al., 2024; Stambovsky, 2021). These stories are usually conveyed orally, so they often undergo changes or variations according to developing culture and time. Therefore, myths also reflect the cultural identity and beliefs of a society, creating a close relationship in strengthening morals, creating solidarity, and providing guidelines for behavior.

In its continuation, symbols in myth not only speak to logic, but also to emotion. When a myth uses symbols to describe phenomena, it not only conveys a story, but also provides layered meanings, which can be translated into various contexts according to society's needs. This allows myths to continue to be relevant, as their symbols can be adapted and reinterpreted by different generations (da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Pasopati et al., 2024; Stambovsky, 2021).

Symbols in myths function as a universal means of communication that transcends language and cultural boundaries. They speak a language that the human heart and soul understands, engaging all the senses to create a connection with the sacred or the unknown. In the process, these symbols strengthen people's cultural identity and collective values, creating a sense of unity that helps them face life's

challenges. These symbols not only connect humans with the world around them, but also teach wisdom that is often difficult to access through logical thinking alone (da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Stambovsky, 2021; Wijayanto et al., 2025). Symbols become a bridge between the concrete and the abstract, allowing humans to understand the relationship between everyday life and the mysteries of existence.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method as its type of research, namely descriptive analysis, where data is obtained from literature studies. The data sources comes from various dialogues, gestures, and ambiances stated in Wes Anderson's short film entitled *The Rat Catcher* in 2023. The data collection technique is carried out using the note-taking technique that include watching the film comprehensively and writing down various important key points of the film. The data collection instruments are the movie, the notes, and the online journal and books. The data analysis includes content analysis especially by reviewing the data taken from the film, paying attention to the concept of myth, and analyzing the film according to the theory of myth.

## DISCUSSION

### *Rat Man and Myth of the Rat in The Rat Catcher*

The short film entitled *The Rat Catcher* was released on September 29, 2023 and directed by Wes Anderson, an American filmmaker whose films are known for their unique visual and narrative style, as well as the use of ensemble casts. This film tells the story of a Rat Man who has unnatural ways of catching a rat. The film stars Ralph Fiennes as Rat Man, Rupert Friend as Claude, and Richard Ayoade as an editor and the narrator. The myth and how Rat Man correlates to it is listed below;

#### Data 1

He was lean, leathery, a sharp face, two long sulfur- yellow teeth protruding from the upper jaw over the lower lip. His ears were round and thin, set near the back of his head. The eyes were almost black, but when they looked at you, there was a flash of yellow in them.” (Anderson, 2023).

The quote from the film above describes the Rat Man character who has very distinctive physical characteristics like a rat. The description of the sharp face, striking sulfur yellow teeth, and round and thin ears give the impression that this character is a fierce and frightening figure. The eyes are almost black but have a yellow glow indicating something hidden, perhaps wisdom or evil intentions. This character, with its appearance resembling a wild creature, illustrates the transformation needed to succeed in a dangerous and risky mission. The physical description and appearance of the Rat Man can be interpreted as a symbol of a tricky rat, resembling rat's cunningness and agility (Anderson, 2023; Humayun & Chang, 2024; Montanaro, 2023). To succeed in catching rats, Rat Man believes that humans must be able to understand and imitate the behavior and nature of the rat itself, both physically and psychologically.

**Data 2**

“Depends what rats, where they are. Different methods for different rats.”  
([Anderson, 2023](#)).

The above quote refers to the importance of contextual knowledge and understanding in catching rats. This quote is interpreted as a reflection of the knowledge and expertise gained by Rat Man. It emphasizes that the experience and observation of an experienced rat catcher will know the types of rats that are in a particular area and the most effective methods to catch them. Effective rat catchers do not only rely on tools or traps alone, but must also understand the behavior, habits, and habitat of the rats they are facing ([Anderson, 2023](#); [Humayun & Chang, 2024](#); [Montanaro, 2023](#)). For example, rats that live in urban environments may have different habits and paths compared to rats that live in rural areas. Various methods for catching rats, such as the use of traps, bait, or repellent techniques, must be tailored to the specific characteristics of the rats and their location. This includes knowledge of the types of food they like, their hiding places, and their active times.

**Data 3**

“Rat is clever. You wanna catch ‘em, you gotta know ‘em. You gotta know rats on this job.” ([Anderson, 2023](#)).

The quote above seems to show The Rat Man's closeness to rats. In this case, it underlines The Rat Man's understanding of the behavior and characteristics of rats in order to catch them effectively. In this context, knowledge about rats does not only include basic information about their species, but also includes things like the habits and behavior of rats. This includes knowing where they gather, what they eat, and how they interact ([Anderson, 2023](#); [Montanaro, 2023](#); [Sherlock, 2023](#)). Rats are social animals that live in groups. This quote emphasizes that to be successful in catching rats, the catcher must prioritize deeper knowledge and understanding, not just relying on tools or bait alone. Eliminating existing myths and replacing them with facts based on rat behavior will increase the effectiveness of the capture method and create a smarter and more strategic approach.

**Data 4**

“You know what they do? They watch you. Whole time you’re preparin’ how to exterminate ‘em, they’re watchin’ you.” ([Anderson, 2023](#)).

The quote above explains how The Rat Man understands the movements of rat. This quote illustrates how rats, known as intelligent and alert creatures, can monitor and understand human behavior, including rat catchers. The Rat Man understands that rats are intelligent animals and have the ability to observe. When rat catchers prepare strategies to eradicate them, rats observe the behavior and patterns applied. The Rat Man emphasizes that to effectively catch rats, catchers must do more than just apply methods ([Anderson, 2023](#); [Das, 2023](#); [Montanaro, 2023](#)). They need to understand that rats are also observing and adapting. In-depth knowledge of rat behavior is the main weapon in effective catching. By putting forward more in-depth knowledge, rat catchers can develop more effective and sustainable strategies in dealing with rat problems.



**Data 5**

“You work on the understandin’ a rat is a gnawin’ animal, see? Anythin’ you give ‘em, they gnaw on it.” (Anderson, 2023)

The quote above illustrates Rat Man increasingly close relationship with the Rats. Rat Man understands rats as biting animals that are always looking for something to chew. This reflects the way rats adapt and survive by utilizing everything available. This message indicates that to understand rats, we need to look at their instinctive behavior. The Rat Man in this film is considered someone who has a deep understanding of rat behavior and habits. He understands that rats are creatures that adapt quickly and are always looking for ways to survive (Anderson, 2023; Buchanan, 2023; Nathan, 2020). Rat Man has the ability to interact and understand rats, seeing rats not just as pests, but creatures that have certain behavioral patterns. This belief is what helps Rat Man predict the actions of rats and use more effective strategies to overcome the problems caused by their presence.

**Data 6**

“You go down the sewer and you take along some ordinary brown paper bags filled with plaster of paris powder. Nothin’ else. Then you suspend ‘em from the roof of the sewer so they hang down not quite touchin’ the water. Just high enough so a rat can reach ‘em.” (Anderson, 2023)

The quote above explains the sequence of ways to trap rats as if Rat Man is able to bridge the human and animal worlds. Rat Man looks professional in understanding rats like someone who always has a relationship with rats. Rat Man has a strategy and method that he thinks is right for catching rats. By hanging a paper bag on the roof of a channel that is not high, Rat Man creates a trap that only rats can reach. This reflects a deep understanding of rat behavior, namely that they will explore areas where they feel safe to find food. According to Rat Man's belief, rats will try to reach something tempting without fear of getting caught in the water (Anderson, 2023; Buchanan, 2023; Nathan, 2020; Sherlock, 2023). This method highlights Rat Man's skills and knowledge in understanding the life cycle and habits of rats. He does not only see them as pests, but as creatures that have behavioral patterns that can be learned and utilized. This reflects the myth that Rat Man has a unique ability to interact and understand rats more deeply.

**Data 7**

“Old comes swimmig along the sewer, sees the bag. He stops. Takes a sniff at it. It don’t smell so bad. He starts gnawin’ at the bag, and the bag breaks, and old rat gets a mouthful of powder for his pains.” (Anderson, 2023).

This quote provides insight into the behavior of rats and how the Rat Man uses these traits to trap them. It focuses on the Rat Man's belief that rats are so used to eating food that is actually poison that the Rat Man has prepared. The Rat Man myth shows that he has an incredible understanding of how rats work. He knows that rats are attracted to anything new and interesting, and he uses this to trap them. As in the line "takes a sniff at it," this line emphasizes the myth that a rat has a very

keen sense of smell ([Anderson, 2023](#); [Humayun & Chang, 2024](#); [Sherlock, 2023](#)). The Rat Man shows his understanding of what attracts rats. This quote not only explains how the Rat Man catches rats, but it also shows a deep understanding of animal behavior.

#### **Data 8**

“Nevertheless, the rats are in the hayrick. How will you remove them?” ([Anderson, 2023](#))

This quote highlights Claude's belief that the rats are hiding in the haystack. In *The Rat Catcher*, no rats ever emerge from the haystack, but Claude's belief in rats and straw is often considered an ideal place for rats, perhaps because the haystack not only provides shelter for the rats, but also warmth and enough space for the rats to nest and breed ([Anderson, 2023](#); [Das, 2023](#); [Montanaro, 2023](#)). The haystack can attract rats because of the possibility of food scraps or grains that may be trapped in it. This makes the place even more attractive to rats looking for a food source.

#### **Data 9**

“... But your rats don't eat this today. They wouldn't have it, anyway. ... That's where you got to know rats. Rat's is suspicious. Terrible suspicious. So today they get some nice, clean, tasty oats as will do 'em no harm in the world. Fatten 'em up, that's all. And tomorrow, the same again. And the day after that, and the day after that. And it'll taste so good, all the rats in the district will be comin' along soon enough.” ([Anderson, 2023](#))

This quote reflects Rat Man's belief in the strategy he believes in. This strategy can be said to be a very clever strategy used by Rat Man to trick and catch rats by exploiting their natural traits. In this quote Rat Man highlights the habits of rats regarding food. Rat Man emphasizes that in order to successfully overcome the rat problem, it is important to understand their behavior. Rat Man believes that if the food given does not look familiar or attractive, the rats will not want to approach. Rat Man creates a pattern that makes the rats feel safe and comfortable ([Anderson, 2023](#); [Humayun & Chang, 2024](#); [Sherlock, 2023](#)). By giving them good food for a few days is a form of “habituation”, where the rats will feel unsuspecting and come closer and slowly the rats are prepared to accept the food that will eventually trap them.

#### **Data 10**

“A good ratter's gotta be more like a rat than anythin' else. Clever than a rat, and it is not an easy thing to be,” ([Anderson, 2023](#)).

The quote above is a symbol of the Rat Man. The Rat Man says that a good rat catcher must be more like a rat, indicating the importance of a deep understanding of the behavior and habits of a rat. What he means is that in order to solve the rat problem, one needs to put oneself in their shoes, understand how they think and act. The sentence "Clever than a rat" shows that rats have high intelligence and adaptability. Rats can be very clever and clever in deceiving humans. Therefore, the Rat Man emphasizes that in order to defeat rats, one must be smarter and more strategic than they are. In this quote, the Rat Man emphasizes



that in order to be a successful rat catcher, one must understand and learn from the rats themselves (Anderson, 2023; Dilley, 2017; Sexton, 2023). This emphasizes the importance of intelligence, knowledge, and empathy in dealing with problems. The Rat Man myth teaches that a deep understanding of animal behavior can be the key to finding more effective and appropriate solutions.

#### **Data 11**

“They way he walked was so like a rat, it made you wonder. That slow, almost delicate, ambling walk with a lot of give at the knees and no sound at all from his footsteps on the gravel” (Anderson, 2023)

The narration excerpt above explains how Rat Man's gestures resemble a rat. Rat Man adopts a soft and inconspicuous rat gait, allowing him to approach the rat without causing fear or alertness. This reflects a deep understanding of rat behavior, which is often very sensitive to threats. By moving like a rat, Rat Man can disguise himself, making the rat feel safer. Rats who feel safe without threats are more likely to leave their hiding places, creating an opportunity for Rat Man to catch them (Anderson, 2023; Dilley, 2017; Sexton, 2023). This highlights that understanding the psychology of other creatures is an important part of a capture strategy. This narration excerpt illustrates how Rat Man uses his confidence in his understanding of rat behavior to create an effective strategy in capturing them.

#### **Data 12**

“Nothin’ wrong with these rats, somebody’s feedin’ ‘em. They got somethin’ juicy to eat somewhere, plenty of it. No rats in the world will turn down oats unless their bellies is full to burstin’.” (Anderson, 2023)

This quote is the beginning of Rat Man's failure. The quote above reflects Rat Man's frustration when facing failure in trapping rats. Rat Man observed that the rats did not want to approach the bait he prepared, indicating that they had already gotten more attractive food. However, Rat Man's belief has not been proven. Whether it is true that they got something juicy to eat or because the rats are not there. However, Rat Man's myth or belief that rats will always be attracted to the bait prepared shows a lack of understanding of their behavior (Anderson, 2023; Dilley, 2017; Sexton, 2023). When Rat Man realized that the rats might have gotten better food, this changed his perspective on his catching strategy.

#### **Data 13**

“... whose face was beginning to take on a boarding aspect. He had withdrawn into himself over his failure, the eyes veiled and wicked, the little tongue darting out to one side of the two yellow teeth.” (Anderson, 2023)

This quote shows the change in Rat Man's expression, which was initially very optimistic and confident in his belief in the experience he had in catching mice. The sentence "Boarding aspect" reflects how failure has affected his mentality, making him feel alienated or perhaps frustrated with his situation. The quote shows that Rat Man began to isolate himself and get lost in his thoughts. Failure to catch mice not only made him feel disappointed, but also pushed him to withdraw and just be silent. This reflects how heavy the emotional burden he bears due to failing in his mission. The gestures shown such as the eyes veiled and wicked show feelings of

frustration and perhaps anger and can even show despair. Rat Man failure to catch mice shook the belief he had in his methods and knowledge (Anderson, 2023; De la Prida, 2022; Dilley, 2017). The myth that he could easily catch mice with the strategy he had relied on began to crumble. This failure made him question his skills and approach, creating a deep crisis of confidence. The focus of this quote is Rat Man's psychological condition after failing to catch mice, showing deep frustration, disappointment, and introspection. His failure to dismantle the myths and beliefs he had held on to about how to catch mice, created a deep crisis of confidence.

#### **Data 14**

“Nothing will kill a rat quicker than ferret.” (Anderson, 2023).

The quote above is a form of repairing the bad reputation of his failure. By mentioning the ferret, Rat Man may be trying to shift the focus from his failure. Using an example of a more effective predator may be a way to overcome the shame and disappointment he feels. It also reflects the hope that there are other, better ways to deal with the rat problem. Rat Man is trying to show his ability to understand the types and habits of rats (Anderson, 2023; De la Prida, 2022; Montanaro, 2023). In this context, Rat Man uses the ferret as proof that there is a more effective method than his previous strategy. This indirectly shows an awareness of the natural abilities of other animals that are better at catching rats than he is. His failure challenges his belief that he is a skilled rat catcher.

#### **Data 15**

“... He lift the rat and slipped it down inside, next to the skin. His belt prevented the rat from going lower than his waist. He slipped the ferret in the next. ... With the other, he took out the dead rat. There were traces of blood around the white muzzle of the ferret” (Anderson, 2023)

This quote is a depiction of Rat Man's actions in an attempt to restore his reputation as a skilled rat catcher after feeling down due to his previous failure. When Rat Man pulls out the dead rat and there is a trail of blood around the ferret's snout, this shows the results of his efforts. The trail of blood can be evidence that the ferret has succeeded in doing its job. This serves as a way to restore his reputation by proving to Claude that Rat Man is indeed an expert at catching rats. Rat Man wants Claude to see that he still has control and skill in handling the rats. Through dramatic action and the use of the ferret, he wants to show that he has the skills and expertise needed to catch rats (Anderson, 2023; Das, 2023; De la Prida, 2022). By trying to show his skills through this dramatic action, Rat Man is trying to overcome the identity crisis that arises after failing. The myth of himself as a skilled rat catcher must be proven again through real action.

#### **Data 16**

“Strange, The rats never ate the poisoned oats. There must be something nutritious in the hayrick.” (Anderson, 2023)

The quote delivered by the narrator seems to show the strangeness felt by the narrator that the rats did not want to eat the poisoned wheat that had been prepared as bait. In the context of rat behavior, this is very striking because generally, rats will be attracted to food, especially nutritious ones such as oats. This abnormality

raises doubts about the effectiveness of the strategy used by Rat Man. The narrator suspicion reflects a crisis of confidence in Rat Man abilities. The myth and belief that Rat Man is an expert rat catcher began to collapse because he was unable to adjust his strategy to the behavior of the rats (Anderson, 2023; Das, 2023; Montanaro, 2023). The strangeness and suspicion felt by the narrator reflect the importance of concrete evidence to build trust. Without real results, Rat Man reputation as a reliable rat catcher is doubted, showing that expertise needs to be proven with real actions and results.

### ***Myth and Its Representations of the Rat Man in The Rat Catcher***

*The Rat Catcher* is a short film directed by Wes Anderson and released in 2023. It tells the story of a mysterious rat catcher who is hired to deal with a rat infestation. The main character, known as the Rat Man, is a well-known figure trusted by society for his ability to exterminate rats (Anderson, 2023; De la Prida, 2022; Montanaro, 2023). This film follows Rat Man's journey in dealing with various rat-related issues. However, the approach he uses is very different from that of a typical rat catcher. Rather than using violent methods or poison, Rat Man prioritizes a deep understanding of the rat ecosystem, how they communicate, and the social dynamics within their colonies.

The quote in Data 1 describes the physical characteristics of Rat Man, which are very similar to those of a rat. Rat Man not only represents humanity's ability to mimic and understand rats but also highlights the deeper connection between humans and animals in mythology. Rat Man believes that in order to succeed in catching rats, humans must be able to understand and imitate their behavior and traits, both physically and psychologically (Anderson, 2023; De la Prida, 2022; Montanaro, 2023). The physical uniqueness of Rat Man, resembling a rat, not only demonstrates physical adaptation but also symbolizes a deep understanding of nature. By mimicking rats, Rat Man attempts to integrate himself into the animal world to gain a strategic advantage in catching them.

However, his failure to capture the rats throughout the story highlights the limitations of this adaptation. Despite Rat Man efforts to merge with the nature of the rats, the outcome shows that understanding and imitation alone are not always enough to overcome the challenges of nature. In the context of mythology, Rat Man failure to catch the rats until the end of the story strengthens the binary opposition between hope and reality, between human knowledge and the power of nature (Anderson, 2023; Das, 2023; Sherlock, 2023). It illustrates that even though humans strive to understand and imitate nature, there are limits to this ability. This myth highlights the uncertainty and limitations of humanity in controlling nature.

Data 2 explains the knowledge and expertise acquired by Rat Man. It emphasizes that the experience and observations of an experienced rat catcher will enable them to identify the types of rats in a particular area and the most effective methods to capture them. Rat Man's knowledge of rat species and trapping techniques reflects human culture's attempt to exert control over nature. Rats, in this case, symbolize the natural forces that are difficult to control (Adijaya, 2024; Das,

2023; Humayun & Chang, 2024). Moreover, his inability to capture the rats until the end of the story underscores humanity's powerlessness in the face of larger natural forces. Human knowledge and skills may not always be enough to control nature. This suggests that myths not only depict human power but also its limitations, reinforcing the message that nature has forces that may surpass human understanding and control, a theme often found in many myths and folk tales.

Data 3 explains how The Rat Man tries to understand the rats by studying their behaviors and habits, reflecting humanity's effort to use knowledge as a tool to overcome challenges. This demonstrates the duality between humans and nature, where humans attempt to control the environment through science and strategy. In Lévi-Strauss' myth theory, the story of The Rat Man can be seen as a symbol of humanity's attempt to master nature through deep understanding and adaptation (Adijaya, 2024; (Anderson, 2023; (da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Stambovsky, 2021) . This quote highlights The Rat Man's closeness to the rats, seemingly suggesting that knowledge alone is not enough to ensure success.

Although he has a profound understanding of rat behavior, the fact that no rats are caught by the end of the story shows that human knowledge can be limited or not always effective in controlling nature. This emphasizes humanity's limitations in facing natural forces that are often unpredictable or uncontrollable. In myth theory, The Rat Man's failure to capture the rats creates an opposition between hope and outcome (Anderson, 2023; (da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Stambovsky, 2021). Even though he has equipped himself with a vast understanding of rats, the outcome shows that there are elements of nature that remain beyond human control.

Data 4 illustrates how Rat Man understands the behavior of rats, which are highly intelligent and vigilant. In this context, rats are seen as capable of monitoring and observing human movements, especially those of the rat catcher, and can understand that they are being prepared to be hunted or destroyed. This shows how rats, as living creatures, do not only act based on instinct but also demonstrate intelligence in responding to threats. In myth theory, Lévi-Strauss argues that myths arise from the relationship between two opposing or contrasting elements, often reflecting conflict or tension in society (da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Hariyono et al., 2024; Stambovsky, 2021). In this case, rats and humans represent opposing sides as there are the vigilant and intelligent rats and the humans trying to control or defeat them. This concept highlights the conflict between human dominance and the natural intelligence of the rats that resists. Myths in Lévi-Strauss' perspective often reflect social and cultural dynamics in human life (da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Hariyono et al., 2024; Júnior et al., 2023) . Here, the relationship between rats and humans symbolizes tension, with both sides observing each other and trying to outsmart one another. This myth also shows that while humans may have the power to hunt rats, the rats still possess the intelligence and vigilance to

survive. It is an illustration of the tension often found in real life between the dominant and the oppressed. Through this kind of sense, this demonstrates how myths and stories often depict the encounter between two conflicting forces or entities, with both trying to overcome or defeat each other.

Data 5 explains how Rat Man understands the natural traits of rats, particularly their habit of biting or chewing on everything around them. Rat Man emphasizes that rats are creatures constantly seeking objects to bite and chew. This portrays how rats adapt to their environment, striving to survive by utilizing whatever is available to them (Anderson, 2023; Hariyono et al., 2024; Sherlock, 2023). This understanding shows that rats act based on their deep instincts, which allow them to survive in various conditions. Rat Man's understanding of rats as biting creatures constantly searching for something to chew can also be seen as a way of viewing the relationship between humans and rats as in this case humans trying to control something that acts based on instinct.

Furthermore, Lévi-Strauss highlights that myths often feature the relationship between different beings as a way to create balance or explain tensions within society (Anderson, 2023; Humayun & Chang, 2024; Stambovsky, 2021). In this context, Rat Man's understanding of rat behavior as instinctual, particularly their biting habit, is an example of human knowledge striving to understand and cope with the natural traits of other creatures. This understanding depicts the process of humans attempting to grasp and address the tension between the natural needs of animals and human efforts to control or alter their behavior.

This quotation also shows that to understand rats, we must look at their behavior intertwined with their survival instincts. In Lévi-Strauss' myth theory, this illustrates a deeper relationship between humans and other creatures, interacting in complex and meaningful ways (da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Das, 2023; Stambovsky, 2021). Even though Rat Man has a profound understanding of rat behavior, such as their habit of biting or chewing everything around them, he ultimately fails to control or catch the rats. This can be seen as a symbol of the tension between humans and nature, or between humans and creatures that act based on their instincts. Despite humans' higher knowledge and understanding, they cannot always overcome or control the natural instincts of animals like rats. This myth reflects the process of humans trying to understand the natural world and create narratives that explain the ongoing relationship between humans and the creatures around them.

It is understood that myths often teach that understanding the world does not always result in full control over it, and the tension between humans and nature or other creatures remains. While Rat Man has knowledge of rats and their instincts, his inability to catch the rats at the end of the film demonstrates that humans cannot always overcome the greater forces of nature (Das, 2023; Humayun & Chang, 2024; Montanaro, 2023). This reinforces the idea that myths and stories often depict the tension between two opposing entities, with human knowledge and power being limited when facing the forces of nature.

In Data 6, Rat Man explains how the rats would be attracted to try to reach the bag containing poison he prepared, even though the position of the bag is high and can only be accessed with effort. However, despite the apparent logic of this

strategy, in reality, no rats are captured by the end of the story. It is distinct that myths and folk tales reflect the deep structure of human thought. According to Lévi- Strauss, myths often involve profound contradictions or dualities, which are manifested in the differences between the human world and the animal world (da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Júnior et al., 2023; Valipoor, 2016). In this context, Rat Man attempts to bridge the two, showing an understanding that seems to unify humans and rats in a relationship that can be exploited for human advantage. However, in reality, no rats are caught, reflecting that human understanding of the animal world does not always succeed.

From Lévi-Strauss' perspective, even though Rat Man attempts to trap the rats in a logical and structured way, no rats are caught, which shows that the animal world has its own logic and structure that cannot be fully understood or controlled by humans (da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Montanaro, 2023; Valipoor, 2016). Myths or stories like this reflect the structure of human ignorance about other worlds, which, although we try to connect with them in certain ways, still have unexpected and unpredictable methods. Rat Man, believed to be a professional in his approach, still fails in his mission. This shows that while humans can create structures that seem rational, the reality often contradicts those expectations, as depicted in myths that reflect the conflict and tension between the human world and the animal world in human thought.

Data 7 explains the natural behavior of rats, which are attracted to certain smells and tend to bite something suspicious, like a bag containing poisonous powder. In the context of the myth of Rat Man, this portrayal demonstrates Rat Man's deep understanding of rat nature and how he uses this behavior to trap them (Anderson, 2023; Humayun & Chang, 2024; Montanaro, 2023). Although in *The Rat Catcher* film no rats are caught, the narrative about Rat Man still reinforces the idea of his legendary power to control and manipulate rats.

Lévi-Strauss' theory of myths focuses on how myths reflect universal and binary human thinking structures (Adijaya, 2024; (Anderson, 2023; Júnior et al., 2023)). In this case, the story of Rat Man can be analyzed through the lens of the difference between humans and animals, as well as reason and instinct. Rat Man represents humans using their intellect to manipulate rats, which act based on instinct. The narrative about Rat Man solidifies this difference by showing how humans can overcome the natural traits of animals with cleverness.

According to Lévi-Strauss, myths serve to resolve contradictions in society (de Oliveira, 2023; Pillai & Kaushal, 2021; Segal, 2021). In the story of Rat Man, there is a contradiction between cleanliness and filth, as well as order and chaos, represented by the rats. Rat Man, as a mythical figure, serves to address these contradictions with his role as a rat controller. Even though no rats are captured in the film, the myth of Rat Man still provides a satisfying narrative about human control and domination over the wild. The lack of concrete evidence in *The Rat Catcher* about Rat Man's success in catching rats reflects an important aspect of myths according to Lévi-Strauss. It is that myths are not about literal truth, but about conveying symbolic and structural messages.



In Data 8, this note shows Claude's belief that rats are hiding in the haystack, even though in the film *The Rat Catcher* no rat is ever seen coming out of it. This belief reflects how humans often associate specific places, such as a haystack, with the behavior or habits of animals, even without direct evidence to support it. According to Lévi-Strauss' myth theory, myths are a way for humans to understand the world through stories that help explain phenomena that are difficult to comprehend (da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Pillai & Kaushal, 2021; Stambovsky, 2021). Claude's belief that rats are in the haystack is an example of how myths function. He uses this narrative to explain why rats might be there, even without concrete proof. It creates an image of the haystack as the "ideal" place for rats, based on assumptions and symbolism. In this case, the haystack becomes a symbol of the contradiction between human order (haystack as a food storage place) and natural chaos (rats as pests). The myth about rats in the haystack helps to explain and rationalize the fear of the disruption caused by rats, even though no rats are actually seen. Like many other myths, this story does not have to be literally true to have value. Instead, it serves as a symbolic tool to help people cope with the uncertainty and worries about the world around them.

In Data 9, it shows Rat Man's clever and cautious strategy to trap rats by understanding their natural behavior. He knows that rats tend to be suspicious of new things, so he gains their trust by providing safe and appealing food for several days before finally trapping them. This is an example of habituation, where the rats become comfortable and less wary of threats. According to Lévi-Strauss' myth theory, myths often contain explanations of how humans can overcome the forces of nature through knowledge and strategy (da Silva & Werneck, 2021; (de Oliveira, 2023; Pillai & Kaushal, 2021). In this case, Rat Man represents humans using a deep understanding of rats to control them. This narrative creates an image of human power to overcome animal instincts through cleverness and patience. Although Rat Man's strategy appears logical and clever, in reality, no rats are caught in *The Rat Catcher* film. This shows that even though humans may have a deep understanding of nature, the outcome is not always as expected. It reflects an element of myth where success is not always based on facts, but rather on a narrative that builds trust in human abilities.

Data 10 states that a good rat catcher must think and act like a rat, even more intelligently than they do, in order to succeed. Rat Man believes that understanding and mimicking the behavior of rats is key to capturing them. However, in the film *The Rat Catcher*, no rats are ever caught, despite Rat Man's persistent efforts. This suggests that the idea of human capability to fully control rats through deep understanding is merely a myth. In Lévi-Strauss' myth theory, myths often contain stories that offer explanations or solutions to difficult or seemingly unsolvable problems in real life (Adijaya, 2024; de Oliveira, 2023 ; Pillai & Kaushal, 2021). In this case, the myth of Rat Man's ability to be "smarter than the rats" is a way to explain how humans can overcome challenges such as pests like rats.

Even though there is no evidence that this strategy works, the myth provides a sense of control and reassurance. Myths also serve to resolve contradictions between humans and nature. Rat Man, as a mythical figure, is portrayed as someone

who can overcome animal instincts with intelligence (Anderson, 2023; da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Stambovsky, 2021). However, the fact that no rats are caught shows that this myth does not always reflect reality. It illustrates the limits of human ability to control nature, even though myths attempt to depict the opposite.

Data 11 describes how Rat Man imitates the movements of rats for a specific purpose. His smooth, almost silent walking style emphasizes the impression that Rat Man possesses a unique ability to approach rats without raising suspicion. However, from a rational perspective, the idea that someone could imitate rats to such an extent that no rats would be caught could be considered a myth. There is no concrete evidence supporting this ability, and such a claim seems more like a story created to add allure or mystery to the figure of Rat Man (Das, 2023; Montanaro, 2023; Stambovsky, 2021).

In the context of myth, this story can be seen as part of the mythic structure that serves to explain difficult or frightening phenomena, in this case, the relationship between humans and animals, particularly rats. Lévi-Strauss argues that myths function to provide symbolic explanations for contradictions in social life and nature (de Oliveira, 2023; Pillai & Kaushal, 2021; Segal, 2021). In the story of Rat Man, the myth may help explain human inability to fully control or understand the wild nature represented by rats. The Rat Man myth, in Lévi-Strauss' view, could be a symbolic tool to address human fear of rats, which are often seen as disease carriers or destroyers.

By creating a character who can walk like a rat and approach them undetected, the story attempts to balance the relationship between humans and rats, creating an illusion of control that does not actually exist. This myth serves as a symbolic mediator to reconcile humans with their powerlessness over nature (Anderson, 2023; da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Stambovsky, 2021). So, while the story is engaging, from a logical and scientific standpoint, there is no evidence to suggest that someone could mimic rats to a degree that would deceive them. This myth reflects the human need for narratives that explain phenomena they cannot fully control or understand. As part of culture, this myth enriches imagination and provides symbolic lessons, even though it is not based on empirical facts.

Data 12 illustrates the beginning of Rat Man's failure in catching the rats, as they reject the bait because they have access to better food sources. This frustration shows that, despite Rat Man trying to leverage his knowledge of rat behavior, there are factors beyond his control. Logically, this failure reveals the limitations of humans in controlling nature, even with a deep understanding of animal behavior. Rat Man's failure symbolizes humanity's inability to fully dominate the wild, regardless of the effort and understanding possessed (Anderson, 2023; da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Stambovsky, 2021). The Rat Man's myth can be understood as a way of processing this experience of failure into a story with a symbolic structure.

Then, the rats not being tempted by Rat Man's bait demonstrates that nature has its own rules and dynamics that humans cannot always control. Overall, this quote shows how myths function to explain and process realities that often do not align with human expectations. By depicting Rat Man's failure, the myth reveals that

total control over nature is an illusion, and humans must accept the limitations of what they can achieve. This aligns with Lévi-Strauss' view that myths are tools to understand and reconcile with a complex world that cannot always be fully comprehended (Pillai & Kaushal, 2021; Segal, 2021; Sherlock, 2023).

Data 13 describes the emotional and physical transformation of Rat Man after his failure. His facial expression changes, becoming more closed off and resembling something frightening or alienating, signaling that the failure has affected his self-confidence. The "boarding aspect" indicates the process in which he begins to withdraw into his own world, drowning in disappointment and frustration. According to Lévi-Strauss, myths are not just stories about heroes or great events, but also about the struggles of humans facing external forces beyond their control (de Oliveira, 2023; Montanaro, 2023; Segal, 2021).

In this case, Rat Man becomes a symbol of humans confronting failure they cannot overcome, forcing themselves to face the reality that their experience and skills are not always enough. Lévi-Strauss views myths as structures that help individuals and societies understand contradictions in their lives (Adijaya, 2024; Humayun & Chang, 2024; Montanaro, 2023). Rat Man's failure is an illustration of the tension between hope and reality, between human effort and natural forces. By withdrawing and becoming more introspective, Rat Man reflects the human process of trying to understand and accept failure. This myth emphasizes that failure does not only affect outcomes, but also one's identity and self-perception.

Data 14 highlights Rat Man's attempt to restore his reputation after the failure. By stating that "nothing will kill a rat quicker than a ferret," he seems to be diverting attention away from his own inability, suggesting that a more effective solution, in the form of a natural predator like a ferret, exists. This is a form of self-defense, trying to assert that even though he failed, another method could work. According to Lévi-Strauss' myth theory, Rat Man's statement can be seen as part of the mythic narrative that attempts to bridge the gap between personal failure and social expectations (Adijaya, 2024; Anderson, 2023; da Silva & Werneck, 2021). Myths often function to resolve contradictions or tensions by offering symbolic explanations or solutions. By referencing the ferret, Rat Man creates an alternative narrative implying that his failure is not the end of the story, but rather a part of the process of finding a better solution, as he acknowledges that trust in his own methods has not yielded results.

Data 15 describes Rat Man actions, which symbolically attempt to prove his abilities after his failure. From the perspective of Lévi-Strauss' myth theory, this action can be seen as an attempt to reconstruct the myth of belief that has been shattered. Lévi-Strauss argues that myths serve to resolve the tension between reality and expectation (de Oliveira, 2023; Pillai & Kaushal, 2021; Segal, 2021). In this case, Rat Man, who has failed, tries to change the paradigm about himself by relying on the ferret, a symbol of greater strength and effectiveness than himself. This suggests that myths are not just about heroes or figures, but also about how individuals overcome internal and external conflicts. Lévi-Strauss also asserts that myths often use symbols to connect seemingly contradictory aspects of the real world. Here, the ferret serves as a substitute or complement that addresses Rat Man's

weaknesses. By incorporating the ferret into his process, Rat Man is not only trying to complete his task but also reshaping his identity, shifting from a failed figure to one who can overcome challenges with greater strength. The Rat Man's myth is now renewed with a symbol of success, albeit through an external tool.

Data 16 reflects the narrator's sense of astonishment and suspicion regarding the unexpected outcome, namely the rats not eating the poisoned oats prepared as bait. This abnormality raises doubts about Rat Man's strategy, as rats are typically attracted to food like oats, especially nutritious ones. In this context, the narrator's suspicion reflects the collapse of trust in Rat Man abilities, as he has long been believed to be an expert rat catcher. The myth of Rat Man expertise begins to unravel because there is no tangible evidence supporting this claim. Myths function to resolve contradictions in human life, whether in relation to nature or oneself. Here, the myth of Rat Man as a skilled rat catcher is called into question due to the unexpected result (Anderson, 2023; da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Stambovsky, 2021). What should have been a success, proving Rat Man's strength or skill, is now disrupted by the reality that the rats refuse to approach the prepared bait.

In this context, the myth serves to provide an explanation for the tension arising from failure. Rat Man, who is usually considered to have control over rats, is now seen as incapable of dealing with them, causing the myth that shapes his identity to begin to falter. Lévi-Strauss suggests that myths often exist to ease such tensions, and in this case, the tension between the expectation of success and the failure to achieve it creates an identity crisis for Rat Man (Anderson, 2023; da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Stambovsky, 2021). Rat Man's inability to explain why the rats do not eat the poisoned oats reflects that human knowledge and experience are not always sufficient to master nature. The Rat Man myth must be validated through concrete results, and when those results are not achieved, the myth begins to weaken.

In the same way as the film's title, the Rat Man as the Rat Catcher is convinced that he has the ability to get rid of rats because he has a peculiar skill of mimicking the animal's behaviors and understanding their environment. Nevertheless, as the movie unfolds, it becomes clear that he is not able to catch or get rid of the rats in spite of his claims. His approach is, without a doubt, extremely naive, yet he seems to be perfectly satisfied with it. On a more neutral analysis, this can best be described with the term cognitive dissonance, when a person experiences a conflict between their beliefs and the underlying reality (Humayun & Chang, 2024; Montanaro, 2023; Stambovsky, 2021). Rather than admitting that his claim about the effectiveness of his approach is not true, Rat Man seeks alternative justifications to maintain his credibility. Such behavior is prevalent in all societies, especially those that are steeped in traditional myths and dead culture.

Higher social groups or even individuals tend to have a certain social influence which enables them to implant fabricated claims on others. For instance, take Indonesia where self-proclaimed martial arts experts pretend to have crazy abilities like defeating an opponent just by flicking their wrist. Even though there is no scientific evidence that backs their skills, people are eager to accept their so-called expertise. Such a phenomenon clearly shows how people with authority use ignorance, lack of education, or critical thinking to control masses (da Silva & Werneck, 2021; Júnior et al., 2023; Valipoor, 2016). As such, all of them are stated in the senses of myth. Indeed, as examined in the analysis section, *The Rat Catcher* captures this sentiment through Rat Man's overconfidence in his myth that has failed time and time again.

## CONCLUSION

*The Rat Catcher* is a film that tells the story of a mysterious rat exterminator hired to solve the rampant rat problem. The main character, known as Rat Man, is a trusted and well-known figure his ability to exterminate rats by focusing on gaining a deep understanding of the rat ecosystem, how they communicate, and the social dynamics within their colonies. This belief stems from such myth that by mimicking the behavior and movements of rats, one can approach and capture them more easily. However, Rat Man does not succeed. The myth of Rat Man is also rooted in the belief that there is someone capable of communicating with and even controlling the rats that have overtaken cities and villages. Rat Man is believed to have the power to catch these rat hordes and can control the rats' minds. Rat Man's actions in capturing rats become an essential part of the myth that develops. The story of Rat Man evolves into a belief that spreads widely, turning him into a symbol of mysterious power and the ability to fight great threats. Over time, this myth strengthens the community's belief in the existence of a figure with extraordinary power to combat large issues, like a rat infestation. However, in the development of the film, despite the community's strong belief in Rat Man's abilities, there is no physical evidence or real event showing that the rats were caught or controlled by him. Throughout the film, no rats are successfully caught or dealt with in a way that demonstrates the power or magic attributed to him. This shows that the myth of Rat Man and his actions may always change. However, such myth is still rational since it is believed by common people, especially when the community sees Rat Man as an intermediary between the human world and the rat world. They believe Rat Man can understand and communicate with them, making it easier to catch them.

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