



Hochschule Neu-Ulm  
University of Applied Sciences

Master Thesis  
in the master program  
**Advanced Management (M.Sc.)**  
at University of Applied Sciences Neu-Ulm

**A comparison of archetypal storytelling between American and Japanese films**

1<sup>st</sup> examiner: Prof. Dr. Jens U. Pätzmann  
2<sup>nd</sup> examiner: Prof. Dr. Wilke Hammerschmidt

Author: Marcel Rupp (Enrolment number: 254905)

Topic received: 20/01/2025  
Date of submission: 20/07/2025

# Table of contents

Abstract .....	VI
1 Introduction .....	1
1.1 Relevance of the Problem .....	1
1.2 State of the Research and Research Gap .....	2
1.3 Objectives and Research Question .....	2
1.4 Limitations and Scope of the Master’s Thesis .....	3
1.5 Procedure and Research Design .....	4
2 Context & Literature Review .....	5
2.1 Archetypes.....	5
2.1.1 Archetypes in Jungian Psychology .....	5
2.1.2 Other Archetypes .....	6
2.1.3 Pätzmann and Hartwig’s New Archetypal Model .....	8
2.2 Storytelling and Narrative Structures .....	13
2.2.1 Fundamentals of Narrative and Storytelling.....	13
2.2.2 Classical Storytelling Structures.....	14
2.2.3 The 15 Storytelling Formats of Pätzmann and Busch .....	17
2.2.4 The Kishōtenketsu .....	24
2.3 Cultural Influences .....	26
2.3.1 High and Low Context Communication.....	26
2.3.2 Individualism versus Collectivism .....	27
2.3.3 Japanese Cultural Concepts .....	31
2.3.4 Mono no aware .....	33
3 Methodology .....	35
3.1 Research Design.....	35
3.2 Film Selection .....	36
3.3 Analytical Framework.....	40
3.3.1 Storytelling Formats .....	41
3.3.2 The Archetypal Model.....	41
3.3.3 Cultural Concepts and Aesthetics.....	41
3.3.4 Application .....	42
3.4 Data Analysis .....	43
3.5 Limitations of the Research.....	46
4 Results .....	48
4.1 Overall Findings by Country.....	48
4.1.1 Storytelling Formats .....	48
4.1.2 Character Archetypes .....	50
4.1.3 Primary Conflict Types .....	57
4.1.4 Antagonist Types.....	58
4.2 Findings Based on Storytelling Formats .....	60
4.2.1 The Slightly Different Hero’s Journey .....	61
4.2.2 The Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict .....	63
4.2.3 The Unexpected Twist.....	66
4.2.4 Storytelling Formats Exclusive to the Japanese Film Selection .....	67

4.2.5 Storytelling Formats Exclusive to the American Film Selection .....	68
5 Discussion .....	70
5.1 Key Findings .....	70
5.2 Interpretation of the Key Findings.....	72
5.3 Limitations of the Thesis .....	77
6 Conclusion.....	78
6.1 Summary of Key Findings.....	78
6.2 Answer to the Research Question and Hypotheses .....	78
6.3 Implications for Research and Practice .....	80
6.4 Suggestions for Future Research .....	80
7 Reference List .....	VII
8 Appendix .....	XIV

# List of figures

Figure 1: Archetypes of the archetypal model by Pätzmann and Hartwig .....	9
Figure 2: Anti-archetypes of the archetypal model by Pätzmann and Hartwig .....	10
Figure 3: The archetypal motive force field by Pätzmann and Busch .....	12
Figure 4: The three-act structure by Field.....	15
Figure 5: Freytag’s pyramid.....	15
Figure 6: The Hero’s Journey model by Vogler.....	17
Figure 7: The Kishōtenketsu .....	25
Figure 8: Comparison of storytelling formats between Japanese and American films .....	49
Figure 9: (Anti-)archetypes in Japanese films by character role.....	50
Figure 10: (Anti-)archetypes in American films by character role .....	52
Figure 11: Aggregated archetype counts across all 40 Japanese and American films .....	53
Figure 12: Distribution of archetypes across the motivational systems (Japan) .....	54
Figure 13: Distribution of archetypes across the motivational systems (America).....	55
Figure 14: Aggregated count of archetype appearances across the motivational systems (Japan versus America) .....	57
Figure 15: Primary conflict types by country.....	58
Figure 16: Antagonist types by country .....	59
Figure 17: Archetypes in the Slightly Different Hero’s Journey by character roles (Japan) .....	62
Figure 18: Archetypes in the Slightly Different Hero’s Journey by character roles (America).....	63
Figure 19: Archetypes in the Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict by character roles (Japan)..	64
Figure 20: Archetypes in the Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict by character roles (America) .....	65

# List of tables

Table 1: Profile of the Mother archetype according to Pätzmann and Hartwig .....	11
Table 2: The 15 storytelling formats by Pätzmann and Busch.....	19
Table 3: List of analyzed American films .....	38
Table 4: List of analyzed Japanese films (with English titles).....	40
Table 5: First row of each used template .....	42
Table 6: Types of primary conflict.....	44
Table 7: Types of antagonists.....	45
Table 8: Comparison of the storytelling formats exclusive to the Japanese films .....	67
Table 9: Comparison of the storytelling formats exclusive to the American films.....	68

# Abstract

This thesis analyzes how archetypal storytelling differs between Japanese and American films and how cultural context influences these differences. A qualitative analysis of 20 films per country using Pätzmann and Hartwig's archetypal model and Pätzmann and Busch's storytelling formats was applied. Additionally, two custom typologies – primary conflict types and antagonist types – were developed to allow for a more detailed comparison. The results of the analysis show that, while there are overlaps in appearing archetypes, American films often use the Slightly Different Hero's Journey storytelling format with clear antagonist roles and a focus on autonomous archetypes like the Hero or Rebel. Japanese films favor formats such as the Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict or the Unexpected Twist, frequently omitting an antagonist, preferring internal or less direct conflict and featuring archetypes centered around safety and excitement like the Mother or Happy Nature. While some archetypes appear in both cultures, preferences in differing motivational systems reveal the influence of cultural concepts such as individualism and collectivism. This thesis supports the assumption that storytelling formats and character archetypes are influenced by culture. Therefore, this thesis offers relevant insights for research, branding, cinema and content marketing.

# 1 Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis serves as the introduction to the topic of American and Japanese films, their differences, similarities and the potential for scientific research – especially concerning the narrative structures and archetypes within them. In order to portray a clear framework for understanding the thematic of this thesis, this chapter presents the concept of this work.

Chapter 1.1 will detail the relevance of narrative structures and archetypes for research, while chapter 1.2 outlines the current state of research concerning archetypes and narrative structures as well as their interplay. After chapter 1.3, which states the overarching research question and additional hypotheses, chapter 1.4 and chapter 1.5 will refer to the limitations and scope as well as the research design of this thesis respectively.

## 1.1 Relevance of the Problem

Successful films not only tell a story to the viewers, but also offer insights into the culture and mindsets of the people creating them. Especially in Hollywood, the Hero's Journey model is a widely used framework to tell an engaging story about overcoming the odds and personal growth (Campbell, 2008). However, the United States is not the only country producing successful films – Japanese cinema also managed to gained international acclaim on many occasions. Various Japanese films divert from Western models and use different formats of storytelling, like the *Kishōtenketsu* - a four-act narrative format that emphasizes contrast and resolution without direct conflict (Arnavas & Bellini, 2023, pp. 26-27).

Exploring the differences and similarities in storytelling between different cultures and the way the characters act and behave within their narratives can provide valuable insights for not only academic research, but also the film industry and for content marketing. Learning how culture may shape narratives and character archetypes can reveal which structures are more effective in eliciting audience appreciation and engagement in culturally diverse countries.

## **1.2 State of the Research and Research Gap**

Existing literature extensively covers the theory of archetypes that was developed by Jung (2020), exemplified by books that illustrate and add new insights and methods of application to the concept of an archetype such as in Roesler's work (2022). Additionally, articles cover the debate about the fundamental aspects of the archetype framework and try to define in detail what defines an archetype, stating an ongoing lack of agreement on the definition (Mills, 2018, p. 200). Since films generally tell a story through characters and their actions, said characters can be associated with archetypes, which allows research on the use of archetypes and narrative storytelling in films. Based on the archetypes of Jung, Pätzmann and Hartwig (2018) analyzed 50 blockbuster films to create an archetypal model consisting of 28 (anti-)archetypes and their corresponding motivational amplifiers and barriers. Afterwards, Pätzmann and Busch (2019) used this model on a number of YouTube videos to describe 15 storytelling formats. It has to be noted that all of the 50 analyzed films that led to the archetypal model had either been produced or co-produced in the United States, meaning none of the studied films originated from an Eastern culture (Pätzmann & Hartwig, 2018, p. 6). This opens up a gap in research. Scholars already compared Western tropes with Eastern storytelling methods, such as the Kishōtenketsu (Arnavas & Bellini, 2023). No comprehensive study, however, has analyzed the possible differences and similarities in how Western and Eastern films use archetypes and certain narrative structures as well as how culture influences these aspects, which is what this thesis aims to accomplish.

## **1.3 Objectives and Research Question**

The objective of this thesis is to analyze and compare the use of archetypes and narrative structures in successful films from the United States of America and Japan. This examination is based on and uses the archetypal model by Pätzmann and Hartwig (2018) and the 15 storytelling formats by Pätzmann and Busch (2019). It is to be examined if the archetypal model of Pätzmann and Hartwig can be applied towards all films of those culturally different countries and if films made in the United States and Japan differ in which archetypes of the new archetypal model are predominantly used. Additionally, this study aims to discover how these archetypes are portrayed, as well as if there are noticeable differences or similarities in storytelling formats between the two countries. To answer these questions, the research question

## **“To what extent does archetypal storytelling differ between Japanese and American films and how is it shaped by cultural context?”**

is raised. Additionally, two hypotheses are formulated that are to be answered through this thesis.

Prior research suggests that culture influences which values and behavioral patterns are considered desirable within individuals (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 113). Such values are then reflected in storytelling through characters that embody one or more archetypes with distinct characteristics. Therefore, cultural differences may lead to differing preferences in archetypes used in film, leading to the first hypothesis:

- 1) *The character archetypes assigned to protagonists, antagonists and supporting characters differ significantly between Japanese and American films.*

Furthermore, modern Western cinema often centers around action-focused and conflict-heavy narratives, such as those seen in superhero franchises (Vogler, 2020, pp. ix - x). In contrast, many Japanese narratives emphasize contrast and resolutions without direct conflict (Arnavas & Bellini, 2023, pp. 26-27; Krutiakova, 2023, pp. 55-56). Based on this, it can be assumed that the dominant conflict types in Japanese and American films differ. Consequently, the second hypothesis is proposed:

- 2) *Conflicts in American films more frequently focus on a direct confrontation between heroes and villains than in Japanese films.*

## **1.4 Limitations and Scope of the Master’s Thesis**

The geographic focus of this thesis is limited to films produced in the United States and Japan. According to a list of the film industry data website Numbers.com, the United States as well as Japan are among the five countries with the highest total worldwide box office (2024b). Japan was chosen to be compared to the United States because of its cultural isolation – long periods of isolation such as the Sakoku period allowed the country to preserve its cultural uniqueness due to Japan’s geographical location and policies (Garside, 2024; Prusinski, 2012, p. 27). This allows for a comparison of two distinctly different cultures. Because of this contrast and to avoid blending culturally similar regions, only the mentioned two countries were chosen as focus for a direct comparison. This thesis focuses on the analysis of 20 films per country to

accurately capture cultural nuances and explore different genres for both countries while still maintaining a manageable scope. Films that were not accessible outside of their respective countries, as well as films that act as a part of a television series and would need knowledge outside of the analyzed film, were excluded from the analysis. The time frame for analysis was restricted to films after the year 1980 to exclude films created before or during the Second World War and to more accurately capture modern formats and aesthetics. Finally, films that have been released in the middle of the year 2024 and were therefore not easily accessible during the time of the film analysis were excluded from the analysis as well.

## **1.5 Procedure and Research Design**

The research of this thesis follows a qualitative approach through a content analysis of 20 selected films from both the United States and Japan. The films were analyzed in their usage of archetypes and their storytelling formats by following the approach of Pätzmann and Busch (2019). To achieve a uniform selection of successful films, the films with the highest domestic box office in their respective countries were gathered through the usage of websites that track box office data. For films from the United States, the website *The Numbers* was used (2024a). For Japanese films, the data was gathered through the website of the company *Kogyo Tsushinsha Ltd.* (2024). Afterwards, the films were filtered based on the exclusion criteria stated in section 1.4 and the 20 films with the highest box office of each country were chosen for the analysis. The selected films were then analyzed for patterns in the frequency of appearing archetypes and storytelling formats. Additionally, two custom typologies – one for primary conflict types and one for antagonist types – were developed and used during the analysis. Finally, cultural concepts and aesthetics that may influence the behavior of American and Japanese individuals were used to find possible explanations for the similarities, differences and additional patterns found in the analysis. Through the findings gathered in this analysis, this thesis aims to provide an answer to the research question and both proposed hypotheses. More detailed information about the research design, the two custom typologies and the film analysis will be illustrated in chapter 3.

## **2 Context & Literature Review**

Phenomena like archetypes or cultural concepts have several different definitions. Existing literature focuses on many distinct aspects of these topics. To fully grasp the themes discussed in this thesis, this chapter will create a baseline understanding of the relevant aspects of archetypes, narrative storytelling and culture before proceeding towards the film analysis.

In chapter 2.1 the topic of archetypes in general will be discussed, focusing on different archetypal frameworks before introducing the model that was used for the analysis of this thesis. Afterwards, chapter 2.2 will explore the topic of narrative storytelling and the different kinds of storytelling formats that can shape a story. Finally, chapter 2.3 will introduce cultural influences, concepts and aesthetics that can define how individuals in different countries and cultures may behave.

### **2.1 Archetypes**

Since a general knowledge about Archetypes is necessary to understand the following chapters of this thesis, chapter 2.1.1 will introduce how Carl Gustav Jung perceived and defined archetypes. Chapter 2.1.2 will detail further archetypal frameworks that emerged, while chapter 2.1.3 will introduce Pätzmann and Hartwig's archetypal model that was used for this thesis.

#### **2.1.1 Archetypes in Jungian Psychology**

In the 1930s, Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung wrote in his essays about three different areas of the human psyche, which he called 1) the personal conscious, 2) the personal unconscious and 3) the collective unconscious. (Jung, 2020, pp. 7-8; Pätzmann & Adamczyk, 2020, p. 3; Pätzmann & Hartwig, 2018, p. 1; Roesler, 2022, pp. 18-19). Jung further elaborates that the collective unconscious consist of content and behavior that is and has been present in every human being since generations, defining this content as primordial image – archetypes – which are universal for all people disregarding their backgrounds (Bassil-Morozow & Hockley, 2017, p. 27; Jung, 2020, pp. 8-9; Roesler, 2022, pp. 18-19). Haule continues Jung's description, stating that archetypes influence actions and perception beneath the level of conscious awareness and using situations like going through puberty or falling in love as examples (Haule, 2011, p. 11). Mills suggests that archetypes are unconscious structures that are expressed through forms like cultural traditions, myths, art or religious beliefs (Mills, 2018, p. 213).

Although Jung initially assumed that such archetypes were inherited genetically (Haule, 2011, p. 14; Jung, 2020, p. 56), literature nowadays represents the point of view that archetypes are transmitted through culture and are learnable, making them partially universal and a cultural anthropological topic (Miller & Pätzmann, 2023, p. 57; Mills, 2018, p. 202; Pätzmann & Adamczyk, 2020, p. 3; Pätzmann & Hartwig, 2018, p. 1; Roesler, 2022, p. 105).

In his works, Jung introduced several archetypes to which he attributed greater importance. In *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, Jung describes the archetype of the Shadow as well as the Self. The Shadow represents the dark aspects within the human psyche, traits and desires that are denied or suppressed and often manifest onto others through projections (Jung, 1968, pp. 8-10; Steinecke & Pätzmann, 2023, p. 119). The self on the other hand is stated to be the achieved wholeness, when the conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche are connected. Jung describes the Self as mandalas or deities appearing in dreams or myths (Jung, 1968, pp. 23-35). In other works, such as *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology*, Jung presents the archetype of the Persona. The Persona is a mask an individual wears to meet societal expectations, even if the Persona does not align with the individual wearing it and mainly acts as a role to be played (Jung, 1966, pp. 216-217). Further, Jung writes about the archetype of Anima/Animus, calling them the feminine and masculine aspects in the psyche of a man/woman respectively. The Anima makes up the emotional and feminine side of a man, while the animus relates to the authoritative and masculine side of a woman. (Jung, 1968, pp. 11-22; 2020, pp. 71-93; Steinecke & Pätzmann, 2023, p. 119). Finally, Jung also addresses archetypes such as the Mother, the Child or the Trickster in his work. These archetypes share names with archetypes introduced in other archetypal models, but will not be explained in more detail at this point in this thesis. Further elaborations to archetypes such as the Mother can be found in chapter 2.1.3.

## **2.1.2 Other Archetypes**

Apart from and partially inspired by Jung, archetypes were used outside of analytical psychology. In her book *Awakening the Heroes Within: Twelve Archetypes to Help Us Find Ourselves and Transform Our World*, Carol S. Pearson listed twelve different archetypes with the goal to use them for character development and transformation (Pearson, 1993, pp. 38-39). In her book, she introduced archetypes that can help an individual in certain parts of their personal and professional life and the lessons one can learn from these archetypes as well as their negative aspects or shadow forms. To put these archetypes into perspective, Pearson

connected them to a Hero's Journey, mirroring the transformation that a hero undergoes in his journey to kill a dragon, save the maiden and return as their true self to a happy end. Through the understanding of her archetypes, Pearson aimed to use this model in a similar way for character development (Pearson, 1993, pp. 22-23).

The archetypes Pearson used in her book are named in accordance to the Hero's Journey and inhabit corresponding goals, fears, problems, responses to the task and virtues. While named differently, many of the attributes in these archetypes can be found in the new archetypal model by Pätzmann and Hartwig, as seen in chapter 2.1.3. Pearson's archetype of the compassionate Caregiver for example, who attends to those in need, closely parallels the archetype of the caring and protective Mother in Pätzmann and Hartwig's model. Inside the narrative, both archetypes fulfill similar narrative roles. This indicates that while archetypes can be named and perceived differently, certain overarching aspects of archetypes appear regularly across different archetype models.

After introducing the twelve archetypes, Margaret Mark and Carol S. Pearson later adapted said archetypal model for strategic brand management. By replacing some of the archetypes such as the Warrior or the Orphan and their virtues to better fit the purpose of brand management, they used the model for archetypal brand strategy to create brand identities for companies or products (Mark & Pearson, 2001, p. 13; Pätzmann & Hartwig, 2018, pp. 1-2). While this archetypal model was more applicable for brand management, Pätzmann and Hartwig criticized the absence of female archetypes such as the mother or corresponding negative archetypes/shadows (Pätzmann & Adamczyk, 2020, p. 7; Pätzmann & Hartwig, 2018, p. 2).

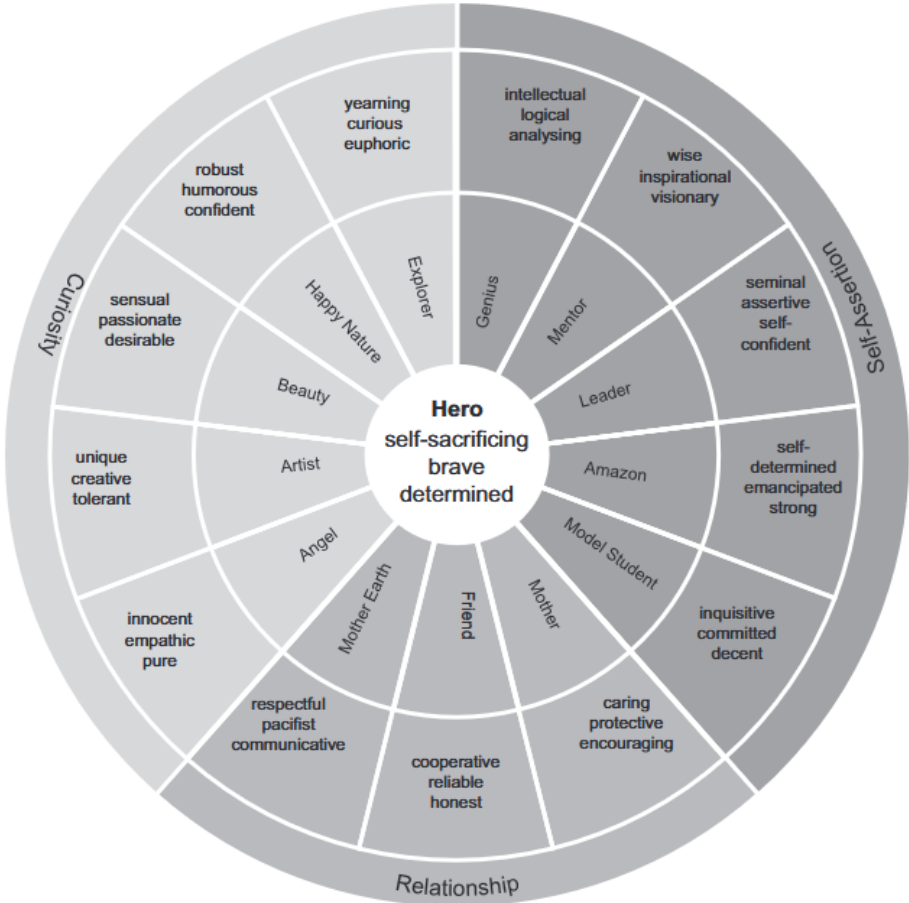
Archetypes were not only found useful for psychological applications or brand management but also in entertainment and storytelling. In his book *The Hero with a thousand faces*, Joseph Campbell connects Jung's ideas on archetypes with the images of rituals, myths and visions (Campbell, 2008, p. 14) while associating the classical hero as an archetypal pattern (Campbell, 2008, p. 30). In his work, Campbell presents other recurring key figures and symbols within the story of a hero that resemble archetypes, such as the mentor, the threshold guardian, the trickster, the goddess, the shapeshifter and many more with each key figure serving a specific purpose in the story and following a certain pattern (2008). These key figures can be observed in many old and modern stories and appear to be similar to the archetypes of both Pearson as well as Pätzmann and Hartwig.

As already mentioned in chapter 2.1.1, it is known that archetypes are transmitted and learnable through cultural aspects (Mills, 2018, p. 202; Pätzmann & Adamczyk, 2020, p. 3; Pätzmann & Hartwig, 2018, p. 1; Roesler, 2022, p. 105). In his book *Archetypes in Japanese Film*, Gregory Barrett supports this idea by following the view of Bellah in that archetypes stem from the personal unconscious – coming from a child’s interactions with its environment - and seem universal due to the fact that interactions in different cultures are akin to each other (Barrett, 1989, p. 20). Nonetheless, Barrett states that specifically Japanese archetypes exist in cinema and that they belong to the traditions of a filmmaker. According to him, filmmakers can use and adjust them according to their personal archetypes or the current times but can also reject them (Barrett, 1989, p. 20). While Barrett notes that in modern times, Japanese archetypes are not as different from Western archetypes (1989, p. 211), he nonetheless depicts classical Japanese archetypes as they appeared in film across many decades. For classical Japanese archetypes he lists, among other examples, the Loyal Retainer and the Tormented Lord, the Vengeful Spirit and the Irresponsible Salaryman, with each of them presenting a different role within Japanese culture and society (Barrett, 1989). The Japanese archetypes of Barrett will not be analyzed in more detail as they were mainly presented to illustrate the existence of uniquely Japanese archetypes in itself that vary from the archetypes presented by Jung, Pearson and Campbell.

### **2.1.3 Pätzmann and Hartwig`s New Archetypal Model**

Aside from the model by Mark and Pearson (2001), other archetypal models emerged that use archetypes to assist in brand management, although many of them exhibited inherent weaknesses. The model by Young and Rubicam presents twelve archetypes together with their corresponding shadow archetypes, and while this model includes female archetypes and better depicts positive and negative archetypes compared to Mark and Pearson, Pätzmann and Hartwig pointed out the flaw of uncommon, medieval wordings within the naming of the archetypes (Pätzmann & Adamczyk, 2020, pp. 7-8; Pätzmann & Hartwig, 2018, p. 2). The *Neuroversum of Archetypes* is an archetypal model from a collaboration between the advertising agency Scholz & Friends and the market research company Spiegelinstitut Mannheim (Horizont Online, 2011) in which twelve archetypes are named and linked to motivational systems. Similarly to the model by Mark and Pearson, the *Neuroversum of Archetypes* is shown to miss shadow archetypes as well as female archetypes according to Pätzmann and Hartwig, rendering the model incomplete (Pätzmann & Hartwig, 2018, pp. 2-3).

Based on the knowledge and missing aspects of these previous archetypal models, Pätzmann and Hartwig (2018) used the idea of linking archetypes to motivational systems. The Zurich model of motivation by Norbert Bischof (2001) introduces the three basic motivational systems of safety, excitement and autonomy, which can then be linked to the positive motives of relationship, curiosity and self-assertion as well as to the negative motives of tedium, fear and subjection (Miller & Pätzmann, 2023, p. 54; Pätzmann & Adamczyk, 2020, p. 10; Pätzmann & Hartwig, 2018, p. 3). By including said model and defining the positive models as motivational endorsers and the negative models as motivational barriers, Pätzmann and Hartwig created an archetypal model that allows connecting male and female archetypes as well as shadow archetypes – which Pätzmann and Hartwig called anti-archetypes – to motivational endorsers and barriers (Pätzmann & Hartwig, 2018, p. 3).

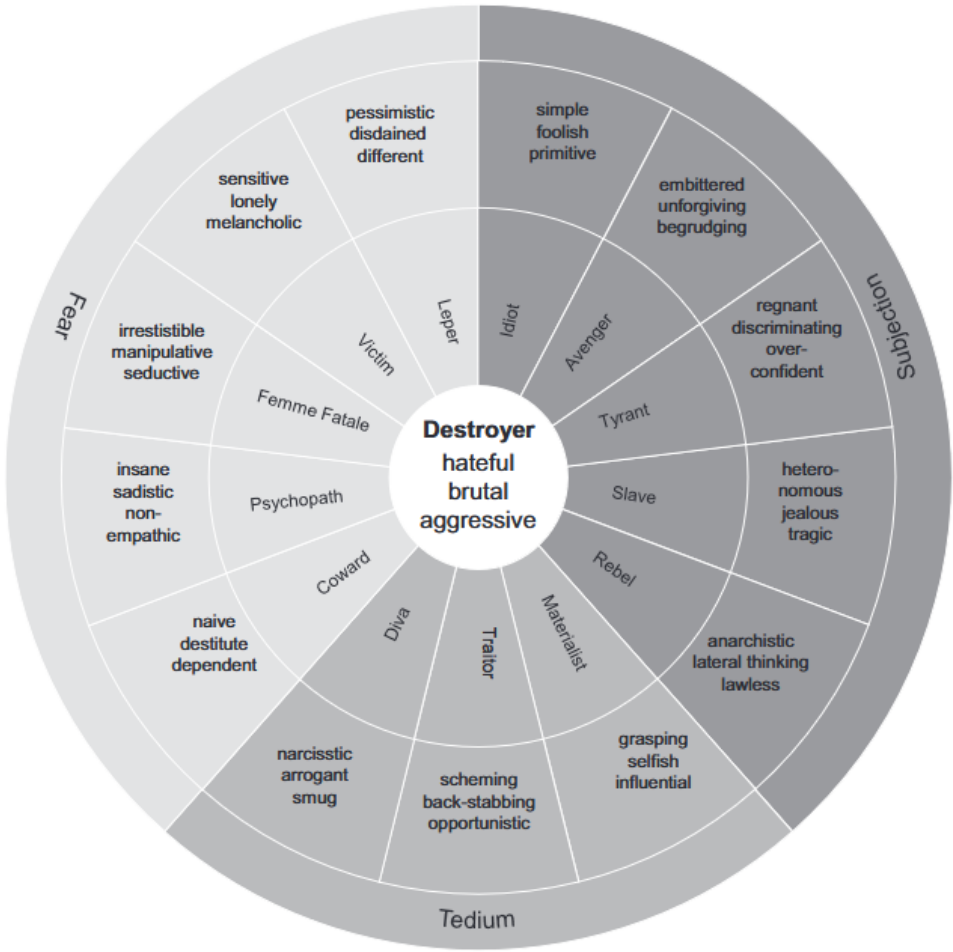


**Figure 1: Archetypes of the archetypal model by Pätzmann and Hartwig**

Source: Pätzmann & Hartwig, 2018, p. 8, translated by Miller & Pätzmann, 2023, p. 55

Through the analysis of the 50 most successful blockbuster films of the last ten years at the point of their study, Pätzmann and Hartwig identified 14 archetypes in addition to 14 anti-

archetypes. Connecting the resulting 28 (anti-)archetypes to the three basic motivational systems and their specific motivational endorsers and barriers led to the creation of the new archetypal model (Pätzmann & Hartwig, 2018, p. 5). Serving as the foundation for the analysis of this thesis, this archetypal model incorporates the archetypes Mother, Friend and Mother Earth into the motivational endorser of relationship, while the archetypes Explorer, Happy Nature, Beauty, Artist and Angel belong to the endorser of curiosity. Genius, Mentor, Leader, Amazon and Model Student are included into the endorser of self-assertion. Finally, the archetype of the Hero is positioned in the middle of all three motivational endorsers, as shown in Figure 1 (Pätzmann & Hartwig, 2018, p. 8).



**Figure 2: Anti-archetypes of the archetypal model by Pätzmann and Hartwig**

Source: Pätzmann & Hartwig, 2018, p. 27, translated by Miller & Pätzmann, 2023, p. 56

The 14 created anti-archetypes (depicted in Figure 2) mirror their respective archetypes in positioning within the motivational systems as well as gender and show either a contrast or an exaggeration to their positive counterparts. The motivational barrier of tedium, opposing the

motivational endorser of relationship, features the Materialist, Traitor and Diva. The motivational barrier of fear, counterpart of the endorser of curiosity, encompasses the anti-archetypes of the Leper, Victim, Femme Fatale, Psychopath and Coward. The motivational barrier of subjection, which stands in contrast to the endorser of self-assertion, is associated with the anti-archetypes Idiot, Avenger, Tyrant, Slave and Rebel. Lastly and similar to the Hero, the anti-archetype of the Destroyer serves as the center-point of the three motivational barriers, having all three barriers be a part of this anti-archetype (Pätzmann & Hartwig, 2018, p. 27). To further explain the attributes and details of all 28 (anti-)archetypes, Pätzmann and Hartwig created profiles, as seen in Table 1, for each individual archetype. These profiles list common roles, characteristics, mottos and definitions as well as tendencies towards their usual gender, age and alignment within a narrative (Pätzmann & Hartwig, 2018, p. 5). Especially the six descriptive characteristics, listed in prioritized order, are intended to highlight how characters embodying these archetypes would behave and differ from one another. These profiles clarify the roles and narrative positions of each (anti-)archetype within a narrative.

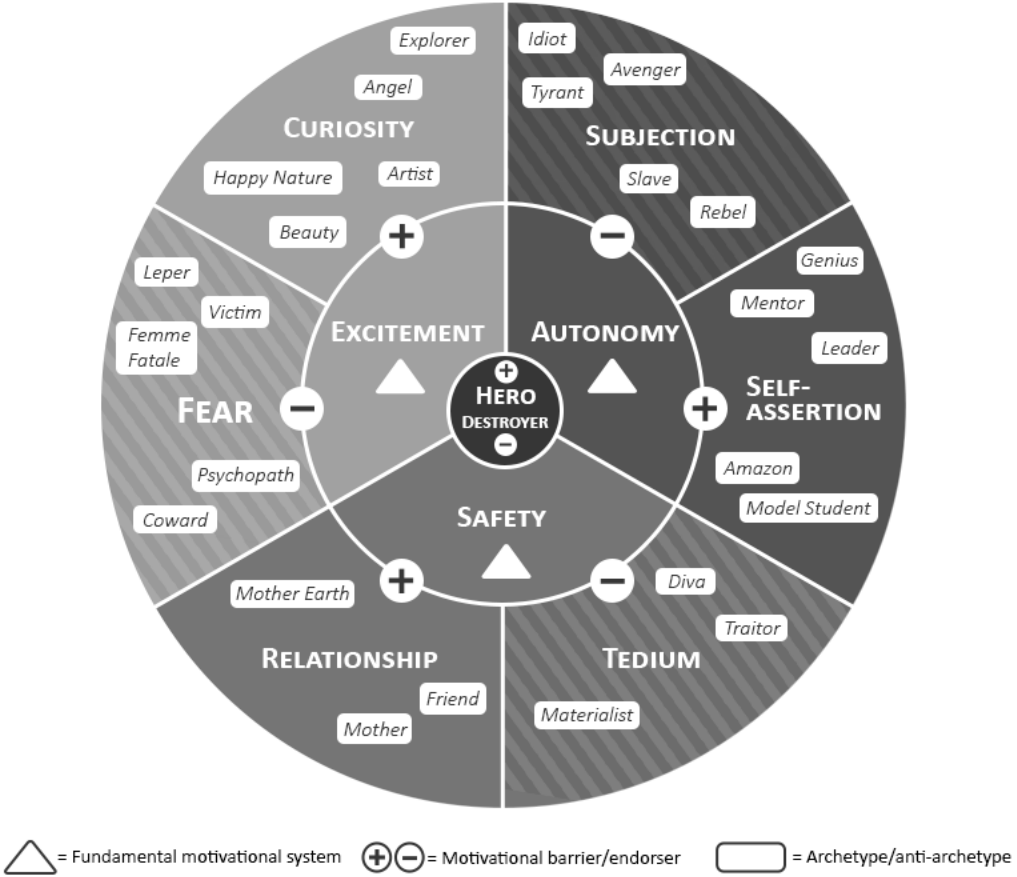
Archetype	The Mother
Also appears as...	Grandmother, Protector, Guardian angel, Father, Grandfather
Characteristics	Caring, protective, encouraging, sincere, comforting, loving
Motto	“My children are my greatest treasure.”
What defines her	The mothers greatest gift is her protective instinct, with which she tries to protect her children from all the evils of the world.
Usual gender	female <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> male
Usual age	young <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> old
Alignment	good <input type="range" value="10"/> evil

**Table 1: Profile of the Mother archetype according to Pätzmann and Hartwig**

Source: Pätzmann and Hartwig, 2018, p. 8, own translation

The characteristics within the aforementioned profiles are an important part of the archetypal model of Pätzmann and Hartwig, being referenced in both Figure 1 and Figure 2. These

characteristics will be referenced again in chapter 3, as they serve as the key-metric for the archetype analysis of this thesis. After the creation of the archetypal model, Pätzmann and Busch (2019) expanded upon it by creating the archetypal motive force field, a model that displays not only the three motivational systems, but also the positive and negative motivational endorsers and barriers along with their associated archetypes and anti-archetypes more clearly (Pätzmann & Adamczyk, 2020, p. 10; Pätzmann & Busch, 2019, pp. 6-7; Steinecke & Pätzmann, 2023, pp. 122-123). This model allows researchers to analyze characters in films based on motivational drives more easily, making it especially useful for examining character roles in narratives.



**Figure 3: The archetypal motive force field by Pätzmann and Busch**

Source: Pätzmann & Busch, 2019, p. 7, translated based on the work of Steinecke & Pätzmann, 2023, p. 124

Similar to Mark and Pearson, Pätzmann and Hartwig (2018) created the archetypal model for various uses, such as brand management, storytelling or content marketing. When comparing the archetypes of the model of Pätzmann and Hartwig to other archetypal models, it can be seen

that some archetypes appear in other iterations in previous scientific research. In the twelve archetypes of Pearson's model for example, the Innocent or the Ruler can be compared to the Angel or the Leader, while the Destroyer appears in both models. This suggests that while archetypes may be named differently or vary in certain aspects and characteristics, the overall idea and pattern of certain archetypes remains consistent (Miller & Pätzmann, 2023, p. 57). This indicates that the archetypal model of Pätzmann and Hartwig can be applied for the purposes of this thesis, while remaining compatible with other archetypal models.

## **2.2 Storytelling and Narrative Structures**

Storytelling is an essential aspect of every film, since every one of them aims to tell a story. Before proceeding to detail different storytelling formats a film can use, chapter 2.2.1 aims to clarify the fundamental concept of storytelling according to literature. Chapter 2.2.2 then focuses on introducing the classic storytelling formats such as the Hero's Journey, while chapter 2.2.3 will introduce the 15 storytelling formats of Pätzmann and Busch that were used during the film analysis of this thesis. These 15 storytelling formats will be supplemented by an additional format, the Kishōtenketsu, in chapter 2.2.4.

### **2.2.1 Fundamentals of Narrative and Storytelling**

The terms narrative or storytelling are fundamental to understanding films and their structure. Since each film follows a specific narrative, it is essential to specify what constitutes these terms before examining the different formats of storytelling. Depending on the context and situation in which storytelling is used in, the definition of it varies. Kleine Wieskamp breaks up the word storytelling in its two components, story and telling, leading her to the conclusion that storytelling is defined by its content and the way the story is told. She further expands upon this thought, defining storytelling as the conscious choice of using the communication tool *story* to emotionally engage the target group and achieve a specific goal (Kleine Wieskamp, 2024, pp. 2-3). Kleine Wieskamp also argues that certain elements are essential for creating a functional story and need to be present to define a story as such. Accordingly, these elements include 1) a reason for the story to be told, 2) a protagonist, 3) a plot, 4) a conflict within the story, 5) emotions, 6) relevance, 7) a transformation of the protagonist's initial situation, 8) simplicity and clarity within the story to make it go viral and 9) orientation towards dialogue (Kleine Wieskamp, 2024, pp. 94-95). Although referencing visual storytelling, Sammer and Heppel (2015, pp. 94-96) name five building blocks to create a good story that overlap with the

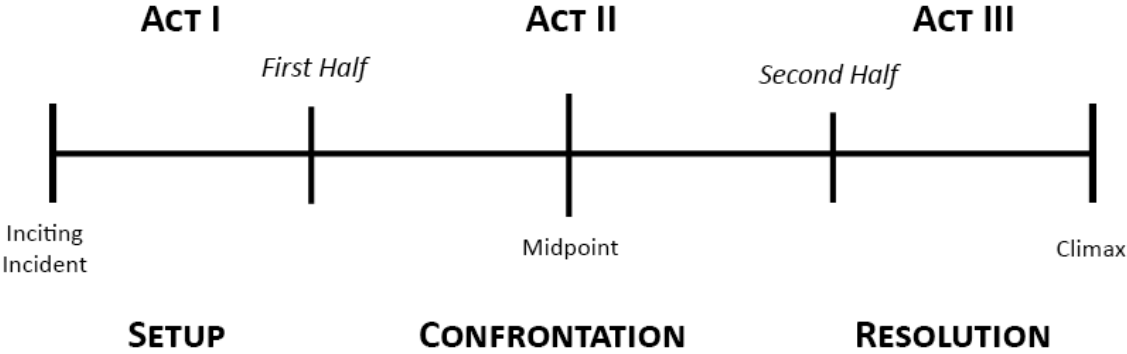
elements of Kleine Wieskamp. These building blocks include 1) a protagonist, 2) a conflict, 3) emotions, 4) the ability to be viral and easily reproducible and 5) a purposeful motive. While referring to narrative instead of storytelling, Ryan writes about three necessary facets a narrative has to include that are similar to the descriptions of Kleine Wieskamp and Sammer and Heppel. For a text to qualify as a narrative, it must include 1) a world containing characters and objects, 2) a change within that world through accidents or the actions of humans and 3) a structured representation of these changes that establishes coherence and meaning (Ryan, 2004, pp. 8-9). Comparing the different interpretations of storytelling and narrative, it becomes evident that a protagonist, a conflict and the presence of emotions are relevant to create a compelling story. By evoking emotions, stories resonate with the unconscious mind, enhancing memorability and making them easier to recall over time (Kleine Wieskamp, 2024, p. 6; Pätzmann & Busch, 2019, p. 3). Stories even immerse viewers, making them feel as if they are experiencing the events themselves while connecting with the hero (Pätzmann & Busch, 2019, p. 2; Pyczak, 2023, p. 20). Building on the different aspects of storytelling introduced in this chapter, multiple different storytelling formats have emerged over time that portray conflict and emotion in various ways to create a story.

## **2.2.2 Classical Storytelling Structures**

In their book introducing 15 different storytelling formats, Pätzmann and Busch (2019, p. 2) highlight three different storytelling formats: 1) The three-act structure, 2) the five-act structure and 3) the Hero's Journey. According to Pätzmann and Busch, good stories tend to use one of these three storytelling formats as foundation to build upon. Since this thesis uses the storytelling formats of Pätzmann and Busch as basis for its analysis, a basic understanding of the three storytelling formats mentioned above is necessary. Thus, a brief overview of these formats will be provided before introducing the storytelling formats of Pätzmann and Busch.

The concept of the three-act structure in storytelling can be traced back to the Greek philosopher Aristotle, who, after analyzing the dramas and stories of his time, developed a model that divides narratives into three parts – beginning, middle, and end – to create a unified whole (Aristoteles, 2008, p. 12; Kleine Wieskamp, 2024, p. 95; Pyczak, 2023, p. 98). This model of three parts influenced authors such as Syd Field, who formalized Aristotle's concept into a framework consisting of three acts as well as two plot points within said acts as exemplified in Figure 4. In his work, Field (2005, p. 143) identified three acts – the setup, the confrontation and the resolution – and assigned specific story elements and key plot points to each stage. The

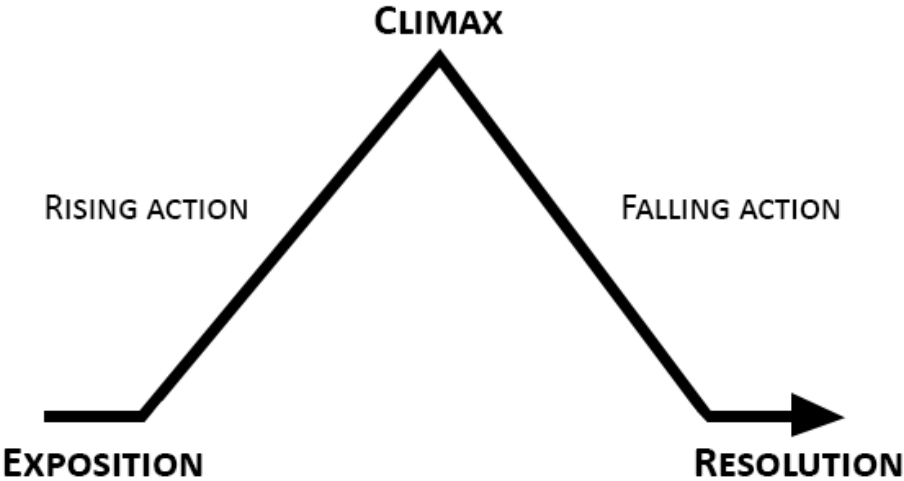
setup introduces the protagonist and the setting of the story before the protagonist encounters the conflict and other obstacles in the confrontation. In the resolution, the conflict gets resolved after the climax and the story ends. Two plot points, one during the first and one during the second act, serve as turning points to move the story forward (Field, 2005, p. 143; Pyczak, 2023, p. 101).



**Figure 4: The three-act structure by Field**

Source: own illustration based on Pyczak, 2023, p. 101

Unlike Field, Freytag expanded upon the three-act structure of Aristotle by developing a model with five instead of three acts. In his work – later referred to as *Freytag’s Pyramid* – Freytag (1887, pp. 102-122) outlines the five relevant acts of a story as presented in Figure 5.



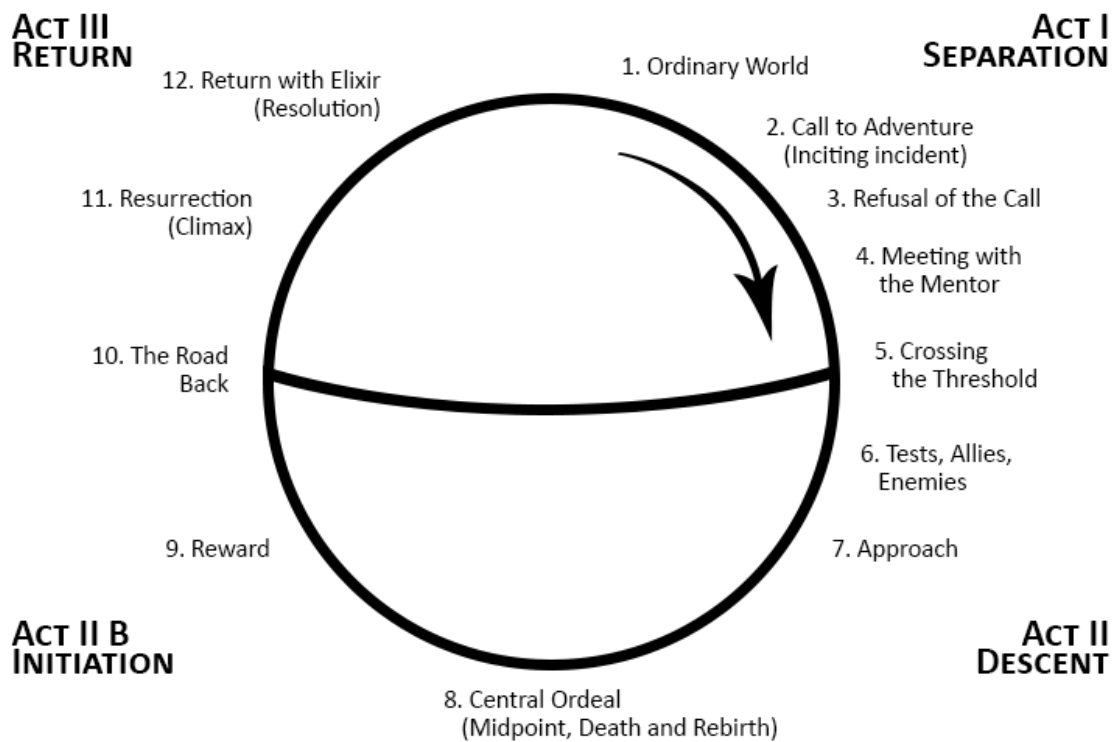
**Figure 5: Freytag’s pyramid**

Source: own illustration based on Pyczak, 2023, p. 100

Act 1, the introduction (or exposition) introduces the initial situation as well as the protagonist, followed by act 2, the rising action, where the tension begins to rise. The climax of act 3 serves as the turning point of the story with the greatest tension before the tension decreases in act 4, the falling action. Finally, in the last act, called the catastrophe (or resolution), the conflict gets resolved and the story ends on either a positive or a negative note (Freytag, 1887, pp. 102-122; Pyczak, 2023, pp. 99-100). This structure is similar to Field's three-act model but offers a more detailed depiction of how the tension within the story develops by subdividing the second and third act of confrontation and resolution, resulting in Freytag's five-act structure.

Alongside Field's three-act structure and Freytag's five-act structure, the Hero's Journey is the third widely used storytelling format. After analyzing various myths and stories from different cultures across the world, the myth researcher Joseph Campbell identified a recurring narrative structure. In his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (2008), Campbell introduced the Hero's Journey (or monomyth), a structure that depicts the story of a protagonist and his transformation into a hero in 17 acts. In the Hero's Journey, the hero departs to his adventure, is faced with trials, meets allies and enemies, undergoes a transformation during his journey and finally returns with the elixir (Campbell, 2008, p. 210). It is noteworthy, that Campbell cited Jung multiple times in his book. Campbell's findings about recurring aspects in the Hero's Journey mirror the work of Jung on archetypes – with both including repeating characters that also appear in dreams and fantasies, leading to stories based on the Hero's Journey leveraging the unconscious to draw in its audience (Vogler, 2020, pp. 4-5). Realizing the usefulness of this structure, Hollywood began using the Hero's Journey for many of its films (Pätzmann & Busch, 2019, p. 2; Vogler, 2020, pp. 3-4).

Inspired by Campbell's work and trying to modernize it towards its use in the film industry, Christopher Vogler altered the structure of the Hero's Journey. This led to a condensed version with 12 stages instead of 17, structured to fit within a three-part framework to make it more adaptable for film (Vogler, 2020, p. 6). As illustrated in Figure 6, the first act includes the stages 1) Ordinary World, 2) Call to Adventure, 3) Refusal of the Call, 4) Meeting with the Mentor and 5) Crossing the First Threshold. In act 2, the stages 6) Tests, Allies, Enemies, 7) Approach to the Inmost Cave, 8) Ordeal and 9) Reward are situated. Act 3 finishes with the stages 10) The Road Back, 11) Resurrection and finally 12) Return with the Elixir (Vogler, 2020, p. 8).



**Figure 6: The Hero's Journey model by Vogler**

Source: own illustration based on Vogler, 2020, p. 9

In these 12 stages, the protagonist departs from his ordinary world into an adventure, which he refuses before meeting a mentor that sets him on his path. After committing to the adventure, the protagonist gets tested, meets allies and enemies and approaches the final fight. The protagonist then confronts his greatest fear and supposedly dies before being reborn, seizing the reward of the journey afterwards. On the way back to the ordinary world, the protagonist faces one final challenge where he undergoes a resurrection and transforms before returning with the elixir/treasure (Vogler, 2020, pp. 20-21). This version of the Hero's Journey nowadays is more widely known than Campbell's version, making it the basis for Pätzmann and Busch's version of this storytelling format (Pätzmann & Busch, 2019, p. 2).

### 2.2.3 The 15 Storytelling Formats of Pätzmann and Busch

Building upon the work of Pätzmann and Hartwig, as well as the storytelling formats outlined in the previous chapter, Pätzmann and Busch analyzed 150 short and successful YouTube videos that promote a product or a service, ensuring that storytelling remained the primary focus rather than the product or service itself. Their analysis examined the general structure and key

narrative elements of these stories, such as crises or unexpected turns in the narrative. Subsequently, they categorized the protagonists of the videos based on their characteristics, aligning them with the archetypal model of Pätzmann and Hartwig. As shown in Table 2, this research led to the development of 15 unique storytelling formats, each characterized by distinct narrative features and a varying amount of acts (Pätzmann & Busch, 2019, pp. 9-12). It is important to note, that Pätzmann and Busch’s storytelling formats were specifically developed for content marketing. Accordingly, many of their storytelling formats emphasize particular aspects of storytelling in a distinct way, tailored towards shorter narratives. Nonetheless, these formats can still be effectively applied to a film analysis.

<b>Storytelling format</b>	<b>Amount of acts</b>
The Classic Three-Act Structure	3
The Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict	5
The Classic Five-Act Structure without Conflict	5
The Slightly Different Hero’s Journey	12
The Unexpected Twist	5
The Clever Turn in the Main Part	5
The Self-Helper	4
The Savior in Need	4
The Dreamer	7
The Time-Lapse	3 (more depending on the past)
The Flashback	4
The Tragic Ending	3
The Shocker	5
The Daydreamer	3 (more depending on the daydream)

The Storyteller	3 (more depending on the story being told)
-----------------	--

**Table 2: The 15 storytelling formats by Pätzmann and Busch**

Source: Pätzmann and Busch, 2019, own translation

As previously mentioned, Pätzmann and Busch asserted that a well-structured story is often based on either the three-act structure, the five-act structure or the Hero's Journey. Consequently, it is unsurprising that most of their storytelling formats align with one of these models. While four of the 15 storytelling formats deviate from this pattern by using four or seven acts, the remaining 11 formats largely adhere to these established narrative frameworks. Since this thesis applies Pätzmann and Busch's storytelling formats for the film analysis, the following section provides a brief introduction to all 15 formats, highlighting their key differences as well as other reoccurring patterns for clarity.

#### 1) The Classic Three-Act Structure

Similar to Field's (2005, p. 143) three-act structure or Aristotle's (2008, p. 12) idea of three acts, the Classic Three-Act Structure that Pätzmann and Busch described begins with the introduction in which the characters, their situation and the general setting are introduced. The story then builds up to the climax, the act with the highest tension in the story, before letting the tension drop again for the ending. In many cases, an anti-archetype appears in the beginning of the story, transforming into an archetype before the story ends (Pätzmann & Busch, 2019, pp. 13-15).

#### 2) The Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict

Structured around Freytag's classic pyramid model (Freytag, 1887, pp. 102-122), this format integrates five phases: the introduction, rising action, climax with conflict, falling action, and resolution. In the introduction – similar to the three-act structure – the protagonists and general setting are established before the conflict emerges in the second act, increasing tension. The climax marks the peak of the conflict, followed by a decrease in tension in the falling action, which ultimately leads into the resolution where the conflict is resolved. Pätzmann and Busch identified recurring patterns within this structure: anti-archetypes associated with the motivational barrier of fear frequently appear during the climax, while archetypes linked to the endorser of relationship are commonly found in the falling action. In the resolution, archetypes with the endorser of curiosity tend to be present (Pätzmann & Busch, 2019, pp. 15-17).

### 3) The Classic Five-Act Structure without Conflict

Although structurally similar to its counterpart with a central conflict, this version omits the tension in favor of a different method. Instead of a central conflict, its climax arises from an emotional, humorous or otherwise memorable moment designed to leave a lasting impression on the viewer before the story concludes. Notable patterns that emerged in this format include the consistent presence of a single archetype throughout all arcs – sometimes supplemented by another archetype – and the recurring appearance of the motivational endorser of curiosity in the third act as well as the motivational endorser of relationship in the final act (Pätzmann & Busch, 2019, pp. 17-20).

### 4) The Slightly Different Hero's Journey

Building on Vogler's (2020, p. 8) version of the Hero's Journey with its 12 stages, Pätzmann and Busch developed the storytelling format of the Slightly Different Hero's Journey. To modernize this structure, they revised the names of the 12 stages the hero undertakes: 1) Introduction, 2) Call to Adventure, 3) Refusal, 4) Change of Mind, 5) Obstacle, 6) Trial, 7) Approach, 8) Final Battle, 9) Reward and Insight, 10) Journey Back, 11) Transformation and 12) Return with the Solution. A key distinction of this format is its flexibility – unlike the previous version of the Hero's Journey, this format allows for some of the 12 stages to be omitted without disrupting its function as a Hero's Journey. Despite this variation, recurring patterns emerge. These include the presence of the Mentor archetype, the protagonist being driven by the motivational endorser of curiosity, the protagonist evolving from an anti-archetype into an archetype over the course of the journey, or mirroring this transformation within the same motivational system (Pätzmann & Busch, 2019, pp. 20-23).

### 5) The Unexpected Twist

The storytelling format of the Unexpected Twist follows a five-act structure, much like the Classic Five Act Structure with Conflict. Both formats begin with the introduction, establishing the protagonists and the setting, followed by the rising action that leads into the climax, where the protagonist faces a personal crisis or conflict. The difference of the Unexpected Twist lies in the act following the climax: instead of a slow decline in tension towards the end, an unexpected turn of events occurs, enabling the protagonist to overcome the crisis or conflict. This twist leads into the final act, which concludes the story. Recurring patterns that Pätzmann and Busch (2019, pp. 24-26) identified in this format include the prominent presence of the

motivational endorser of curiosity, contrasted with anti-archetypes of the motivational barrier of fear appearing during the climax. This reflects a mirroring effect within the motivational system of excitement.

#### 6) The Clever Turn in the Main Part

The format of the Clever Turn in the Main Part consists of five acts, but distinguishes itself from other five-act structures with its deceptive climax in the second act. After the introduction, the story appears to reach its main part early. This, however, is followed by a turn of events that leads the story into the true main part or climax, before ultimately ending. This format is often characterized by the frequent use of archetypes within the story, with anti-archetypes appearing only rarely. Additionally, the protagonists' archetypes tend to remain within a single motivational system throughout the story (Pätzmann & Busch, 2019, pp. 26-28).

#### 7) The Self-Helper

Unlike the previously introduced storytelling formats, the Self-Helper format follows a four-act structure. It begins with the introduction that establishes the protagonist and setting while teasing the crisis they will face. In the second act, this crisis fully unfolds, which leads to the third act, where the protagonist manages to undergo a transformation and solve the crisis because of it. In the last act, the story ends on a positive note. Due to this format focusing on transformation and overcoming a crisis, common features in this format involve the protagonist starting as anti-archetypes before transforming into archetypes during the third act. Notably, archetypes associated with the motivational endorser of self-assertion appear more frequently in this format (Pätzmann & Busch, 2019, pp. 28-30).

#### 8) The Savior in Need

The storytelling format of the Savior in Need follows a structure similar to that of the Self-Helper format, but with a significant difference: instead of the protagonist transforming and overcoming the crisis on their own, an ally causes this change. In the third act, an ally helps the protagonist undergo a transformation, finally leading them out of the crisis. Since this format also includes themes of transformation, similar patterns were found to the Self-Helper. According to Pätzmann and Busch (2019, pp. 30-32), anti-archetypes of the motivational barrier of fear commonly appeared during the second act. In the third act, the ally that helps the

protagonist transform often portrays archetypes of the motivational endorser of relationship while the archetype Happy Nature regularly appears at the final arc of this storytelling format.

#### 9) The Dreamer

The Dreamer is the only storytelling format that consists of seven acts. As the name of the format suggests, the protagonist strives to pursue a dream to escape their current situation. The story begins with the introduction, followed by a crisis in act two. Attempting to follow their dream in the third act results in a setback, placing them back in their original crisis. Through a moment of insight, the protagonist manages to transform and achieve their dream in the final act. Throughout the format, the acts of the crisis and the setback involve anti-archetypes belonging to the motivational barrier of fear, particularly the anti-archetype of the Victim, while the dream often uses the archetype of the Explorer. Other recognizable traits include the use of archetypes of the motivational endorser of self-assertion during the act of insight as well as a shift from the anti-archetype Victim towards the archetype of Happy Nature during the final act (Pätzmann & Busch, 2019, pp. 32-34).

#### 10) The Time-Lapse

The Time-Lapse storytelling format includes three acts: the introduction, a past-focused middle section, and a present-time conclusion. As the name suggests, in the Time-Lapse the narrative unfolds across different time periods, beginning in the past and progressing toward the present, where the story concludes. This format can include two or more time jumps, further dividing the second act into multiple sub-sections. Based on their analysis of stories that align with this structure, Pätzmann and Busch (2019, pp. 35-37) identified two categories. In love stories, archetypes associated with the motivational endorser of curiosity frequently emerge, with the archetype Happy Nature commonly appearing in the final act. In life stories – narratives that lead through the life of the protagonist – a recurring pattern involves the Angel archetype evolving into an archetype of the motivational endorser of relationship, particularly the Mother archetype.

#### 11) The Flashback

While the Time-Lapse format unfolds chronologically from the past to the present, the Flashback storytelling format employs past events to clarify the present situation. This structure consists of four acts, beginning in the present, where the protagonist's current situation and the

setting are introduced. The eponymous flashback that occurs in the second act provides insight into the events that led to the situation the protagonist faces. The third act returns to the present, advancing the story, before the story ends in the fourth act. Anti-archetypes frequently appear in both the first act and the flashback, whereas the final act features archetypes, often linked to the motivational endorser of relationship (Pätzmann & Busch, 2019, pp. 37-39).

#### 12) The Tragic Ending

Based on the traditional three-act structure, the Tragic ending diverges by taking a different approach to build tension. Following the introduction in the first act, the tension starts to rise when the crisis emerges in the second act. This tension peaks in the third act, culminating in a tragic conclusion of the story. As the name suggests, the narrative progression follows a downward trajectory, with archetypes shifting into anti-archetypes. This pattern is especially evident the motivational system of excitement, where transformations from the archetype Happy Nature to its corresponding anti-archetype Victim are especially common (Pätzmann & Busch, 2019, pp. 39-41).

#### 13) The Shocker

The storytelling format of the Shocker, structured in five acts, follows a similar framework to other five-act structures, with the first three acts comprising the introduction, rising action, and climax – the point of highest tension. However, unlike other five-act formats where the fourth act typically features falling action, the Shocker maintains the high tension by introducing a sudden and unexpected event that significantly alters the course of the story. The final act then resolves the narrative, leaving the impact of the shock lingering in the mind of the viewer. Due to the limited number of examples – only two videos analyzed by Pätzmann and Busch (2019, pp. 41-43) fit this format – the only pattern observed was the presence of the anti-archetype Coward during the shocking moment.

#### 14) The Daydreamer

The Daydreamer format in itself only consists of three acts. The introduction that not only introduces the protagonist and the setting but also the crisis that the protagonist faces, the daydream of the protagonist, and the ending in which the protagonist uses the knowledge and lessons from the daydream to escape the crisis. A notable peculiarity of the Daydreamer format is the daydream itself, which can contain the structure of a separate storytelling format from

this list, adding an additional layer of arcs to this format. Due to the limited amount of videos that were assigned to this format, no noticeable patterns were recorded (Pätzmann & Busch, 2019, pp. 44-45).

#### 15) The Storyteller

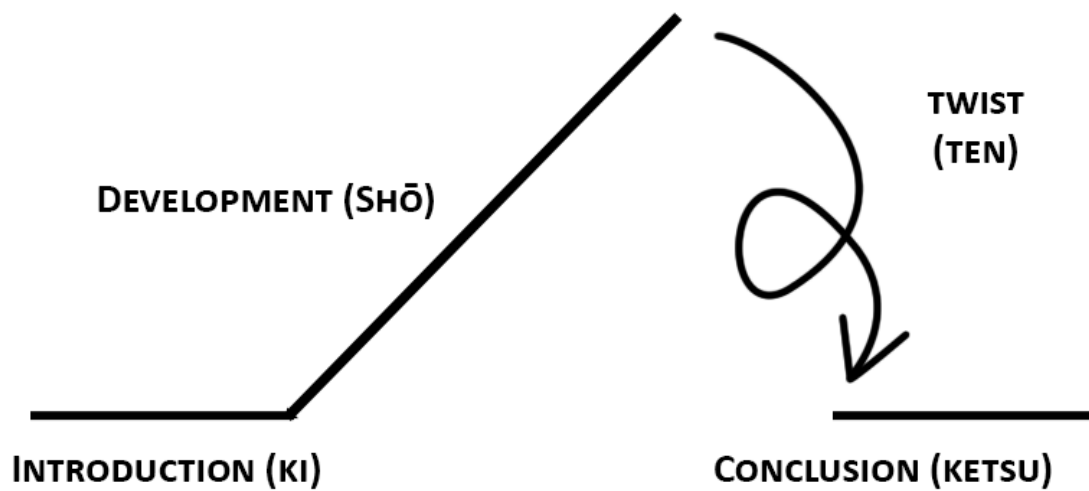
The storytelling format of the Storyteller includes three acts. In the introduction, the narrator of the story gets introduced, who begins telling the story that takes up the main part of the narrative. The story itself – similar to the daydream of the previous storytelling format – is its own storytelling format with a corresponding number of acts that tells its own story. The narrator may appear in this story, but does not necessarily have to. After the story, the final act concludes the story through either a final scene or a farewell from the narrator. Pätzmann and Busch (2019, pp. 46-48) did not name any recognizable patterns for the format of the Storyteller.

Since Pätzmann and Busch analyzed videos from various countries and cultures, the storytelling formats they identified are universally applicable. However this also meant that culture-specific storytelling formats were excluded. Since this thesis compares American and Japanese films using these formats, it is necessary to introduce an additional format specific to Japanese culture, which was not included in Pätzmann and Busch's framework.

#### 2.2.4 The Kishōtenketsu

Originally used in Chinese poetry and later spreading out across other Asian countries such as Korea and particularly Japan, the four-act narrative structure of Kishōtenketsu (jap. 起承轉結) evolved into a format that shapes storytelling in essays as well as films (Arnavas & Bellini, 2023, p. 26; Aston, 2024, p. 127; Richings, 2022, pp. 5-6). The Kishōtenketsu consists of four acts that together spell out the name of this format: ki, shō, ten and ketsu (see Figure 7). The first act, ki (起) serves as the introduction to the protagonist, setting and premise of the story. This act is followed by shō (承), where the story develops and events occur which lead to the third act, ten (轉). In this third act that defines the special nature of this storytelling format, a twist or contrast is introduced, which alters the perception of the whole narrative. This does not mean a sudden dramatic twist, but can appear as a development or change that introduces a new perspective, often diverging from the previous acts (Arnavas & Bellini, 2023, pp. 26-27; Richings, 2022, pp. 5-6). The fourth and final act, ketsu (結), serves as a conclusion but does

not always provide a decisive resolution to the story. Instead, the ending often leaves space for the viewer's interpretation (Arnavas & Bellini, 2023, pp. 26-27; Krutiakova, 2023, pp. 55-56).



**Figure 7: The Kishōtenketsu**

Source: Own illustration

While Pätzmann and Busch's (2019) storytelling format of the Unexpected Twist follows a similar idea, albeit with five instead of four acts, the Kishōtenketsu approaches the narrative in a different way, especially regarding the twist and the conflict. Contrasting the common Western, conflict-driven formats like the Unexpected Twist or the Hero's Journey, where the central conflict marks the climax of the story, the Kishōtenketsu is known as a structure without the presence of a central conflict that drives the story forward. A conflict can be present, but is not the central driving force that shapes the narrative, allowing for narratives without a discernible conflict or crisis. Instead, the depiction of varying kinds of contrast that can coexist in harmony is the focus point of this storytelling format, aiming to change the viewer's perception of the overall story (Arnavas & Bellini, 2023, pp. 26-27; Aston, 2024, p. 127; Krutiakova, 2023, pp. 55-56; Richings, 2022, pp. 5-6). This differentiates the Kishōtenketsu from the storytelling formats previously introduced in this thesis, which mostly use conflict as the primary motivation for the narrative to progress. As this storytelling format covers a unique form of narrative popular in Eastern countries, the Kishōtenketsu was added to the list of storytelling formats used for the analysis of this thesis.

## 2.3 Cultural Influences

Having explored the different narrative frameworks – such as the Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict and the Kishōtenketsu – and their influence on storytelling, the question arises as to why these storytelling formats feel so different across cultures, and how cultural values shape these differences.

This chapter investigates key cultural characteristics of American and Japanese societies, with particular attention to how they influence storytelling conventions and emotional expression. Chapter 2.3.1 introduces Hall's theory of high- and low-context cultures as foundation for understanding cross-cultural differences. Chapter 2.3.2 follows with a discussion of individualism versus collectivism. Finally, chapter 2.3.3 will examine specific Japanese cultural concepts and their narrative implications before chapter 2.3.4 will focus on the Japanese key aesthetic of *mono no aware*.

### 2.3.1 High and Low Context Communication

Before focusing on specific cultural concepts and their influence on narrative forms, it is useful to consider Edward T. Hall's distinction between high-context and low-context communication. This model offers valuable insight into how different societies rely on implicit or explicit communication, which can shape how stories are constructed and how interactions between different cultures can unfold.

In his work *Beyond Culture*, Hall (1976) differentiates between high-context and low-context communication. He defines high-context communication as a situation in which a majority of the intended information is not delivered explicitly through the message itself, but through context and the assumed knowledge of the parties. In contrast, in low-context communication the intended information is mostly delivered explicitly through the message itself (Hall, 1976, p. 91).

Hall exemplifies this by assigning American culture to a low-context communication style, stating that different cultures can be considered high-context or low-context (Hall, 1976, p. 91). Later applications of this theory position Japan as a high-context culture, associating it with communication that depends on shared understanding and context while confirming America's position on the side of low-context cultures, where direct messages and the transfer of information through direct communication is preferred (Broeder, 2021, pp. 14-15). This

difference in communication styles, in turn, is reflected in how films in America and Japan are structured, how characters behave within their respective cultural frameworks, and how narrative information is conveyed to the audience.

Aside from differences in communication styles, the way someone relates to their social environment also plays a significant role in shaping narratives. A frequently used cultural distinction in this regard is the contrast between collectivistic and individualistic value systems. These systems influence how a character inside a story acts towards others, how they engage with conflict, or how they prioritize their own goals and the goals of a group. This can shape how a story progresses and how the protagonist navigates situations, which is why the differences between collectivism and individualism will be introduced in the next chapter.

### **2.3.2 Individualism versus Collectivism**

In their work, Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede and Michael Minkov (2010, p. 109) refer to Hall's concept of high-context and low-context communication and associate it with their own definitions of individualistic and collectivistic cultures. They state, that low-context communication is the common communication style in individualistic cultures, while high-context communication usually appears in collectivistic cultures.

Before specifying the key differences that individuals within these cultures display, it is important to introduce definitions to collectivism and individualism. Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010, p. 92) define individualism as when within a society "the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him- or herself and his or her immediate family" while they define collectivism as when "people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty". Similarly, Triandis (1995, p. 2) stated that individualism is "a social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collectives; are primarily motivated by their own preferences, needs, rights, and the contracts they have established with others; give priority to their personal goals over the goals of others; and emphasize rational analyzes of the advantages and disadvantages to associating with others". Collectivism, according to him, is "a social pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who see themselves as parts of one or more collectives (family, co-workers, tribe, nation); are primarily motivated by the norms of, and duties imposed by, those collectives; are willing to give priority to the goals of these collectives over their own personal

goals; and emphasize their connectedness to members of these collectives". These definitions illustrate that an individual from an individualistic culture tends to prioritize their own needs and maintains a strong sense of self when interacting with others, whereas an individual from a collectivistic culture places the needs, wants and expectations of their group above their own. Accordingly, a protagonist in a film produced within an individualistic culture would likely behave differently in a given situation than a protagonist in a film produced within a collectivistic culture, making an understanding of these cultural distinctions essential for the analysis conducted in this thesis.

While Triandis acknowledges that aspects of both collectivism as well as individualism can coexist within any given culture in certain levels, he characterizes Japan as a predominantly collectivistic and the United States as a predominantly individualistic country (Triandis, 1995, p. 2). This assessment is supported by the Individualism Index in the work of Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov. The index, as presented in their comparative analysis of 76 countries, ranks nations according to their degree of individualism based on their Individualism Index Values. Countries with higher scores reflect stronger individualistic tendencies, while lower scores show more collectivistic orientations. In this ranking, the United States hold the first rank with an index score of 91, representing the highest level of individualism. In contrast, Japan ranks in the middle range with a score of 46, placing it around 35<sup>th</sup> to 37<sup>th</sup>. This suggests that while Japan is generally considered a collectivistic culture and exhibits a lower level of individualism compared to the United States, it is nevertheless less collectivistic than many other East Asian countries and can display some individualistic tendencies (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 95-96). The classification of the United States as an individualistic society and Japan as a collectivistic society still corresponds with Hall's categorization of the United States as a low-context culture and Japan as a high-context culture. This alignment reinforces the idea that the two countries differ not only in their communication style but also in their orientations toward individualism within their community.

Aside from the already stated differences between individualism and collectivism according to their definitions, Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) listed key differences between individuals in collectivistic and individualistic societies. According to them, individuals in collectivistic societies among other things conceptualize themselves mostly in terms of *we* instead of *I*. They differentiate between in-group and out-group members, treat individuals differently based on their affiliations, tend to avoid open confrontations to maintain harmony

and share belongings and resources primarily within their family and affiliated groups. Friendships are often based on social standings and expectations rather than personal preferences. Furthermore, violating the social norms is perceived as a reason for shame and a loss of face for not only the individual but also their family or other groups. In contrast to this, individuals in individualistic societies focus on the *I* instead of the *we*, tend to treat others in a similar way regardless of the groups they belong to, are more likely to engage in confrontation to solve issues, and treat belongings and resources as individual property. Friendships in individualistic societies are formed based on personal choice, while norm violations are associated with the feelings of guilt and diminishing self-respect, without broader implications for the family or social groups of the individual (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 113).

Additional key differences Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov listed, include several behavioral tendencies that differ between collectivistic and individualistic societies. Individuals in collectivistic societies tend to have a more introvert personality, where the social norm encourages the display of sadness while discouraging expressions of happiness. Their consumption patterns and information-seeking behavior show dependence on their immediate social network rather than impersonal sources. Finally, individuals with disabilities may be considered a shame to the family since personal behavior is closely linked to family honor in collectivistic societies. Meanwhile, individuals in individualistic societies tend to be more extraverted and emotionally expressive in terms of displaying happiness. Their consumption patterns are more self-reliant, they use media as primary source of information and individuals with disabilities are treated equally to others as much as possible (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 117). Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov also outline cultural differences across various other aspects such as education, workplace behavior or politics. Since this thesis focuses on interpersonal dimensions and how individuals act in general, as these are the most relevant to understanding how a character may behave within a narrative, this thesis will not focus on these differences any further in this chapter.

While Markus and Kitayama (1991) do not explicitly refer to individualism and collectivism in their work, they introduce the concepts of the independent and interdependent construal of the self, using American and Japanese cultures as examples on how these concepts may shape the behavior of an individual. The independent construal of the self is defined as autonomous and self-contained, mostly associated with Western societies and linked with terms such as *individualist* (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 226). The interdependent construal of the self,

however, is defined by the connectedness to others, obligations and sensitivity to their actions and thoughts. This construal of the self is more prevalent in non-Western societies like Japan and is associated with terms such as *collective*. There, actions are interpreted in relation to the social context. According to Markus and Kitayama, behavior that originates from an interdependent self carries different meaning than the same behavior from an independent self, as it is shaped by the relationships and expectations of the individual's social groups (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 227). Like Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010), Markus and Kitayama (1991) highlight additional dimensions that they associated with the independent and interdependent construal of the self. Individuals with an independent construal focus on uniqueness, self-expression, the realization of personal goals, and direct communication. Their sense of self-esteem comes from the ability to express themselves as well as validate internal attributes. Opposed to this, individuals with an interdependent construal of the self prefer belonging, fulfilling their roles, and acting according to expectations. Rather than asserting their own goals, they promote the goals of others and often communicate in more indirect ways. Their self-worth is based on their capacity to adjust to the social context, their self-restraint, and their ability to maintain harmony (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 230).

The differences in behavior and mentality described by Markus and Kitayama greatly resemble the cultural patterns identified by Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov. This suggests that the concepts of the independent/interdependent construal of the self and individualism/collectivism are overlapping in how they affect the behavior of an individual. These insights can also be applied to character archetypes and narrative storytelling in films, where a protagonist's behavior may reflect these cultural distinctions and shape how they pursue their goals or interact with others. Therefore, understanding the distinctions outlined by these authors is essential for analyzing how narratives may differ between films from culturally distinct societies such as the United States and Japan.

While many theoretical frameworks classify the United States as an individualistic society and Japan as a collectivistic one and assign corresponding characteristics to individuals from these countries, it is important to note that this classification has been subject to criticism. Scholars such as Takano and Osaka (1999), for instance, challenge this common view by drawing on historical evidence and inconsistencies in existing behavioral studies. They argue that the generalization of individualism and collectivism for the United States and Japan is not only unsupported by empirical studies – it is, in certain cases, directly contradicted by it. Hendry

(2019, pp. 70-71) supports this perspective, stating that all societies exhibit some degree of group orientation as well as individual pursuits. In Japan, an individual's pursuit of personal goals and interests is generally accepted on the condition that it does not disrupt their obligations to their relevant social groups. Hamamura (2012) further suggests that cultural classifications such as individualism and collectivism are not static, but shift over time. Japan, for example, demonstrates a growing presence of individualistic values in certain domains, while simultaneously retaining or experiencing an increase in collectivistic values in others. Even American individualism shows greater complexity than traditional portrayals suggest. Fischer (2008) comments on a paradox within American culture, where individuality and autonomy coexists with strong voluntary affiliations to groups and communities. She introduces the concept of voluntarism, which addresses this issue by framing group loyalty as a freely chosen commitment rather than an imposed obligation. These scholars demonstrate that the classification of the United States as individualistic and Japan as collectivistic is more nuanced than some frameworks suggest. Nevertheless, many of the collectivistic tendencies in Japanese culture described by Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010), as well as Markus and Kitayama (1991), are also described in other scholarly works that focus on Japanese behavioral patterns, social norms and cultural aesthetics. While some of these works repeat previously mentioned patterns such as the display of emotions, other sources introduce culture-specific concepts such as *honne* or *mono no aware*. These concepts are especially relevant for understanding how narratives and the portrayal of characters can occur differently in Japanese films. Therefore, the following chapter will examine these concepts in more detail.

### **2.3.3 Japanese Cultural Concepts**

Many of the behavioral patterns previously associated with collectivistic societies are discussed in sources specifically focusing on Japanese culture and society. These works introduce culturally significant behavioral concepts – often expressed with Japanese terminology – that shape individual behavior in distinct ways. Given the extensive amount of such concepts, this chapter will focus only on a select few that are most relevant to narratives and character behavior in films.

Where Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) described the way Japanese individuals tend to refrain from stating their real thoughts to avoid confrontations, other works define this concept as *honne* and *tatemae*. In this concept, *honne* are words and intentions that remain unspoken – the real and intended feelings that are not expressed publicly as to not hurt other's feelings.

*Tatemaes* are the carefully chosen words and actions that are used in public to portray the intended feelings, often spoken as ceremonious phrases to maintain harmony and to avoid conflict within groups while interacting with others (Davies & Ikeno, 2002, pp. 115-116, 195; Hendry, 2019, pp. 60-61). This concept can be relevant in Japanese films, where characters interact by using *tatemaes*, while hiding their real intentions and thoughts, *honne*. Understanding this concept is crucial for analyzing characters and correctly identifying their intentions to accurately sort them to fitting archetypes. While not being demonstrable in the results section of this thesis, this concept was actively used for the analysis to ascertain each character's motivations and characteristics – making it a core concept to successfully apply Pätzmann and Hartwig's (2018) archetypal model.

Many of the behavioral concepts that influence character actions and interpersonal dynamics in Japanese narratives can be traced back to the concept of *amae*. Introduced by Takeo Doi (1973) and later summarized by Davies and Ikeno (2002, p. 17), *amae* refers to an emotional dependence on others – such as the dependence of children on their parents or of subordinates on their superiors – in order to maintain harmony and receive care. In the context of this thesis, *amae* serves as a foundational concept that supports other, more directly observable concepts. One such concept is *giri*, which refers to the social obligations individuals hold toward others. These obligations often force individuals to act according to prescribed rules and expectations, even when such actions conflict with their own desires (Davies & Ikeno, 2002, pp. 95-99; Doi, 1973, pp. 33-35). Closely related to *giri* is the concept of *ninjō*, which Doi (1973, pp. 33-35) describes as human feelings that emerge in relationships and are strongly connected to *amae*. He elaborates that *giri* and *ninjō* are connected to each other and can cause conflict. Such a conflict arises when an individual wishes to act on their emotions (*ninjō*) but feels obligated to fulfill their social expectations (*giri*). In such situations, individuals may be forced to act against their own will, suppress personal feelings and fulfill their role to preserve harmony and the dependency of *amae* (Doi, 1973, pp. 34-35). The conflict between the two concepts – duty and personal feelings – is a frequent theme in Japanese narratives and provides insight into the struggles many characters face.

Another behavioral pattern Doi discusses is the concept of *enryo*. In Japanese society, this concept refers to the self-restraint an individual exercises in relationships to avoid imposing on or burdening others. Doi explains that the degree of *enryo* varies based on the closeness of the relationship between the affected individuals. In intimate relationships – such as between close

family members or close friends – *enryo* tends to be unnecessary due to the presence of *amae*. Accordingly, in less intimate relationships, *enryo* becomes more prominent as a way to remain distant and respectful. In interactions with strangers, however, neither *amae* nor *enryo* may be present (Davies & Ikeno, 2002, pp. 17-18; Doi, 1973, pp. 38-39). While the concept of *enryo* is generally seen as limiting or confining in the Japanese society, Doi notes that individuals tend to value *enryo* in others while disapproving of this behavior in themselves (Doi, 1973, p. 39). This concept is not always obvious in Japanese films. Yet, it may still influence a characters' actions within a narrative similar to *giri* and *ninjō*. A character who avoids being direct or suppresses their emotions may act according to *enryo*, depending on the perceived closeness of a relationship between the involved characters in the narrative.

In addition to the cultural concepts that shape character behavior and dynamics in narratives, Japanese storytelling is also influenced by traditional aesthetics that reflect deeper cultural values. These aesthetics can affect both the structure and rhythm of a narrative and are therefore relevant in the context of Japanese films. To clarify their relevance, the following section introduces one Japanese key aesthetics that illustrates how stories can be shaped differently from American films.

### **2.3.4 Mono no aware**

Lauren Prusinski (2012, p. 25) introduces three Japanese aesthetics in her work: *wabi-sabi*, *mono no aware* and *ma*. Originating from the Japanese Heian era, each describes a distinct and uncommon way of perceiving beauty in nature. These aesthetics influenced various artforms including poetry, rituals, and aspects of daily life. As these aesthetics are foundational in traditional art such as poetry, it can be assumed that they also hold relevance in modern storytelling forms such as films.

Of these aesthetics, *mono no aware* introduces a perception of beauty that significantly differs from Western perspectives. Because of its relevance to narrative tone and structure, this aesthetic will be the focus of this chapter. While *wabi-sabi* and *ma* are culturally significant and similarly important to the Japanese perception of beauty, they exert limited influence on archetypal behavior or narrative storytelling and will therefore not be discussed further.

The aesthetic of *mono no aware* is associated with temporary beauty or transience – an appreciation for an experience which cannot be fully captured in a single image or moment. Instead, its perceived beauty lies in the emotional response evoked during an object's brief and

fleeting existence, often linked to the feeling of melancholy (Prusinski, 2012, pp. 27-28). Unlike the Western perception of beauty, which relies on specific, fixed criteria and objectivity, the term *aware* reflects on how Japanese individuals are sensitive towards impermanence. More precisely, it relates to the Japanese sympathy toward things that are generally considered worthless (Davies & Ikeno, 2002, p. 37). A frequently cited example for *mono no aware* compares how Western and Japanese observers perceive a flower: while a Westerner may consider a flower as beautiful only when in full bloom, a Japanese observer may see the flower as beautiful during its bloom as well– but may become even more emotionally moved when the flower begins to wither (Davies & Ikeno, 2002, p. 37; Prusinski, 2012, p. 28). Therefore, in *mono no aware*, beauty encompasses the entire span in which an object or moment exists, including all aspects of its transformation (Prusinski, 2012, p. 28).

The attitude towards transience and melancholy represented by *mono no aware* can be found in Japanese narratives, shaping how beauty and emotion are conveyed. Understanding this aesthetic is relevant in analyzing why certain films resonate with Japanese audiences and how it may influence their emotional tone, especially towards more melancholic resolutions in film.

## **3 Methodology**

To accurately examine the differences – or similarities – between American and Japanese films in their use of archetypes and storytelling formats, a structured and comparative analysis was conducted. This study included a selection of films from both countries and applied established frameworks to explore how these formats may be shaped by cultural context.

Before presenting the results of this analysis, the following chapter outlines the methodological approach taken in this study. Chapter 3.1 introduces the overall research design and reasoning behind this study, before chapter 3.2 details the selection criteria and process for choosing the analyzed films. Chapter 3.3 presents the analytical frameworks applied during the film analysis and explains the process in which they were utilized. Chapter 3.4 describes the synthesis of data across the two groups, while chapter 3.5 concludes with a discussion of the study's limitations.

### **3.1 Research Design**

The goal of this thesis is to explore if and how cultural values have an effect on the narrative structure and the use of character archetypes in American and Japanese films. To achieve this, a qualitative and comparative research design was chosen. This study focuses on interpreting storytelling decisions and character behavior through the application of established narrative and archetypal frameworks. Through this approach, an understanding for how culture may shape storytelling methods and the role of characters inside a narrative can be achieved. Since the understanding of storytelling formats, character archetypes, symbolic meanings and cultural peculiarities cannot be easily quantified, a qualitative approach was chosen to more flexibly explore and interpret the cultural patterns and symbolism that define the story and characters in the selected films.

As already clarified in the previous chapters, the comparison of American and Japanese films was chosen due to their global presence, their cultural contrast in terms of values such as individualism versus collectivism and their frequent representation in various cross-cultural studies such as those by Hofstede (2010) or Markus and Kitayama (1991). As comparisons between these two culturally distinct countries are common in research, this study also adopts this pairing to build on established scholarship.

Especially films as a storytelling medium offer a broad field of analysis, since in successful films, the narrative formats and character behavior may often mirror existing social norms and cultural values from the individuals creating them. Based on this assumption, analyzing and comparing films can be a way of exploring societal differences and cultural peculiarities in archetypes and storytelling formats.

### **3.2 Film Selection**

For the purpose of ensuring a balanced and meaningful comparison while still maintaining a manageable amount, a total of 40 films were selected for the analysis of this thesis. Of these 40 films, 20 originated from the United States and 20 originated from Japan. The total of 20 films per country was chosen to allow for the recognition of patterns and cultural variations, while simultaneously keeping the scope manageable for a qualitative analysis and the purpose of this thesis.

The primary selection criterion for chosen films was the national box office performance. Similarly to the argumentation of Pätzmann and Hartwig (2018, pp. 5-6) in the selection of films for their archetypal model, this analysis is based on the assumption that viewers can identify the archetypes and the storytelling formats in the films they watch and that these films would not top the box office of their respective country if the viewers would not be fascinated by the archetypes and narrative structure in the film they watched. Additionally, it can be assumed that domestically successful films are likely to reflect cultural and societal values, archetypes and narrative structures that are popular within the country. To retrieve the information about the films with the highest box office performance of all time in the United States and Japan, two separate websites were consulted. For films from the United States, the film industry data website *The Numbers* was used. This website, which tracks and records data such as box office revenue, offers a dedicated section providing information about films with the highest all-time domestic box office in the United States (The Numbers, 2024a). For the Japanese films, the website *kogyotsushin.com* was accessed. This Japanese website also includes a section with Japan's 100 most successful films of all time based on the domestic box office revenue (Kogyo Tsushinsha Ltd., 2024).

After retrieving the lists with films from the United States and Japan, the next step included filtering these lists based on selected exclusion criteria in order to ensure consistency in the dataset. First, films had to be domestically produced in the country they represent, meaning that

films not primarily identified with the national film industry were excluded. Second, only films released after the year 1980 were included in the analysis, in order to focus on more recent storytelling formats and to avoid including possibly outdated archetypes and cultural patterns. Third, the selected films had to be readily accessible at the time of the analysis through either legal streaming platforms or physical DVD's. Films that were still being screened in theaters or were otherwise inaccessible for repeated viewing had to be excluded, as these issues prevented the multi-stage process necessary for the analysis of this thesis. Lastly, films that were direct continuations or spin-offs of television series were excluded as well. Understanding such narratives would have required vast knowledge of previous media content not within the scope of this thesis and could have influenced the analysis of character archetypes.

After excluding all films that did not meet the specified requirements, the first 20 remaining films from the American and Japanese film lists with the highest box office revenue were selected as material for the film analysis. The box office revenue of the American films was recorded in dollars, as seen in Table 3.

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Domestic Box Office in \$</b>
<b>1</b>	Star Wars Ep. VII: The Force Awakens	2015	Live-Action	936,662,225
<b>2</b>	Avengers: Endgame	2019	Live-Action	858,373,000
<b>3</b>	Spider-Man: No Way Home	2021	Live-Action	814,811,535
<b>4</b>	Avatar	2009	Live-Action	785,221,649
<b>5</b>	Top Gun: Maverick	2022	Live-Action	718,732,821
<b>6</b>	Black Panther	2018	Live-Action	700,059,566
<b>7</b>	Avatar: The Way of Water	2022	Live-Action	684,075,767
<b>8</b>	Avengers: Infinity War	2018	Live-Action	678,815,482
<b>9</b>	Titanic	1997	Live-Action	674,460,013

10	Jurassic World	2015	Live-Action	652,270,625
11	Barbie	2023	Live-Action	636,785,476
12	The Avengers	2012	Live-Action	623,357,910
13	Star Wars Ep. VIII: The Last Jedi	2017	Live-Action	620,181,382
14	Incredibles 2	2018	Animation	608,581,744
15	The Super Mario Bros. Movie	2023	Animation	574,934,330
16	The Lion King	2019	Animation	543,638,043
17	The Dark Knight	2008	Live-Action	536,625,724
18	Rogue One: A Star Wars Story	2016	Live-Action	533,539,991
19	Star Wars Ep. IX: The Rise of Skywalker	2019	Live-Action	515,202,542
20	Beauty and the Beast	2017	Live-Action	504,014,165

**Table 3: List of analyzed American films**

Source: The Numbers, 2024a

It has to be noted that due to the nature of box office rankings, several films from the same franchises were included in the list of the 20 most successful films and were therefore included in the dataset for the American films (for example, movies belonging to the Star Wars, Avatar and Marvel franchises). While this may result in overlap in some cases, this also allows to observe differences and similarities in narrative structures, how archetypes evolve in reoccurring characters or even how a character develops different archetypes across multiple films. Therefore, similarly to the analysis of the Japanese films, each film was treated as a distinct entry and analyzed independently due to their unique role in the overarching narrative of their respective franchise.

Unlike the American list, many of the most commercially successful Japanese films are animated. Referred to as *anime*, Japanese animation is seen as popular culture and an artform that exhibits influences from Japanese cultural traditions while simultaneously being able to

present complex issues in its narratives (Napier, 2005, pp. 3-4). Anime holds a central position in Japanese culture, influencing narrative structures across different media, including life-action films. In recent years, anime has accounted for approximately half of all cinema ticket sales and about half of the total releases by Japanese film studios (Napier, 2005, p. 15; Richie, 2005, p. 257). The popularity of anime is consequently reflected in the list of the 20 most successful Japanese films that was used for the analysis of this thesis, as seen in Table 4. Given the role of anime in Japanese culture and cinema, as well as its complex narrative structure, these animated films were included into the Japanese list and treated equally to live-action films regarding storytelling formats and the use of character archetypes. The box office revenue of the Japanese films was recorded in yen.

No.	Title	Year	Format	Domestic Box Office in ¥
1	Spirited Away	2001	Animation	31,680,000,000
2	Your Name	2016	Animation	25,170,000,000
3	Princess Mononoke	1997	Animation	20,180,000,000
4	Howl's Moving Castle	2004	Animation	19,600,000,000
5	Ponyo	2008	Animation	15,500,000,000
6	Suzume	2022	Animation	14,940,000,000
7	Weathering with You	2019	Animation	14,230,000,000
8	The Wind Rises	2013	Animation	12,020,000,000
9	Antarctica	1983	Live-Action	11,000,000,000
10	Evangelion: 3.0+1.0 Thrice Upon a Time	2021	Animation	10,280,000,000
11	The Adventures of Milo and Otis	1986	Live-Action	9,800,000,000
12	The Boy and the Heron	2023	Animation	9,400,000,000

13	Arrietty the Borrower	2010	Animation	9,260,000,000
14	Heaven and Earth	1990	Live-Action	9,200,000,000
15	The Eternal Zero	2013	Live-Action	8,760,000,000
16	Crying Out Love in the Center of the World	2004	Live-Action	8,500,000,000
17	Stand by Me Doraemon	2014	Animation	8,380,000,000
18	Shin Godzilla	2016	Live-Action	8,250,000,000
19	The Silk Road	1988	Live-Action	8,200,000,000
20	Tales from Earthsea	2006	Animation	7,840,000,000

**Table 4: List of analyzed Japanese films (with English titles)**

Source: Kogyo Tsushinsha Ltd., 2024

After finalizing the lists with the American and Japanese films, the 40 films were then either acquired and watched through streaming platforms such Amazon Prime, Netflix and YouTube or purchased on DVD. If possible, the films were watched in English. Otherwise, either German or the original language with added subtitles (mostly for Japanese films) was utilized. After acquiring the films, they were analyzed following the method detailed in the following chapter and included into the reference list of this thesis.

### 3.3 Analytical Framework

In this chapter, the frameworks and methods that were used to conduct the film analysis will be presented. The goal of this analysis was to investigate the differences and similarities between American and Japanese films regarding their preferred storytelling formats and character archetypes as well as the influence of cultural values on them. The analysis used already established frameworks and aimed to discover to which degree these frameworks are applicable to the selected films and if they can portray notable differences. Furthermore, the analysis was conducted in a multi-stage process consisting of three major stages. The frameworks that were

used for this analysis will be discussed in chapter 3.3.1 to 3.3.3 before detailing their application in the analysis in chapter 3.3.4.

### **3.3.1 Storytelling Formats**

One part of the analysis involved viewing the films and assigning a matching storytelling format to each of them to ascertain which narrative structure the films align with the most. As previously mentioned – based on the knowledge of the chapters 2.2.1 and 2.2.3 – this thesis used the 15 storytelling formats described by Pätzmann and Busch (2019) for the analysis of the 40 films. Not only do these storytelling formats include popular formats such as the five-act structure, the three-act structure and a version of the Hero's Journey, they also feature additional formats that can be used to further describe narrative plot points more precisely. In addition to these 15 storytelling formats, the format of Kishōtenketsu was included into the analysis for films that align more closely with this Eastern narrative structure. These 16 models were used to find major turning points and characteristic features in each film to assess how aspects like conflict or plot-twists were created.

### **3.3.2 The Archetypal Model**

The character analysis part was conducted using Pätzmann and Hartwig's (2018) archetypal model as introduced in chapter 2.1.3. This model and its archetypes was developed through the analysis of 50 films, providing a solid foundation for its application in storytelling through films. This model also has been previously used to analyze the archetypes in YouTube videos, which culminated in the creation of the 15 storytelling formats used in this thesis. This proves the compatibility of the two utilized frameworks. Therefore, this archetypal model is well-suited for application in the context of this thesis. Through this model, recurring character archetypes such as the Mother, Leader or Hero were tracked and analyzed for major characters. Archetypes were also tracked across acts to better evaluate character development.

### **3.3.3 Cultural Concepts and Aesthetics**

To interpret if and how culture may influence storytelling formats and character archetypes in a film, the results of the analysis were contextualized with the cultural concepts and aesthetics previously discussed in chapter 2.3. Through the behavioral patterns found in Hofstede's dimensions of individualism and collectivism, Markus and Kitayama's construal of the self and Japanese concepts such as *honne* and *tatemae*, culturally influenced decisions and dynamics

were identified if present. Likewise, the aesthetic concept of *mono no aware* was considered when analyzing narrative decisions and character behavior, especially concerning melancholic resolutions in Japanese films.

### 3.3.4 Application

For the first step of the film analysis, templates for each of the 16 relevant storytelling formats were created to ensure a consistent and comparable basis across the different storytelling formats. To stay as accurate to the work of Pätzmann and Busch (2019) as possible, each of the used templates followed a similar structure to the corresponding format example featured in their work. The first row, as exemplified in Table 5, remained unchanged for all templates. Only the amount and names of acts varied according to the storytelling formats.

Plot	Character				
	Protagonist, antagonist, supporting character	Motivational system	Motivational endorser/barrier	Archetype/ Anti-Archetype	Story

**Table 5: First row of each used template**

Source: Own representation based on Pätzmann and Busch, 2019, p. 12

After creating the templates in Microsoft Word, each of the 40 films was viewed and analyzed with regard to its characters, plot points and structural phases. Based on the characteristics of the storytelling formats, each film was assigned to the most fitting template. For each act, relevant characters – including protagonists, antagonists and important supporting roles – were recorded in the template, specifically inside the acts in which they impacted the narrative. At the same time, the main plot events of each act were summarized in the corresponding row to document the overall story.

The second step of the analysis involved reviewing the personality traits and behavior of the relevant characters and assigning each of them to an archetype and corresponding motivational system and motivational endorser or barrier within the template. Based on the characteristics associated with each archetype in Pätzmann and Hartwig’s (2018) model, as portrayed in Figures 1 and 2, as well as the role of the character in each act, one to two (anti-)archetypes

were assigned to reflect their role most accurately. The motivational system and corresponding endorser or barrier were then matched to their (anti-)archetype. This process was applied across all 40 films in this analysis.

These completed templates served as the core for the comparative analysis. The information from these files was collected inside a Microsoft Excel sheet to allow for the identification of trends and patterns in storytelling format and archetype usage. Additionally, possible influences from cultural concepts and aesthetics were noted for each film. The next chapter describes how the data was analyzed to answer the research question and hypotheses of this thesis. All 40 word documents containing the information of the individual films as well as the Excel sheet used for this analysis can be found in the appendix of this thesis.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

This thesis used a content analysis approach to systematically analyze the chosen Japanese and American animated and live-action films by utilizing the information on the used templates to fill in a prepared Excel sheet. This analysis was based on a combination of storytelling formats and character archetypes as its primary dimensions. Furthermore, by reviewing the summarized plot points of each film as well as the role of its antagonist regardless of their character archetypes, a primary conflict type and antagonist type were assigned to each film and antagonist. This expanded the analysis slightly and serves to provide more context overall.

Four dimensions were analyzed for all 40 films: The storytelling format, the character archetypes, the primary conflict type and the antagonist type. Each film was reviewed, transferred into the Excel sheet manually and split up into the dimensions described above to simplify pattern recognition. For the character archetypes, one or two protagonists, one antagonist if available and up to two key supporting characters were transferred into the Excel sheet together with their corresponding (anti-)archetypes as described in chapter 3.3.2. As each (anti-)archetype is connected to only one particular motivational system and motivational endorser/barrier, they were not directly transferred into the Excel sheet themselves. Instead, colors were used to illustrate the motivational endorsers and barriers inside the character archetype analysis.

In addition to the storytelling formats and character archetypes adopted from the completed templates, two custom typologies were developed by the author specifically for this thesis: one

for categorizing the primary type of conflict more clearly and one for classifying antagonist roles. These typologies aim to show further distinctions between Japanese and American films that were not fully depicted by the used frameworks. By reviewing the plot and analyzing the reason(s) for the primary conflict of all 40 films, five recurring patterns of conflict were identified. These patterns were then developed inductively into a new set of conflict types. The resulting definitions – created for the purposes of this thesis – are presented in Table 6 and have been applied consistently across all 40 films.

Primary conflict types	Definition
Internal Conflict	The main conflict occurs within the protagonist and often involves emotional, psychological or identity-related issues.
Metaphysical Conflict/Fate	This conflict involves supernatural or abstract/ungraspable forces such as fate, time or destiny.
Nature versus Civilization	A conflict between human development (technology or industrialization) and nature or other species (alien or primal), often focusing on environmental/ethic themes.
Societal/Cultural Conflict	The conflict originates from pressure due to societal norms, traditions, ideologies or structures (often based on social class or role within the society).
Classic Good versus Evil	The classic conflict between a heroic protagonist and an evil antagonist, often resulting in a decisive confrontation where one side wins and one side loses.

**Table 6: Types of primary conflict**

Source: Own definition

Similar to the primary conflict types, the categorization of the antagonist types was developed inductively based on the analysis of the 40 selected films. Through the analysis, five recurring patterns in the role of the the antagonists inside the narrative were found. These patterns were formed into a typology of antagonist types. As with the primary conflict types, the definitions – as seen in Table 7 – were created for the purpose of this thesis and have been applied to the antagonists invariably across all films. Films that lacked a clear antagonist were classified as

*None*. It has to be noted, that the antagonist types do not replace the character (anti-)archetypes. This typology serves to explain the narrative purpose of the antagonist in the story and is analyzed separately from the character (anti-)archetypes.

Antagonist Types	Description
Pure Villain	An evil antagonist with harmful goals, portrayed with little to no justification or redemption in the narrative.
Ambiguous Antagonist	An antagonist that opposes the protagonist due to conflicting goals, positions or misunderstandings. Not entirely villainous.
Redemptive Antagonist	Begins as a threat but undergoes a moral shift, showing redemption or stopping to oppose the protagonist.
False Antagonist	Appears as an antagonist in the beginning but is revealed to be an ally or not hostile. Actions are based on good intentions.
Force of Nature	An impersonal or non-human threat that cannot be reasoned with or categorized morally.
None	The narrative contains no clear antagonist.

**Table 7: Types of antagonists**

Source: Own definition

After transferring the previously discussed storytelling formats and character archetypes (with their motivational systems and endorsers/barriers) from the film analysis templates into the Excel sheet, the primary conflict types and antagonist types were manually added to each film based on the developed definitions. Additional worksheets inside the Excel document were then created to systematically compare these different dimensions by counting their amount of appearances across all films. It is important to note, that for character archetypes, each (anti-)archetype was only counted once per character to avoid an inflation of counts. This allowed

this study to explore how storytelling formats and character archetypes differ between the 20 Japanese and 20 American films. Furthermore, the categorization of primary conflict types and antagonist types made comparisons across countries possible. The two custom typologies allowed to identify, which conflict and antagonist types are dominant across cultures and within storytelling formats. These comparisons were then extended further by examining the use of character archetypes, primary conflict types and antagonist types not only across countries, but also within the specific storytelling formats in each country. This enabled a more detailed analysis, showing how certain storytelling formats may favor particular character archetypes, conflict types or antagonist types. Moreover, antagonist types were analyzed in relation to the (anti-)archetypes assigned to the antagonists themselves, providing more insight into the use of character archetypes for different types of antagonists in Japanese and American films. Finally, a column in the Excel sheet was used to record observed cultural themes and aesthetics for each film. These notes were added based on interpretations and aimed to catch recurring motifs, references or values – especially in the Japanese film selection. While these cultural themes were not analyzed quantitatively like the other dimensions of the analysis, these notes provided context for later interpretation of the results. Overall, the structure of the Excel sheet allowed to find possible trends in archetypal storytelling across both Japanese and American films.

### **3.5 Limitations of the Research**

Before presenting the results of this analysis, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The sample consisted of 40 films – 20 from each country – to ensure that the dataset remained manageable. While this size allows for pattern recognition, it may not fully capture the diversity of narrative storytelling or the use of archetypes in Japanese or American cinema. Furthermore, the selection was based on box office success, which ensured that well-known and culturally influential films were included in the analysis, but also means that niche genres were excluded. Another effect of this selection method was that several of the analyzed films were directed by the same filmmakers or belong to the same narrative universe – for example multiple films in the dataset being directed by renowned directors such as Hayao Miyazaki or James Cameron. While this may lead to naturally reoccurring themes, each film still displays a unique cultural narrative and offers relevant insights into storytelling and archetypes. Therefore, these movies were each included as a distinct entry in the analysis.

Additionally, all categorizations used in this thesis – including storytelling formats, character archetypes and the two custom typologies – were assigned manually based on the author's

interpretations. This approach enabled a detailed analysis of narrative structures and character portrayals. Nonetheless it has to be noted, that this also introduced subjectivity as well as potential bias in the study. While the two custom typologies (primary conflict types and antagonist types) offered useful distinctions for the comparative analysis, they were not derived from any established frameworks and may not be applicable outside of this study. Cultural themes were observed and noted during the film analysis to support the interpretation of results, especially for the Japanese films. However, these themes were not systematically analyzed and quantified and are intended as context rather than formal findings. These cultural themes contribute to the discussion chapter, but do not represent a cultural study. Lastly, Microsoft Word and Excel were used for accessibility and flexibility in data transfer, categorization and comparison. Excel, specifically, provided a useful structure for sorting and counting archetypes, as well as formatting comparisons through the use of multiple worksheets. Even though Excel is not a specialized analysis tool, it was sufficient for the goals of this thesis. More complex software may offer additional features such as advanced data visualization, which was not required in this analysis but may be useful for future research. Despite these limitations, this study offers a comparative insight into archetypal storytelling across two kinds of cinema and opens pathways for further research using broader samples and more specialized methodologies.

## 4 Results

This chapter presents the results of the cross-cultural analysis of 20 Japanese and 20 American animated and live-action films. After analyzing and comparing the dimensions mentioned in the previous chapter – storytelling formats, character archetypes, primary conflict types and antagonist types – the results were organized and structured to spotlight patterns not only across the two countries but also within the specific storytelling formats in more detail.

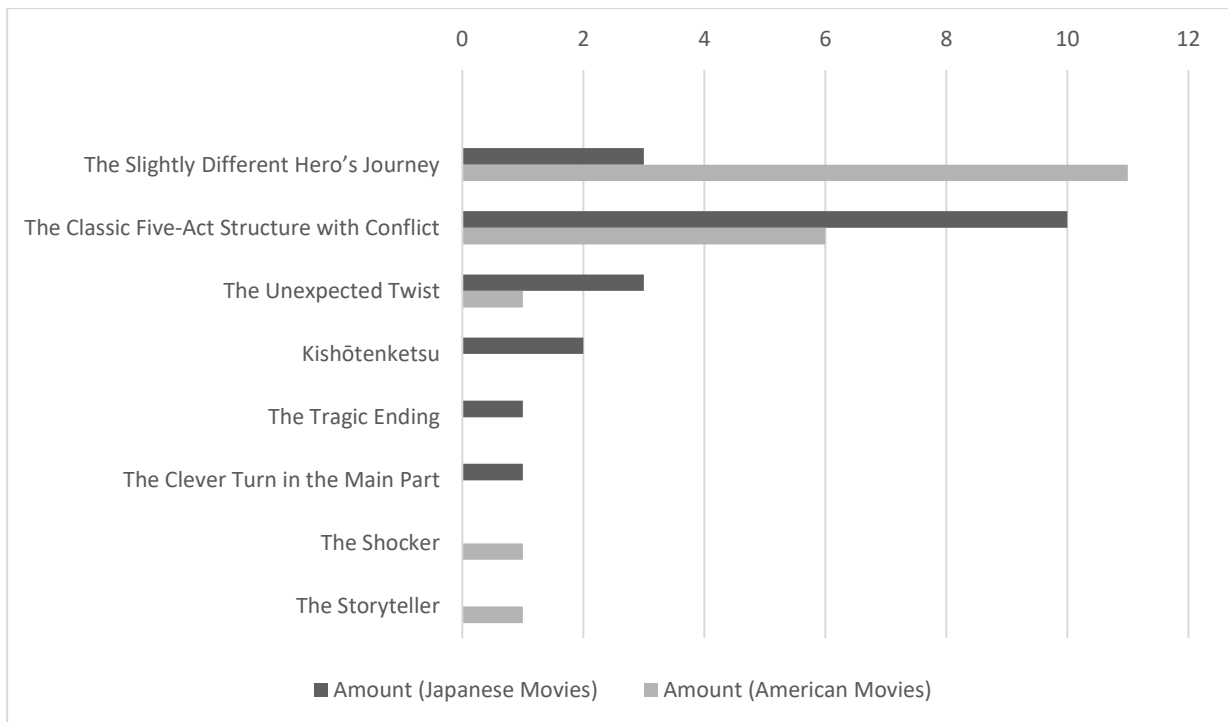
The results are displayed in two stages. Chapter 4.1 will demonstrate the results based on country, allowing a direct comparison in how the four dimensions differ between Japanese and American films and which patterns emerged overall. Subsequently, chapter 4.2 will separate the results by storytelling format. This allows to closely observe how character archetypes, primary conflict types and antagonist types may be influenced by the narrative structure they feature in. The goal of this chapter is to present patterns in storytelling while also aiming to showcase how these storytelling formats are connected to character roles and conflict types.

### 4.1 Overall Findings by Country

Chapter 4.1 will focus on the overall findings of the analysis, which are organized by country. It starts with an overview of the distribution of storytelling formats in chapter 4.1.1 and character archetypes (including motivational systems and endorsers/barriers) in chapter 4.1.2 for both countries. In addition to these primary dimensions, the distribution of primary conflict types and antagonist types is shown in chapter 4.1.3 and 4.1.4 respectively.

#### 4.1.1 Storytelling Formats

Each film was analyzed based on its plot structure and unique characteristics, and then assigned to one of Pätzmann and Busch's (2019) 15 storytelling formats or the format of Kishōtenketsu. If a film fit to more than one storytelling format due to different aspects in its narrative construction, the format that aligned more closely overall was selected. However, a note about alternative possible storytelling formats for certain films was recorded in the data sheet for transparency. The results of the comparative analysis regarding storytelling formats used in the selected Japanese and American films can be viewed in Figure 8.



**Figure 8: Comparison of storytelling formats between Japanese and American films**

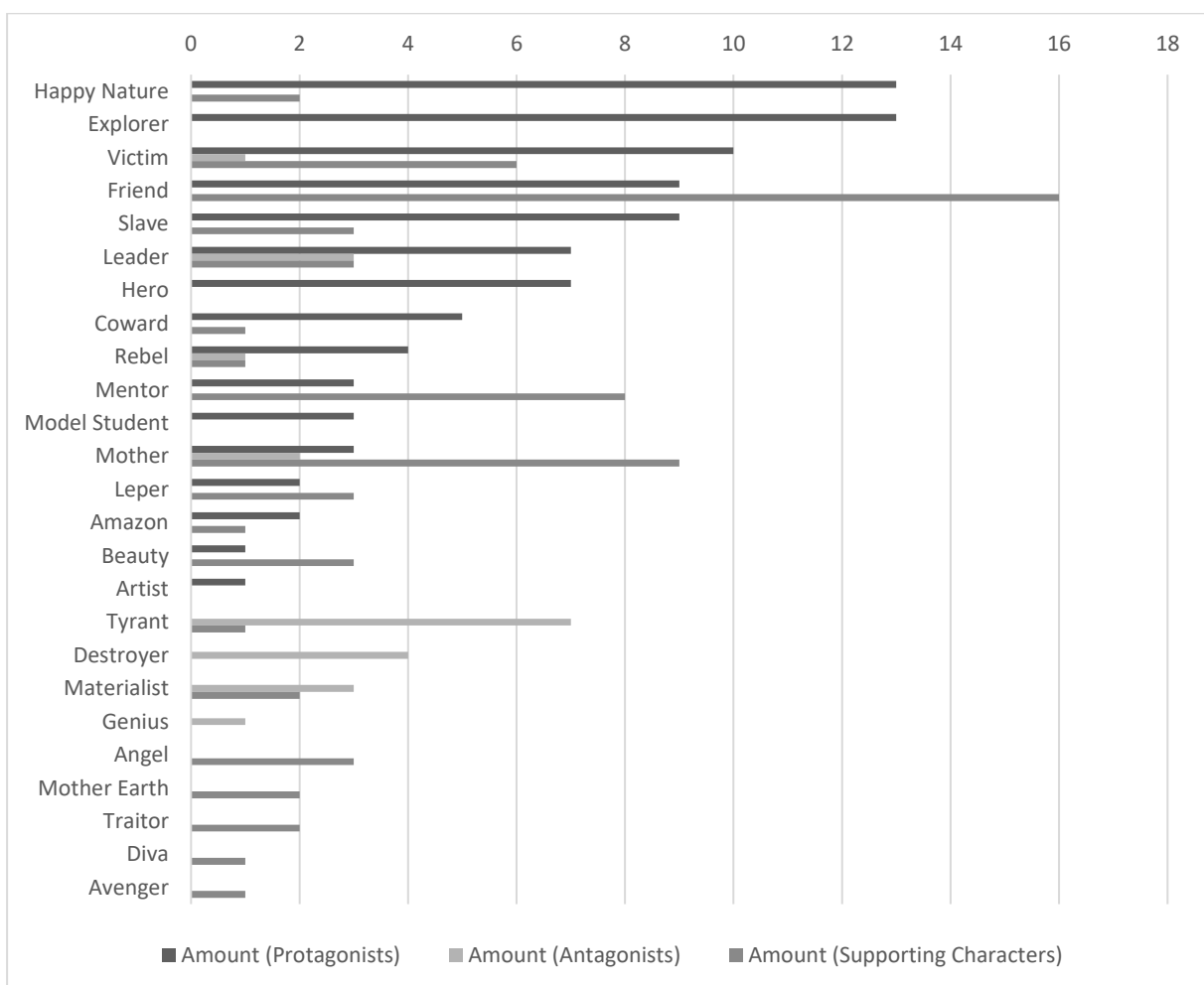
Source: own analysis

Of the 16 possible storytelling formats introduced for this thesis, 8 were identified across the 40 analyzed films. These include formats that appeared in both countries – the Slightly Different Hero's Journey, the Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict and the Unexpected Twist – as well as formats exclusive to either Japanese or American cinema. Kishōtenketsu, the Tragic Ending, and the Clever Turn in the Main Part were only found in Japanese films, while the Shocker and the Storyteller formats were unique to American films.

The Slightly Different Hero's Journey was assigned to 11 American and 3 Japanese films. The Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict was present in 10 out of 20 Japanese and 6 out of 20 American films while the Unexpected Twist was found in 2 Japanese and 1 American film. In addition, the Kishōtenketsu format was assigned to 2 Japanese films, while the Tragic Ending and Clever Turn in the Main Part were each featured in 1 film. Of the Japanese films, 4 showed structural elements of Kishōtenketsu and 2 films included aspects of the Flashback structure; however, these films were ultimately assigned to the formats shown in Table 10 as their overall structure aligned more closely with other formats. In the American selection of films, the Shocker and Storyteller were each assigned to 1 film. The remaining 8 storytelling formats described in chapter 2.2.3 were not represented in the 40 analyzed films.

## 4.1.2 Character Archetypes

This chapter presents the overall use of character (anti-)archetypes across all 40 films. The study separated the characters based on their roles in the narrative and analyzed the behavior of protagonists, antagonists and supporting characters for both countries. This resulted in lists of archetypes with the amount of appearances each archetype had across these three character roles. Archetypes that are not included in this chapter were not represented by any analyzed character. The bar chart in Figure 9 displays the amount of archetypes and anti-archetypes that appeared in the 20 Japanese films with each bar representing the amount of times the archetype was applied to a protagonist, antagonist or supporting character.



**Figure 9: (Anti-)archetypes in Japanese films by character role**

Source: own analysis

In the Japanese selection of films, the most common protagonist archetypes were the Happy Nature and Explorer (both 13 instances). These were followed by the Victim (10), Friend and

Slave (9 each) as well as the Leader and Hero (7 each). Archetypes like the Coward (5) and Rebel (4) appeared slightly less often. On the lower end of appearances are the Mentor, Model Student and Mother (3 each), together with the Leper and Amazon (both 2). Finally, the Beauty and Artist appeared rarely (both 1).

Among the antagonists in Japanese films, the Tyrant was the anti-archetype that appeared most frequently (7 times), with Destroyer (4), Leader and Materialist (both 3) also recurring. Rarer appearances included the Mother (2) as well as the Genius, Rebel and Victim (all 1).

Supporting characters most often included the Friend (16), Mother (9) and Mentor (8) archetypes. The Victim (6) appeared moderately often followed by the Beauty, Slave, Angel, Leper and Leader (all with 3 appearances). Archetypes that barely appeared in Japanese supporting characters, included the Materialist, Mother Earth, Happy Nature, Traitor (2 each) and the Coward, Diva, Rebel, Amazon, Tyrant and Avenger (1 appearance each).

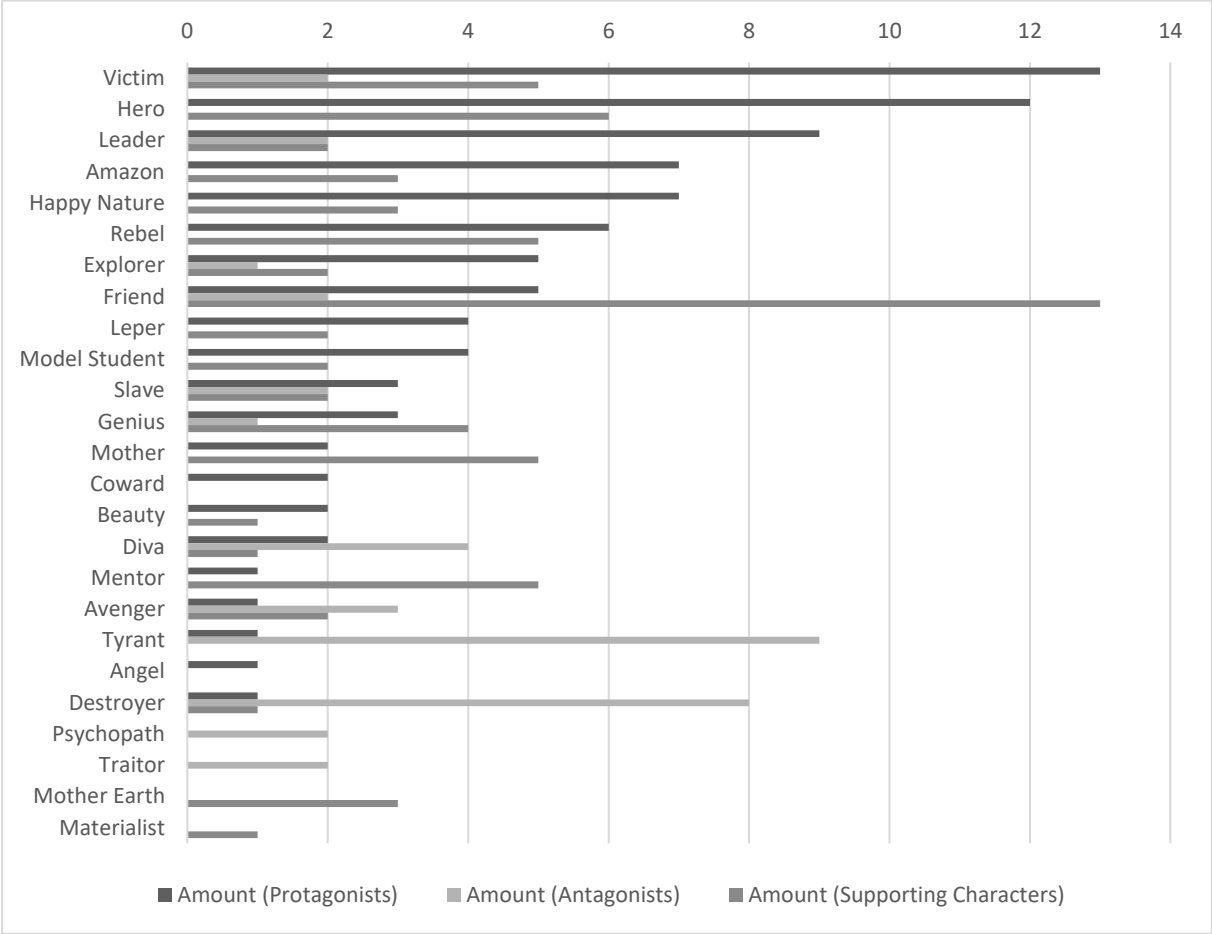
Akin to Figure 9, the bar chart in Figure 10 exhibits the amount of (anti-)archetypes that appeared in the 20 American films. Again, each archetype received between one and three bars, counting the amount of times a protagonist, antagonist or supporting character portrayed this archetype in the narrative.

In the analyzed American films, the Victim (13), Hero (12) and Leader (9) were the dominant protagonist archetypes, in front of the Amazon and Happy Nature (7 each). After these archetypes, the Rebel (6), Explorer and Friend (5 each) as well as the Leper and Model Student (both 4) appeared less often. Finally, archetypes like the Slave and Genius (3 each), Mother, Coward, Beauty and Diva (all 2) as well as the Mentor, Avenger, Tyrant, Angel and Destroyer (1) appeared the least on protagonists.

For American antagonists, the anti-archetypes of the Tyrant (9) and Destroyer (8) were especially prevalent, followed by the Diva (4) and Avenger (3). Less frequent archetypes included the Victim, Slave, Psychopath, Leader, Friend and Traitor (2 each). The Explorer and Genius appeared the least on antagonists (1 each).

In archetypes for supporting characters, the Friend (13 appearances) and the Hero (6) appeared the most frequently. Following these archetypes are the Mentor, Mother and Victim (5 each) as well as the Genius (4). The Happy Nature, Amazon and Mother Earth archetypes (all with 3 appearances) occurred occasionally. Lastly, the Avenger, Slave, Explorer, Model Student,

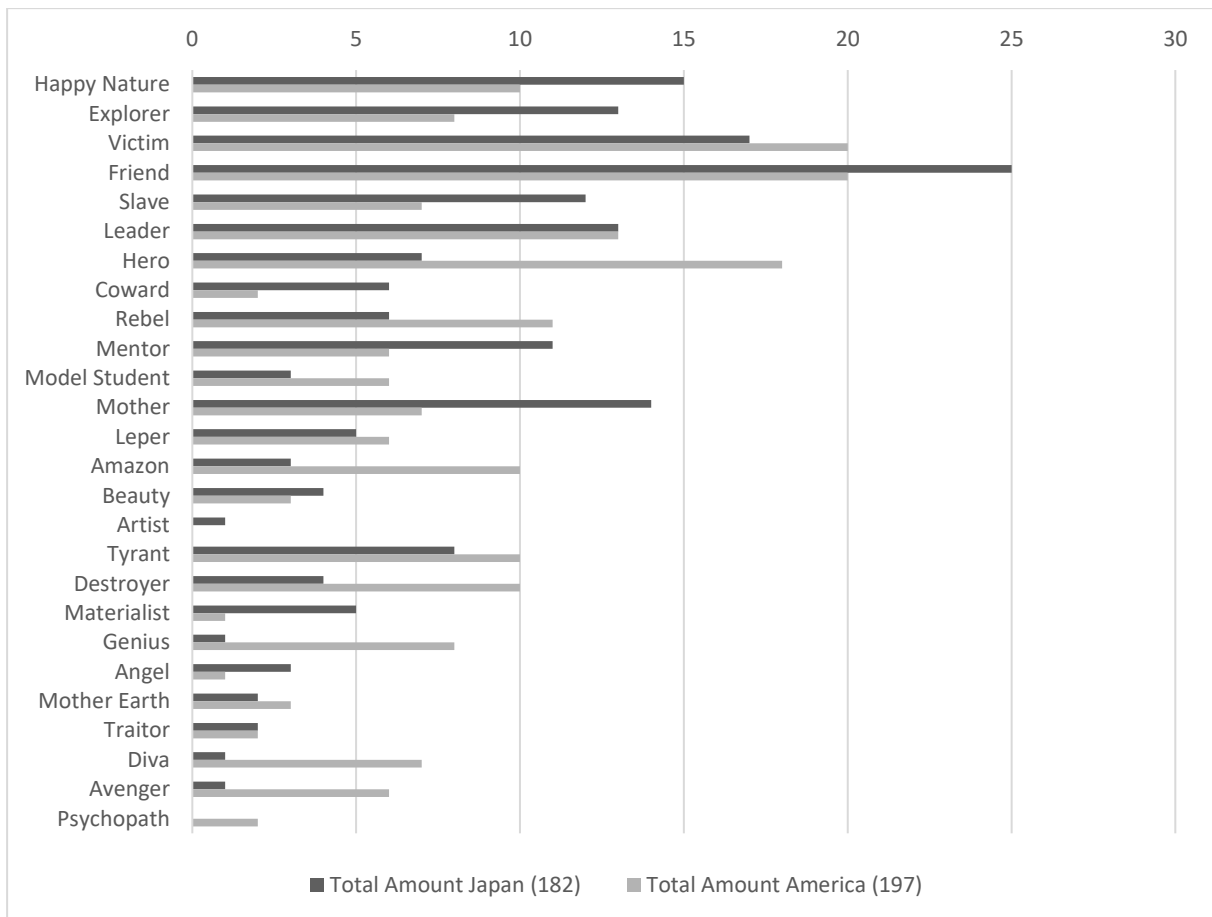
Leper and Leader (2 each) archetypes appeared only rarely on supporting characters, with the Beauty, Diva, Materialist and Destroyer (all 1) appearing the least.



**Figure 10: (Anti-)archetypes in American films by character role**

Source: own analysis

To provide a clearer overview of the overall archetype usage between Japanese and American films, Figure 11 below summarizes the total appearances of each appearing (anti-)archetype across protagonists, antagonists and supporting characters. By showing aggregated counts of appearances, this chart offers insight into the archetype preferences found in Japanese and American cinema. In total, 182 archetype appearance counts were recorded in Japanese films, while 197 archetype appearances were counted for American films. From the Japanese films, 32 protagonists, 13 antagonists and 38 supporting characters were analyzed based on their archetypes. On the American side, 34 protagonists, 20 antagonists and 40 supporting characters were identified and studied. These differences in the amount of analyzed characters and amount of utilized archetypes per character, which was determined by the structure of the analyzed films, led to the close but dissimilar counts in the total amount of archetypes.



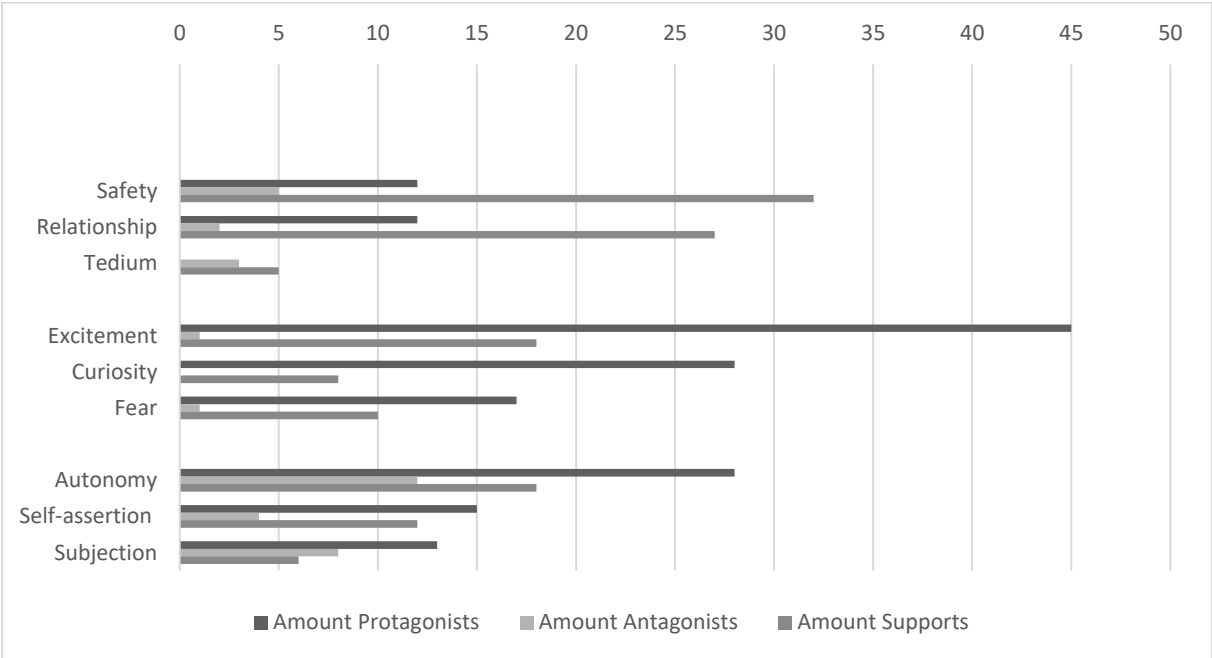
**Figure 11: Aggregated archetype counts across all 40 Japanese and American films**

Source: own analysis

In this comparison, the Friend archetype prevailed in both Japanese (25 appearances) and American (20) films, although appearing slightly more often in Japanese narratives. Likewise, the Victim (Japan: 25 – US: 20) and the Leader (13 – 13) archetypes emerged regularly for both countries as well. In addition to the Hero archetype appearing to be particularly dominant in American films (Japan: 7 – US: 18), archetypes such as the Rebel (6 – 11), Genius (1 – 8), Avenger (1 – 6), Diva (1 – 7) and Psychopath (0 – 2) surfaced more often in American narratives.

Japanese films more commonly featured archetypes such as the Happy Nature (15 – 10), Explorer (13 – 8), Slave (12 – 7), Mentor (11 – 6), Mother (14 – 7), Coward (6 – 2) and Materialist (5 – 1). The Artist (1 – 0) archetype appeared only 1 time overall and in a Japanese film. Finally, archetypes such as the Model Student (3 – 6), Leper (5 – 6), Beauty (4 – 3), Angel (3 – 1) and Traitor (2 – 2) appeared less often but relatively balanced across both Japanese and American films.

These aggregated counts simplify the direct comparison of archetype usage between Japanese and American films and provide the basis for the discussion in the next chapters, highlighting archetypes which seem to be more common and popular in the two countries. As previously mentioned in chapter 3.4, each archetype can be associated with one specific motivational endorser or barrier, which in turn belongs to one of three overarching motivational systems. To gain insight in this distribution for the conducted analysis, Figure 12 displays the aggregated counts of archetype appearances inside these systems for the Japanese selection of films, based on the three character roles inside the narratives. It is worth mentioning that the archetype of the Hero as well as the anti-archetype of the Destroyer belong to all three motivational systems and all motivational endorsers and barriers. Therefore, the appearances of the Hero and Destroyer in the Japanese and American films were not counted for this part of the analysis.

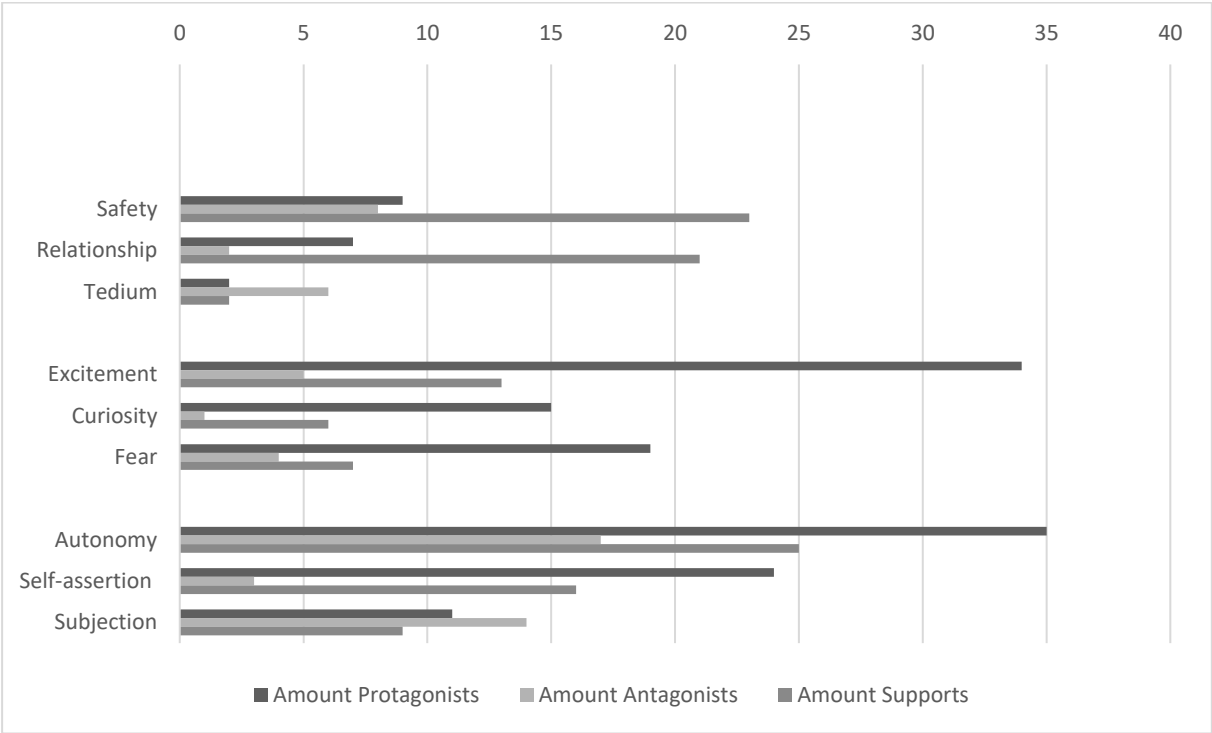


**Figure 12: Distribution of archetypes across the motivational systems (Japan)**

Source: own analysis

Regarding the Japanese films, the motivational system of excitement appeared as the most dominant motivational system among Japanese characters, especially with protagonists (45 appearances) and supporting characters (18). Within the system, protagonists were common in the motivational endorser of curiosity (28) as well as in the barrier of fear (17). Supporting characters appeared in both categories as well, although slightly less often (8 and 10 times respectively). Antagonists were only rarely observed in this motivational system, with just one appearance in the fear barrier. The system of autonomy also featured frequently across all

character roles, including protagonists (28 appearances), antagonists (12) and supporting characters (18). The endorser of self-assertion included protagonists (15) and supporting characters (12) the most, with only a few antagonist archetypes (4) being present in this endorser. In the motivational barrier of subjection, protagonist (13), antagonist (8) and support character (6) archetypes were seen moderately. Across the three character roles, the motivational system of safety was especially prevalent in supporting characters (32 appearances). Protagonists (12) and antagonists (5) appear to a lesser degree. Within this system, the endorser of relationship included the archetypes of protagonists (12), antagonists (2) and a large amount supporting characters (27) while the barrier of tedium was only linked to a minor amount of antagonist (3) and supporting character (5) archetypes, with no protagonists portraying any archetypes of this barrier in the analyzed films.



**Figure 13: Distribution of archetypes across the motivational systems (America)**

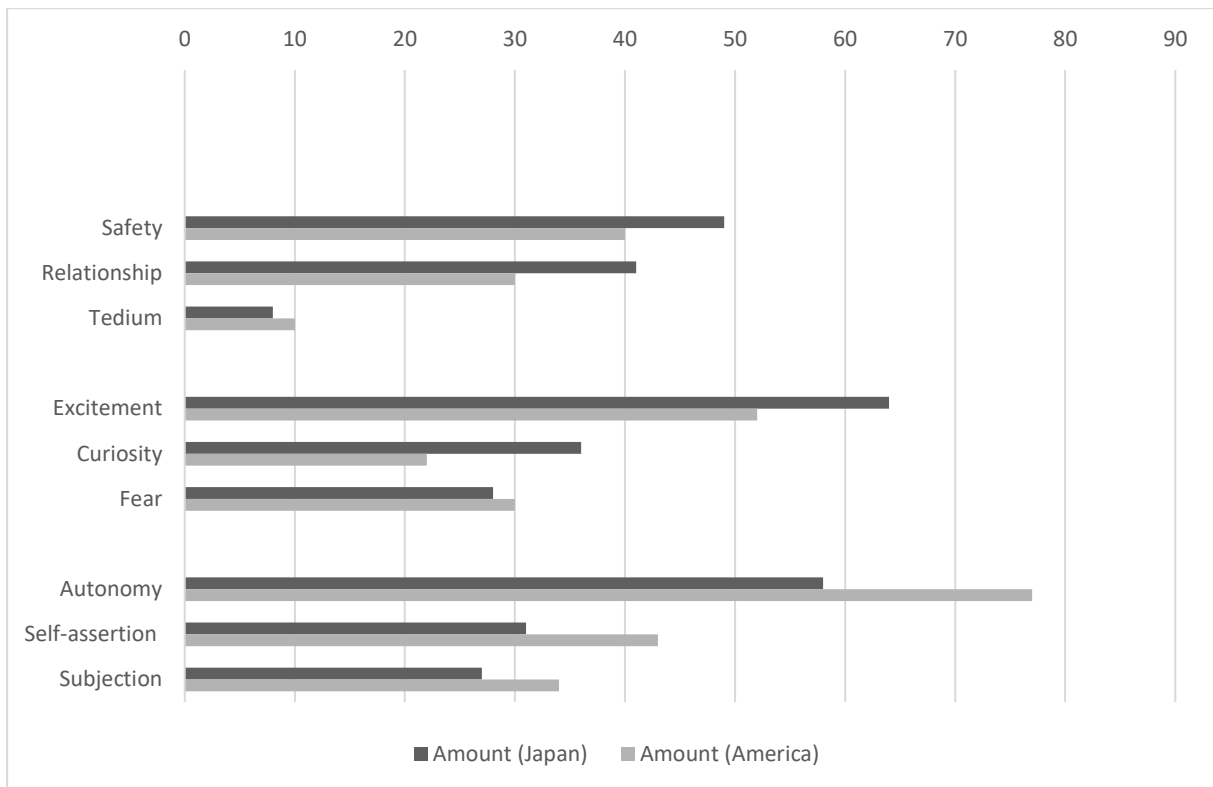
Source: own analysis

In the American film selection, the motivational system of autonomy appeared as the most dominant across all character roles. Archetypes associated with this system were observed frequently in protagonists (35 appearances), as well as in antagonists (17) and supporting characters (25), seen in Figure 13 above. Within this motivational system, the motivational endorser of self-assertion was especially prevalent in protagonists (24) and supporting characters (16), while antagonists (3) were less often connected to it. The barrier of subjection

was represented more recurrently by antagonists (14), but can also be seen in protagonists (11) and supporting characters (9). Aside from the motivational system of autonomy, the motivational system of excitement was prominent in the archetypes of protagonists (34 appearances). Supporting characters (13) are also often linked to archetypes included in this system, while antagonists (5) appeared rarely. The motivational endorser of curiosity appeared in 15 protagonists and 6 supporting characters, but only 1 time in the antagonists. Similarly, the motivational barrier of fear could be found in 19 protagonists, 4 antagonists and 7 supporting characters. Finally, the motivational system of safety appeared to be less represented than the other two motivational systems. Overall, archetypes tied to this system were mostly found in supporting characters (23), with a smaller amount appearing in protagonists (9) and antagonists (8). This can be seen in the motivational endorser of relationship, where protagonists (7) and antagonists (2) rarely portrayed the corresponding archetypes, while supporting characters (21) were portraying archetypes belonging to the motivational endorser of relationship relatively often. In opposition to this, archetypes belonging to the motivational barrier of tedium were rare among all character roles, with antagonists portraying anti-archetypes of this motivational barrier 6 times. Protagonists and supporting characters only embodied the anti-archetypes belonging to the barrier of tedium 2 times each.

To allow for a direct comparison between the two countries, Figure 14 aggregates the total appearances of (anti-)archetypes among all motivational systems and endorsers/barriers. This shows, that the motivational system of excitement appeared most frequently in Japanese films (64), while the system of autonomy dominated in American films (77). While the motivational system of safety was more common in Japanese films (49) than in American films (40), it was the overall least represented motivational system in both countries.

Nonetheless, the results showed that archetypes in the motivational endorsers of curiosity and relationship were more often found in Japanese characters than in American characters. For the motivational endorser of self-assertion, as well as the motivational barriers tedium, fear and subjection, the American characters led in counted appearances of the respective (anti-)archetypes. Overall, Figure 13 shows that – in the conducted analysis – archetypes belonging to the motivational systems of excitement and safety appeared more often in characters of Japanese films, whereas archetypes connected to the motivational system of autonomy predominantly emerged in characters of American films.



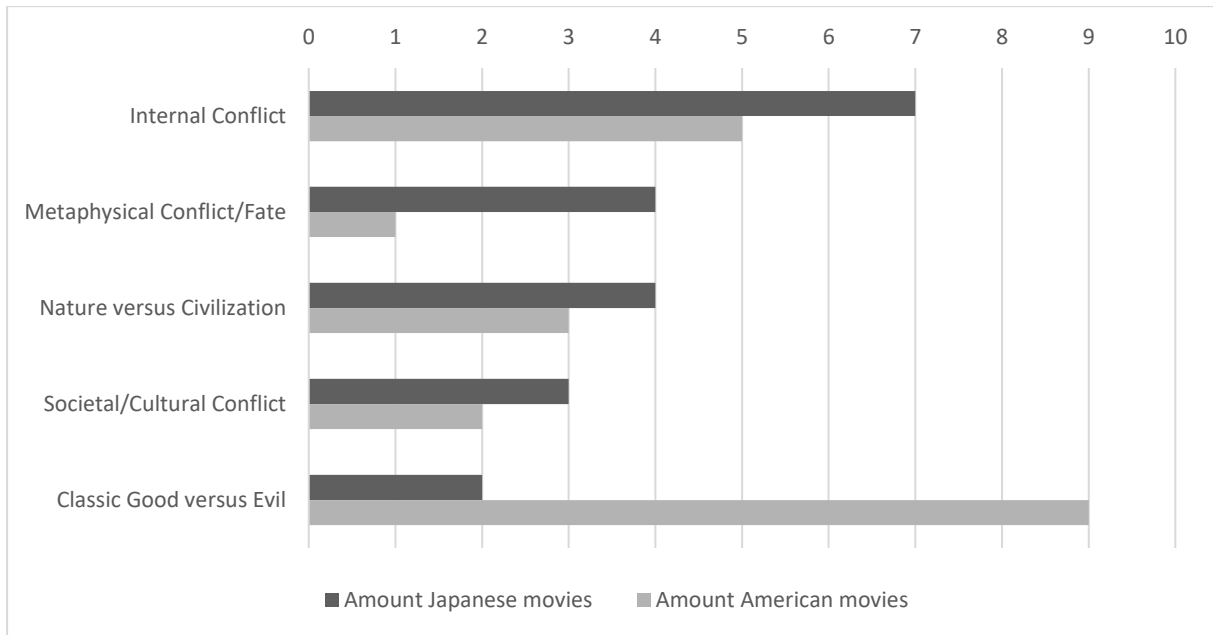
**Figure 14: Aggregated count of archetype appearances across the motivational systems (Japan versus America)**

Source: own analysis

After presenting the results of the two main dimensions of this analysis – the storytelling formats and the character archetypes including their motivational systems, endorsers and barriers – the following two chapters will describe the results of the custom typologies that were created to provide further insight into the roles and themes of the primary conflicts and antagonists of the analyzed films.

### 4.1.3 Primary Conflict Types

As previously mentioned in chapter 3.4, through studying the plot and motivation of plot-relevant characters, each of the 40 films was assigned to one type of primary conflict that best describes the narrative. This can include classic conflicts, such as the fight between two morally opposing individuals, as well as conflicts that only focus on the inner change of a character. The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 15, where the amount of appearances of each of the five primary conflict types is shown for both the Japanese and the American selection of films.



**Figure 15: Primary conflict types by country**

Source: own analysis

For the Japanese selection of films, 7 of the 20 films were assigned to the primary conflict type of the Internal Conflict, while 4 films contained attributes of the Metaphysical Conflict/Fate. Four more films showed a conflict of Nature versus Civilization, while 3 films focused on the Societal/Cultural Conflict. Finally, 2 of the Japanese films depicted a conflict of Classic Good versus Evil.

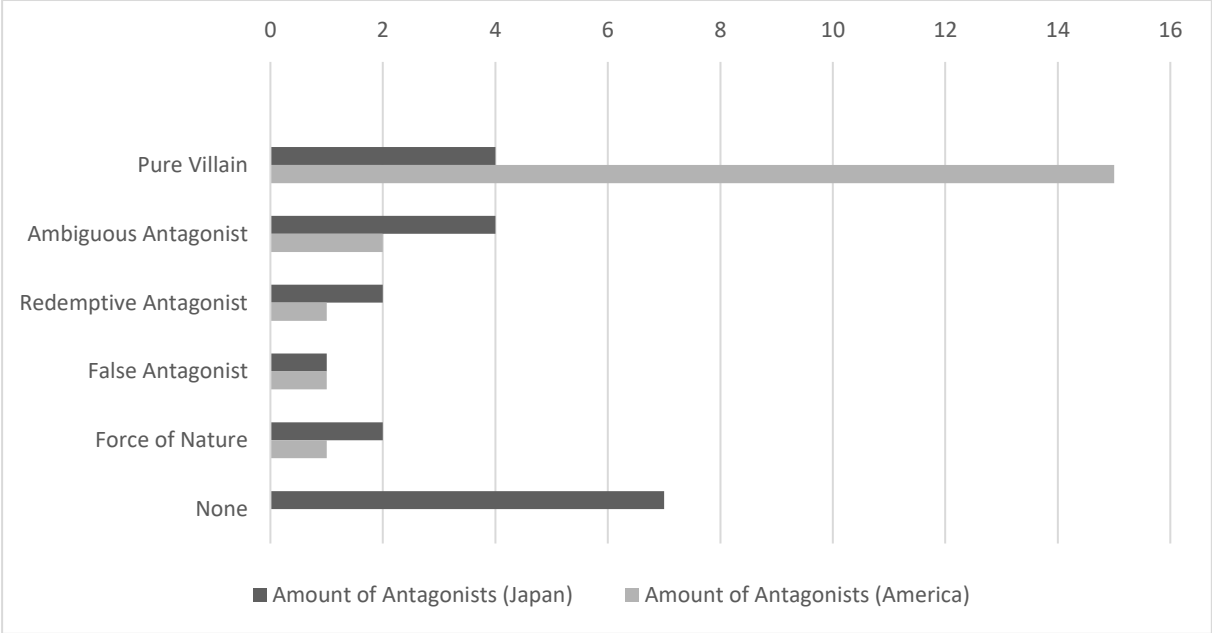
In comparison, in the analyzed American films, the conflict of Classic Good versus Evil prevailed over the other primary conflict types with 9 appearances. The Internal Conflict was included in 5 films, while only 1 film portrayed the Metaphysical Conflict/Fate. Nature versus Civilization was the primary type of conflict for 3 of the American films. Lastly, 2 of the analyzed films showed a primary conflict that can be classified as the Societal/Cultural Conflict type.

Before analyzing the differences in storytelling formats more closely, the following chapter will show the outcome of the analysis regarding the custom typology of antagonist types.

#### **4.1.4 Antagonist Types**

Since for each analyzed film only the one primary antagonist was chosen for the character analysis, this analysis included up to 20 antagonists per country. Each antagonist was assigned

one of five antagonist types based on their function within the narrative. If a film did not include a primary antagonist, the label *None* was used. The results of this analysis were divided by country and compared to each other to learn how antagonists differ in their role within a narrative between Japanese and American films (see Figure 16).



**Figure 16: Antagonist types by country**

Source: own analysis

According to the results of the analysis, Japanese films included various kinds of antagonists: in 4 films the antagonist could be classified as the Pure Villain, while an additional 4 films featured the Ambiguous Antagonist. In 2 films each, the antagonist functioned as the Redemptive Antagonist or a Force of Nature respectively. One antagonist was classified as the type of the False Antagonist. Finally, a noteworthy detail shows that 7 of the Japanese films did not include a physically present primary antagonist and were therefore marked with *None*. American films, however, often featured the Pure Villain as antagonist, as 15 analyzed films included this type of antagonist. Aside from the Pure Villain, 2 films used the Ambiguous Antagonist as its primary antagonist type, while the Redemptive Antagonist, False Antagonist and the Force of Nature all appeared 1 time. Contrary to the Japanese films, every American film featured a physically present and active primary antagonist.

In the Japanese film selection, the Pure Villain antagonist type was most frequently associated with the Tyrant archetype (3 appearances), while the Destroyer and Materialist each appeared 1 time. The Ambiguous Antagonist type was linked to the (anti-)archetypes of the Tyrant (2),

Leader (3) and Materialist (2). The Redemptive Antagonist type occurred across four different (anti-)archetypes: the Tyrant (2), Destroyer (1), Victim (1) and Mother (2). The False Antagonist appeared only in connection with the Genius and Rebel (1 each), while the Force of Nature type was represented exclusively by the anti-archetype of the Destroyer (2 appearances).

In the American dataset, the antagonist type of the Pure Villain was the most frequent. It spans a broad range of (anti-)archetypes, including the Tyrant (8 times) and Destroyer (6) as the most dominant. Several other archetypes appeared less often, like the Victim, Slave, Psychopath, Avenger, Diva and Traitor all appearing on 2 occasions and the Leader, Genius and Friend all appearing 1 time. The Ambiguous Antagonist type only featured the archetypes of the Tyrant, Destroyer and Avenger (1 each). The Redemptive Antagonist type included the (anti-)archetypes of the Diva, Friend as well as Explorer (1 each). Both the False Antagonist and Force of Nature only encompassed one archetype each in the American selection of films: the Leader archetype (1) represented the False Antagonist and the Destroyer anti-archetype (1) showed a connection to the Force of Nature similarly to the Japanese results.

With the overall distribution of character archetypes, primary conflict types and antagonist types established, the next chapter focuses on analyzing how these dimensions are divided into the different storytelling formats.

## **4.2 Findings Based on Storytelling Formats**

After examining the overall distribution of storytelling formats, archetypes and the two custom typologies across the analyzed Japanese and American films, this chapter explores the specific results found in each of the storytelling formats described in chapter 4.1.1. By analyzing the character archetypes that appear within the storytelling formats, potential patterns in their usage may emerge. This may also provide insight into how Japanese and American cinema use these formats and archetypes within them differently. While the primary conflict types and antagonist types are not the main focus of this chapter, their distribution among the storytelling formats will be mentioned as well. Further, as the previous chapter described every appearing archetype per character role and country in detail, this chapter will only focus on key archetypes and possible patterns for each storytelling format.

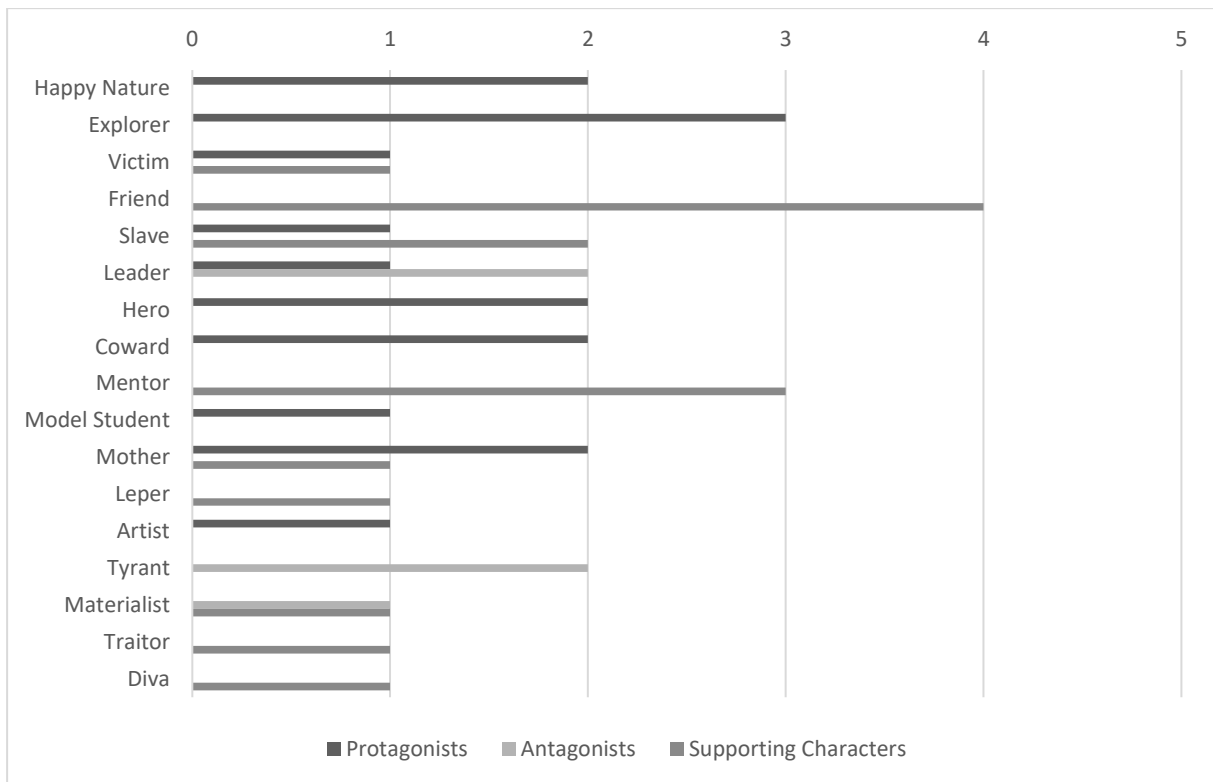
Every subchapter will focus on one storytelling format and present the results of the analysis. Thus, chapter 4.2.1 begins with the Slightly Different Hero's Journey. Chapter 4.2.2 will

present the results of the Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict, followed by chapter 4.2.3, which examines the Unexpected Twist. Afterwards, chapter 4.2.4 and 4.2.5 will then address the storytelling formats that appeared exclusively in Japanese and American films, respectively. Because some storytelling formats appeared in only one to two films, data regarding those formats is limited. While this prevents the identification of patterns or detailed conclusions, these storytelling formats are still included for completeness.

### **4.2.1 The Slightly Different Hero's Journey**

The first storytelling format that will be presented in this chapter is the Slightly Different Hero's Journey. As seen in Figure 8, this storytelling format was featured in 14 out of the 40 analyzed films: 3 Japanese and 11 American films make use of this format. In the 3 Japanese films with this narrative structure, the primary conflict types consisted of 2 Internal Conflict types and 1 Metaphysical Conflict/Fate, while the antagonist types were represented by 1 Pure Villain and 2 Ambiguous Antagonists. The 11 American films included 4 Internal Conflict types, 1 case of Nature versus Civilization and Societal/Cultural Conflict respectively as well as 5 Classic Good versus Evil primary conflict types. The antagonist types that could be assigned to the American films using this storytelling format were 8 Pure Villain types as well as 1 type of Ambiguous Antagonist, Redemptive Antagonist and False Antagonist each. The Japanese cinema included more conflicts that centers around subtle change and antagonists with unclear motivations, while in the American cinema narratives with clear internal change and the classic fight between two opposing sides seemed to dominate. American films in this storytelling format also appeared to heavily favor the Pure Villain antagonist type.

Figure 17 depicts the distribution of character archetypes across protagonists, antagonists and supporting characters for Japanese films in the Slightly Different Hero's Journey storytelling format. It shows that for a protagonist, the Explorer (3 appearances) was the most common character archetype, followed by the Happy Nature, Hero, Coward and Mother (2 each). Antagonists were portrayed with a lower variety of archetypes, as they appear mostly with the archetype of Leader, as well as with the anti-archetype of Tyrant ( both 2 times). For the supporting characters, the Friend (4), the Mentor (3) and the Slave (2) were the most prevalent archetypes in this storytelling format, with the remaining (anti-)archetypes only appearing 1 time each.

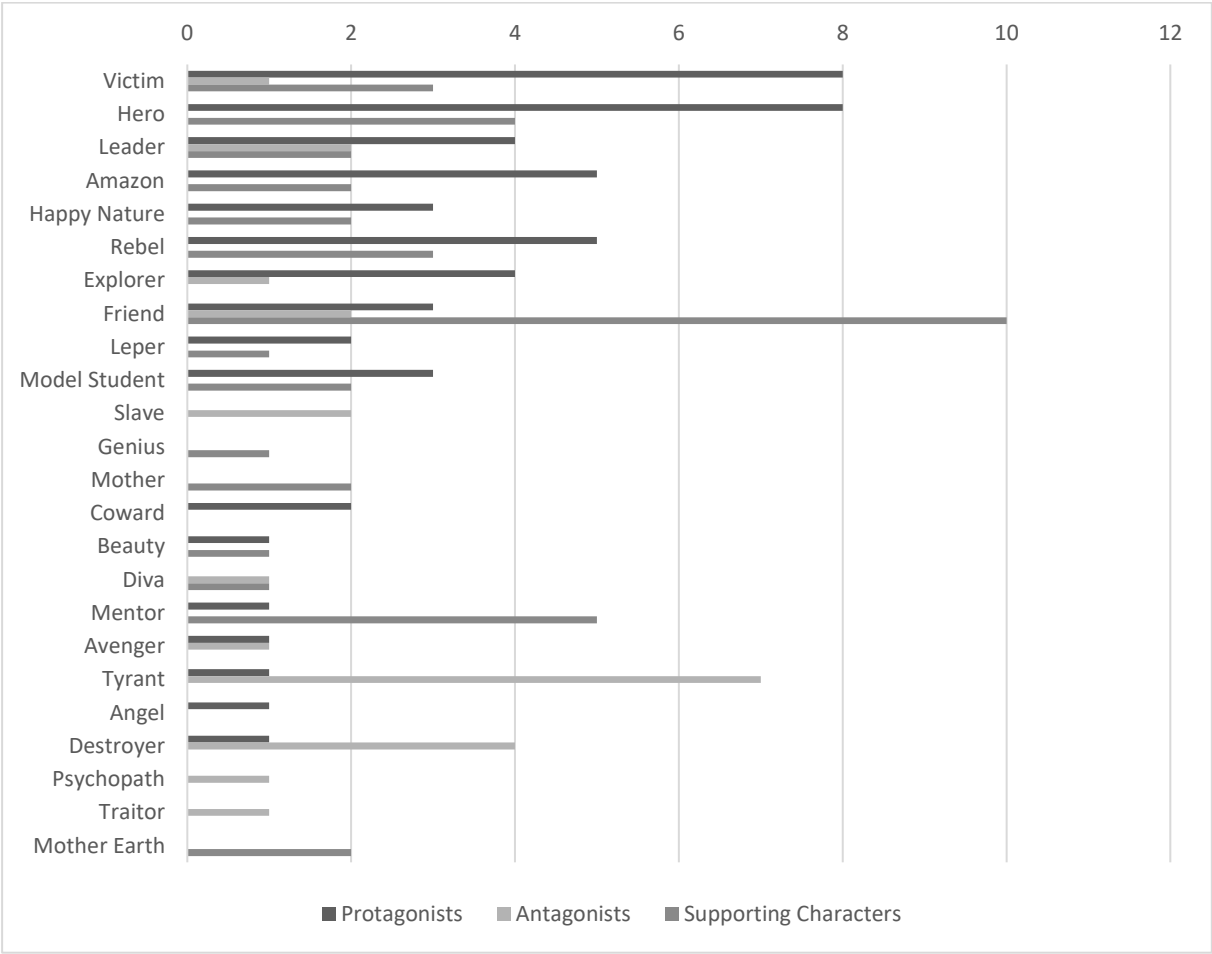


**Figure 17: Archetypes in the Slightly Different Hero's Journey by character roles (Japan)**

Source: own analysis

In contrast with the results of the Japanese film analysis, the protagonists in the American selection of films with the Slightly Different Hero's Journey format most commonly appeared as the Victim or the Hero (both with 8 appearances). Additional archetypes were observed more often include the Amazon and Rebel (both 5) as well as the Leader and Explorer (both 4). As the American selection of films included more titles with this storytelling format, the protagonists as well as the other character roles featured a higher amount of character archetypes with less overall appearances. Details to all of these archetypes will not be described in this paragraph, but can be extracted from Figure 18, which represents the results of this format's analysis. The antagonists of this modified version of the Hero's Journey mostly portrayed the part of the Tyrant (7 appearances) and/or the Destroyer (4), often appearing together. Other (anti-)archetypes were portrayed more rarely in comparison. The archetypes of the supporting characters with the most presence in this storytelling format were the Friend (10 appearances), followed by the Mentor (5). The Hero was represented 4 times in the support characters, while the Victim and Rebel both emerged 3 times. Similarly to the protagonists, the supporting characters also portrayed multiple other archetypes in smaller amounts. These

archetypes will again not be expanded upon in this chapter, but details can be found in the bar chart below.



**Figure 18: Archetypes in the Slightly Different Hero’s Journey by character roles (America)**

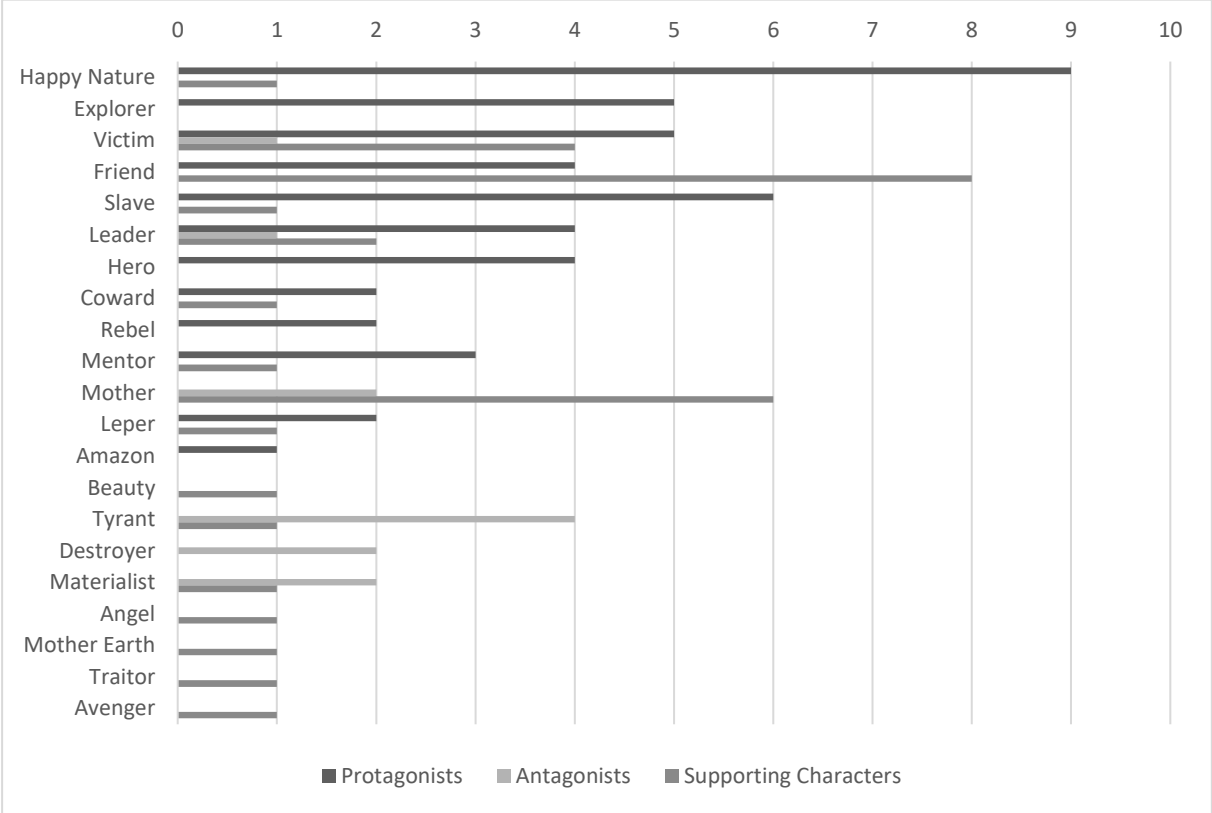
Source: own analysis

Overall, the archetype distribution and primary conflict/antagonist structures in this storytelling format show how the conflict of a hero against the traditional, evil villain dominates in American films. Meanwhile, the Japanese films focus on less direct confrontations and self-discovery.

**4.2.2 The Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict**

The storytelling format of the Classic Five-Act structure with Conflict included the most films overall. 10 of the analyzed Japanese films and 6 out of the 20 American films followed this narrative structure. In the 10 Japanese films, the Internal Conflict as well as the conflict of Nature versus Civilization were both featured 3 times each. The Metaphysical Conflict/Fate

and the Societal/Cultural Conflict were included 1 time and the conflict of Classic Good versus Evil was the focus of 2 films. The Japanese antagonist types in these films were identified as 3 Pure Villains, 1 Ambiguous Antagonist and 2 Redemptive Antagonists. In 4 of the films with this storytelling format, no antagonist was part of the narrative. The 6 American films centered around 2 conflicts of Nature versus Civilization, 1 Societal/Cultural Conflict and 3 conflicts depicting the Classic Good versus Evil, with 5 Pure Villains and 1 Force of Nature appearing in these films.



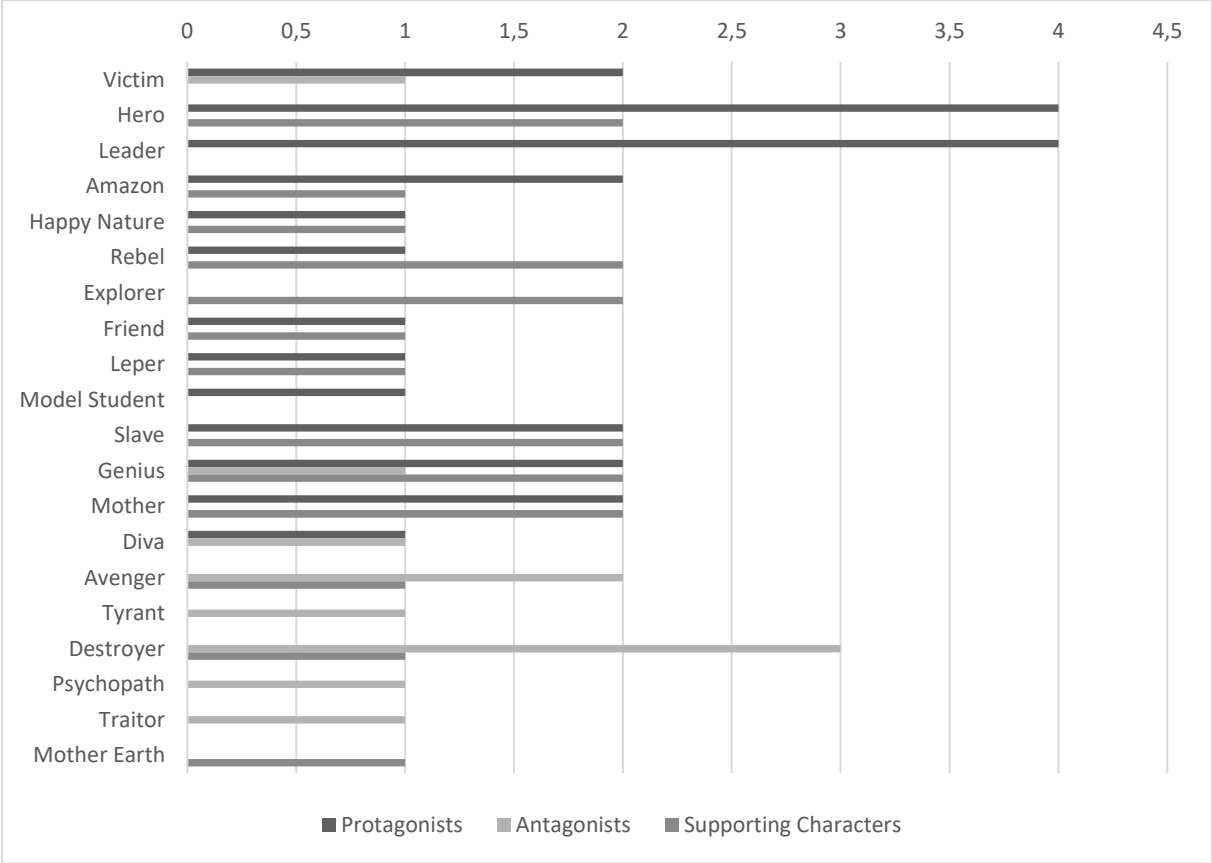
**Figure 19: Archetypes in the Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict by character roles (Japan)**

Source: own analysis

All protagonist, antagonist and supporting character archetypes of Japanese films with the Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict are illustrated in Figure 19. The protagonist archetypes mostly revolved around the Happy Nature (9 appearances), Slave (6), Explorer and Victim (both 5). The 6 antagonists mainly included the Tyrant with 4 appearances, with others such as the Mother, Destroyer or Materialist (all 2 times) appearing less frequently. The supporting characters were predominantly presented as the Friend, Mother or Victim, with 8, 6 and 4

appearances respectively. The remaining archetypes of this character role appeared less often with 1 to 2 appearances at most.

The American protagonist archetypes were dominated by the Hero and the Leader, both with 4 appearances in the 6 films, while the most common antagonist anti-archetypes consisted of the Destroyer (3) and Avenger (2). The other antagonist (anti-)archetypes appeared only 1 time, as proven in Figure 20, where all archetype appearances of American films using this format are illustrated. Finally, the supporting characters displayed a wider range of archetypes. Among others, archetypes such as the Hero, Rebel, Explorer, Slave, Genius or Mother could be seen 2 times.



**Figure 20: Archetypes in the Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict by character roles (America)**

Source: own analysis

Similar to the Slightly Different Hero’s Journey, Japanese and American films using this storytelling format diverged in both archetypal focus and antagonist use: Japanese films emphasized on archetypes centered around emotions such as the Happy Nature and a broader

variety of antagonist types. American films instead positioned Hero and Leader protagonists against antagonists, who in 5 out of 6 films was depicted as the type of the Pure Villain.

### **4.2.3 The Unexpected Twist**

The Unexpected Twist is the final storytelling format that was used by both Japanese and American films. This narrative structure could be seen in 3 Japanese and 1 American film. On the Japanese side, the primary conflicts consisted of 1 Internal Conflict and 2 instances of Metaphysical Conflict/Fate. Only 1 film incorporated an antagonist with the antagonist type of the Force of Nature. The American film presented a Metaphysical Conflict/Fate and an antagonist that could be classified as a Pure Villain.

Despite the small sample size in this storytelling format, a wide variety of archetypes was found in the 3 Japanese films. On protagonists, the Friend and Explorer archetypes were the most common with 4 appearances each, followed by the Victim (3) and the Slave (2). The archetypes of the Leader, Hero, Rebel, Model Student, Mother, Amazon and Beauty only appeared 1 time each on a protagonist. As only 1 of the Japanese films included an antagonist, the Destroyer is the only anti-archetype representing the Japanese film antagonists in this storytelling format. Concerning supporting characters, the Friend (8 appearances) and Mother (6) archetype prevailed over the other archetypes, in front of the anti-archetype of the Victim (4). Again, the remaining (anti-)archetypes appeared less extensively on supporting characters, with the Leader occurring 2 times and the Happy Nature, Slave, Coward, Mentor, Leper, Beauty, Tyrant, Materialist, Angel, Mother Earth, Traitor and Avenger all sharing 1 appearance.

Only 1 American film followed the Unexpected Twist storytelling format, limiting the number of archetypes observed. Still, the Happy Nature, Explorer, Friend, Leper and Diva appeared as the protagonist archetypes, each featuring 1 time in total. The antagonist of this film could only be assigned to the anti-archetype of the Diva (1) while the 2 supporting character archetypes included in this film consisted of the Friend and the Mother Earth (1 each).

While there cannot be any substantial patterns drawn from this comparison, it is noteworthy that the Metaphysical Conflict/Fate served as the primary conflict type for 3 out of 4 films. For each of the analyzed films with this storytelling format, the name-giving twist was connected to a unnatural/magical occurrence that impacted the narrative and influenced the actions of the protagonists.

#### 4.2.4 Storytelling Formats Exclusive to the Japanese Film Selection

This chapter will introduce the storytelling formats that were not matched to any of the films of the American selection. Since each of these formats did not include more than two films – two films in the Kishōtenketsu format and one film in the Tragic Ending and the Clever Turn in the Main Part apiece – the results of the analysis to these formats is briefly depicted in Table 8 below. For every storytelling format the table lists primary conflict types, antagonist types, as well as (anti-)archetypes for protagonists, antagonists and supporting characters. The amount of appearances for each (anti-)archetype are included. Even though none of the American films used these storytelling formats, this allows for a direct comparison of the three of them.

	<b>Kishōtenketsu</b>	<b>The Tragic Ending</b>	<b>The Clever Turn in the Main Part</b>
<b>Primary conflict types</b>	Internal Conflict Nature versus Civilization	Societal/Cultural Conflict	Societal/Cultural Conflict
<b>Antagonist types</b>	Ambiguous Antagonist False Antagonist	None	Force of Nature
<b>Protagonist archetypes</b>	Happy Nature (2) Explorer (1) Friend (1) Coward (1)	Victim (1) Model Student (1)	Leader (1) Rebel (1)
<b>Antagonist archetypes</b>	Tyrant (1) Genius (1) Rebel (1)	-	Destroyer (1)
<b>Supporting character archetypes</b>	Friend (2) Mother (1) Mentor (1) Angel (1) Mother Earth (1)	Beauty (1) Leper (1)	Leader (1) Amazon (1)

**Table 8: Comparison of the storytelling formats exclusive to the Japanese films**

Source: Own analysis

Of these remaining storytelling formats, the 2 films included in the storytelling format of Kishōtenketsu featured many archetypes that could be associated with the motivational endorsers of relationship (Friend, Mother and Mother Earth appearing as supporting characters) as well as curiosity (Happy Nature, Explorer and Angel). It is important to add, that of the 20 analyzed Japanese films, 4 films partially showed elements that can be attributed to the format of Kishōtenketsu, while 2 films included elements that are present in the Flashback storytelling format. While these films ultimately were assigned to other storytelling formats, this demonstrates the ambiguity inherent in some of the narrative structures of the Japanese selection of films.

#### 4.2.5 Storytelling Formats Exclusive to the American Film Selection

Similar to the Japanese films with exclusive storytelling formats, the American selection included formats that did not appear in any of the Japanese films: the Shocker and the Storyteller. Table 9 presents the results of the analysis of the two films using these formats. As each format is represented by only one film, no specific patterns could be identified. Nonetheless, the results are included here for completeness.

	<b>The Shocker</b>	<b>The Storyteller</b>
<b>Primary conflict types</b>	Classic Good versus Evil	Internal Conflict
<b>Antagonist types</b>	Ambiguous Antagonist	Pure Villain
<b>Protagonist archetypes</b>	Victim (2) Leader (1) Genius (1)	Victim (1) Happy Nature (2) Slave (1) Beauty (1)
<b>Antagonist archetypes</b>	Tyrant (1) Destroyer (1)	Diva (1)
<b>Supporting character archetypes</b>	Victim (2) Genius (1) Avenger (1)	Friend (1) Materialist (1)

**Table 9: Comparison of the storytelling formats exclusive to the American films**

Source: Own analysis

While the data from the storytelling formats exclusive to Japanese and American films is limited, their inclusion nonetheless provides a more complete overview on which narrative structures and archetypes are more commonly employed in each country. After presenting the results of the analysis across both countries and across storytelling formats, the next chapter will interpret these results, taking the research question and hypotheses of this thesis into consideration. The goal is to offer an analysis of the patterns and to describe the possible cultural and narrative implications.

# 5 Discussion

After presenting the results in chapter 4, this chapter will interpret these results based on the literature review with the intention of presenting patterns and relating them to the overall research question of this thesis. Chapter 5.1 will summarize the key findings of the results section before chapter 5.2 will interpret these key findings. Finally, chapter 5.3 will focus on the limitations this thesis faced.

## 5.1 Key Findings

This study aims to examine how storytelling formats and character archetypes differ between Japanese and American films and if cultural context may influence these differences. To find answers to the research question and two hypotheses of this thesis, 40 films (20 films per country) were analyzed using Pätzmann and Hartwig's (2018) archetypal model and Pätzmann and Busch's (2019) storytelling formats. In addition, two custom typologies were created – the primary conflict types and the antagonist types – to achieve more insight into the narrative structures and character motivations of the analyzed films.

Based on the results in chapter 4, several key findings emerged:

Of the 40 analyzed films, 14 were assigned to the storytelling format of the Slightly Different Hero's Journey. This format was predominantly represented by 11 American films, with only 3 Japanese films using the same format. Meanwhile, the Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict appeared in 10 Japanese and 6 American films and the Unexpected Twist could be seen in 3 Japanese and 1 American film. The remaining storytelling formats appeared exclusively in one country each, allowing for no cross-cultural comparisons.

Overall, in both the Japanese and American films, the Friend, Victim and Leader (anti-)archetypes were the most frequently used across both datasets. In both countries, the Friend most often appeared as a supporting character, while the Victim and Leader typically took the role of the protagonist. Additionally, Japanese films more commonly featured the Happy Nature, Mother, Explorer, Slave and Mentor. American films, however, favored (anti-)archetypes such as the Hero, Rebel, Amazon, Destroyer, Genius, Diva and Avenger. Regarding the motivational systems associated with the used (anti-)archetypes, the motivational system of autonomy was particularly dominant in American films, while the systems of excitement and

safety were more frequently represented in Japanese films. When segmented by character roles, protagonists most often embodied archetypes linked to the motivational systems of excitement and autonomy, whereas supporting characters were predominantly tied to the safety system across both countries, with some supporting characters also featuring heavily in the autonomy system. In both Japanese and American films, antagonists were most often connected to the motivational system of autonomy, in particular to the motivational barrier of subjection.

In primary conflict types, the American films showed a clear favor towards the Classic Good versus Evil conflict, followed by the Internal Conflict. In contrast, Japanese films featured a more even distribution among all primary conflict types, with the Internal Conflict being the most common and the Classic Good versus Evil conflict type appearing the least often. The results of the antagonist types showed a strong preference for the Pure Villain in American films, with 15 of the 20 films featuring this antagonist type. Meanwhile, Japanese films frequently lacked a distinct antagonist, as 7 films did not include an antagonist. The remaining antagonist types showed a more varied distribution compared to the American films. A notable pattern included the anti-archetype of the Tyrant being common in both countries' Pure Villains, with the Destroyer appearing often in American films as well.

In the storytelling format of the Slightly Different Hero's Journey, American films tended to focus more on the traditional narratives where two morally opposing individuals clash, commonly including the Pure Villain as antagonist. Japanese films using this format, however, leaned more toward the Internal Conflict or Metaphysical Conflict/Fate, with antagonists being less central to the narrative. In the most commonly used storytelling format, the Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict, American films again often used this format to portray the Classic Good versus Evil conflict with clearly defined Pure Villain antagonists. Meanwhile, Japanese films showed more diversity in the appearing primary conflict types – such as the Internal Conflict or the conflict of Nature versus Civilization – and even frequently omitted an antagonist. (Anti-)archetypes displayed in this storytelling format showed similarities to their overall appearances, with the Friend, Happy Nature, Victim and Mother appearing most frequently in the Japanese films and the Hero, Genius, Leader, Slave, Mother and Destroyer representing (anti-)archetypes present in the American films using this storytelling format. In the storytelling format of the Unexpected Twist, most conflicts could be attributed to a Metaphysical Conflict/Fate, as two out of the three Japanese and the only American film in this storytelling format centered their conflict around a supernatural event. Japanese films focused

on indirect conflict and tie the transformation of the characters to these supernatural events, often avoiding to use an antagonist. In contrast, the American film using this storytelling format again used a Pure Villain that opposes the protagonist.

Finally, storytelling formats that were exclusive to one country – such as the *Kishōtenketsu* in the Japanese selection of films – could not offer any patterns that allowed for cross-country comparisons. Still, it is important to note that both films using this unique narrative structure centered around interpersonal themes and mostly featured archetypes associated with the motivational system of relationship, while not relying on conflict to drive the story forward.

## **5.2 Interpretation of the Key Findings**

After the previous chapter outlined the key findings of this thesis, including noticeable patterns in the use of storytelling formats, character archetypes as well as primary conflict and antagonist types, this chapter will present the interpretations of these key findings in context of the frameworks, cultural concepts and literature previously introduced in this thesis. By interpreting all key findings, this chapter aims to assess if the results support the research question and hypotheses formulated in chapter 1.

The distribution of storytelling formats by Pätzmann and Busch (2019) across the 40 analyzed Japanese and American films show a clear contrast in preferences between the two countries. While many of the storytelling formats were not fully applicable to this analysis – given that these formats were originally developed for shorter formats such as content advertising – the remaining structures that appeared in this analysis revealed notable cultural distinctions and preferences in how stories are structured in Japanese and American films. Nonetheless, all 40 analyzed films were assignable to one or more of Pätzmann and Busch's (2019) storytelling formats, supporting the viability of these formats for the film analysis conducted in this thesis.

The American films proved a strong proclivity towards the format of the Slightly Different Hero's Journey, with more than half of the American films (11 out of 20) following this narrative structure. In contrast, only three Japanese films employed this format. This result aligns with the Western (especially Hollywood's) preference towards the Hero's Journey that Campbell (2008) and later Vogler (2020) developed, where clear distinctions between good and evil and a conflict-driven progress towards the climax are evident. The preference of American cinema towards this storytelling format can be linked to their more individualistic, independent and low-context cultural behavior as described by Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010, p.

113), Markus and Kitayama (1991, p. 230) and Hall (1976, p. 91). Their descriptions about self-expression, the thinking in *I* as well as looking after themselves closely mirror the direct and conflict-driven themes of the Hero's Journey. Regarding the Japanese selection, half of the 20 analyzed films followed the storytelling format of the Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict, a format that six American films used as well. However, while the structure remains similar for both Japanese and American films, the way the acts were realized revealed cultural differences in character expression, archetype usage and their utilization of conflict. Again, these differences can be explained through the different communication styles and cultural traits that Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010, p. 113), Markus and Kitayama (1991, p. 230) and Hall (1976, p. 91) attribute to Japanese and American individuals – such as the distinction between individualistic and collectivistic orientations.

Additionally, the analysis revealed the presence of cultural concepts such as *honne* (true feelings and intentions) and *tatemae* (socially appropriate behavior), as described by Davies and Ikeno (2002, pp. 115-116) as well as Hendry (2019, pp. 60-61), in most Japanese films. These cultural concepts defined the more subtle behavior of most characters and influenced the interpretations of character archetypes and roles in this chapter. Another concept that was frequently seen in Japanese films is the cultural aesthetic of *mono no aware* as depicted by Prusinski (2012, pp. 27-28) and Davies and Ikeno (2002, p. 37). This aesthetic, that emphasizes transience and melancholy, may be linked to endings that focus on acceptance or a more subtle transformation and was observed in a number of the analyzed Japanese films, especially those following the storytelling format of the Unexpected Twist. While a more detailed examination of the various storytelling formats will follow in this chapter, it is already apparent that American films tend to favor narrative structures that focus on confrontation, a clear transformation (such as the Slightly Different Hero's Journey) and an unambiguous ending. Meanwhile, Japanese films are more likely to portray subtle, ambiguous and less confrontational interactions and endings that leave room for interpretation. This contrast supports the theory that different cultures and their values influence the preferences in storytelling formats in their respective countries.

Aside from the storytelling formats, the distribution of character (anti-)archetypes as well as their associated motivational systems reveals further distinctions between the analyzed films of the two countries. Before interpreting these distinctions, it is important to note that every character in the analysis – regardless of whether they appeared in a Japanese or American film

– showed clear characteristics that made assigning them to one of Pätzmann and Hartwig's (2018) archetypes possible, although the appearance frequency of archetypes varied. This not only provides evidence for the applicability of this archetypal model across different cultures/countries, but also aligns with the current understanding of scholars such as Roesler (2022, p. 105) or Pätzmann and Miller (2023, p. 57) that archetypes are culturally transmitted and only partially universal. This means that the narrative functions of archetypes remain the same, even though their portrayed characteristics or descriptions may vary depending on the cultural context. This allows this archetypal model to be applied to characters regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

Both, Japanese and American films frequently utilized the Friend, Victim and Leader (anti-)archetypes, where the Friend was most commonly used as a supporting character while the Leader and Victim appeared as protagonists. This shows that certain archetypes appear regularly for their narrative function irrespective of the surrounding cultural context, such as the friend of the protagonist who serves as emotional/physical support. Beyond these overlaps in archetype usage, however, the results of the film analysis also revealed culture-specific patterns in the overall distribution of other archetypes. For instance, in the Japanese selection of films, the Happy Nature, Mother, Explorer, Slave and Mentor (anti-)archetypes appeared more often overall. With the Happy Nature, Explorer and Mother, many of the more prominent archetypes in the Japanese selection can be assigned to the motivational endorsers of curiosity and relationship as defined by Pätzmann and Hartwig (2018). Meanwhile, in the American selection of films, the Hero, Rebel, Amazon, Destroyer, Genius, Diva and Avenger (anti-)archetypes were featured prominently. Aside from the Hero, Destroyer and Diva, the remaining (anti-)archetypes all belong to the motivational endorser of self-assertion or barrier of subjection, which are part of the motivational system of autonomy.

If compared to each other, the overall distribution of archetypes in the analyzed Japanese and American films shows a strong presence of the motivational systems of safety and excitement in the 20 Japanese films, whereas the system of autonomy is more prevalent in the 20 American films. In parallel to the storytelling formats, these preferences in (anti-)archetypes and their corresponding presence within the motive force field as illustrated by Pätzmann and Busch (2019) once again matches the cultural distinctions that Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010), Markus and Kitayama (1991) and Hall (1976) allotted to Japanese and American societies in their works. These differences may explain why Japanese narratives, influenced by more

collectivistic values, as well as an interdependent construal of the self and high-context communication, tend to favor (anti-)archetypes that represent the motivational systems of safety and excitement. Additionally, the motivational systems of safety and excitement and their corresponding archetypes that appeared regularly in Japanese films – such as the Friend, Mother, Happy Nature or Explorer – can be interpreted as expressing values such as harmony or curiosity, which can be tied to Japanese cultural concepts like *amae* or *enryo* (Doi, 1973, pp. 38-39). Therefore, themes such as emotional dependence or self-restraint often appear in Japanese films, especially in connection with aforementioned archetypes. Consequently, American narratives, based on individualistic, independent and low-context tendencies, prefer (anti-)archetypes belonging to the motivational system of autonomy. This can be seen in the archetypes such as the Rebel, Amazon, Genius and Avenger, which all reflect the theme of self-expression and independence and can be seen in many of the American films.

The analysis based on character roles shows that protagonists in both cultures are generally linked to the motivational systems of autonomy and excitement. However, the expression within these systems differs: American protagonists often emphasize self-fulfillment and independence, reflecting the previously mentioned traits of individualism and low-context communication (Hall, 1976, p. 91; Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 113). Many of the Japanese protagonists in the analyzed films, however, tend to act based on the inner conflict of perceived duty and personal desire, trying to maintain harmony. This mirrors the cultural concepts of *giri* and *ninjō* as described by Doi (1973, pp. 33-35) and Davies and Ikeno (2002, pp. 95-99). Supporting characters in both cultures are predominantly associated with the motivational system of safety. Especially in Japanese films, the frequent appearance of archetypes such as the Friend or Mother aligns with themes of emotional dependence and self-restraint that can be seen in the cultural concepts of *amae* and *enryo* (Doi, 1973, pp. 38-39). In American films, supporting characters often act in a functionally assisting manner, resembling the common Western structure where the companion helps in the protagonist's journey. Lastly, in both Japanese but especially American films, the antagonists mostly represent anti-archetypes that correspond to the motivational system of autonomy and the motivational barrier of subjection within it. This is reflected in many of the antagonists trying to dominate, destroy or control the protagonists and is a theme observable across both cultures, often seen as the Tyrant.

The results regarding primary conflict types and antagonist types show a cultural divergence in how tension and conflict are constructed in Japanese and American narratives. American films

clearly favored the Classic Good versus Evil conflict and centered their stories around a Pure Villain. This aligns with the narrative theories of Campbell (2008) and Vogler (2020) and is often seen in narrative formats such as the Hero's Journey. Contrasting this, Japanese films showed a wider range of primary conflict types, such as the Internal or Metaphysical Conflict and often lacked a distinct antagonist altogether. This pattern suggests that, contrary to American films, Japanese narratives tend to show conflict through internal struggles or social obligations caused by concepts such as *giri* and *ninjō* (Davies & Ikeno, 2002, pp. 95-99; Doi, 1973, pp. 33-35) rather than through the confrontation with an antagonist.

In the key findings regarding the comparison of storytelling formats, more dissimilarities emerged. As mentioned in the previous sections, the Slightly Different Hero's Journey storytelling format was the most used format in the American selection of films. Most of these films featured a clear antagonist—often portraying the Tyrant anti-archetype—who opposes the protagonist and plays an important role in the protagonist's transformation. In contrast, the Japanese films often focused on the internal struggle and transformation of the protagonist, where antagonists are less central to the protagonist's transformation. This highlights the varying approach of Japanese and American films towards this format: While most of the American films with this format result in a victory of the protagonist against his adversary, Japanese films focus on changes in perception and subtle, internal transformation, which can be seen in Japanese aesthetics such as *mono no aware* (Davies & Ikeno, 2002, p. 37; Prusinski, 2012, pp. 27-28).

Differences in the use of storytelling formats could also be seen in the Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict, which appeared as the overall most common storytelling format. Given that most films in the analysis of this thesis utilized this narrative structure, it is a strong indication that it remains a popular way to portray narratives in both countries. Further, while American films followed the traditional structure of this format similar to the Hero's Journey, where the protagonist opposes an antagonist in the climax of the narrative, Japanese films in the Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict utilized various conflict types and featured antagonists less frequently. Instead, Japanese films heavily relied on internal conflicts or focus on conflicts of duty versus desire.

A pattern that emerged in the films using the format of the Unexpected Twist suggests that most of the films with this format featured a Metaphysical Conflict/Fate. The twist hereby commonly occurred due to a supernatural influence and served as primary point of conflict in the Japanese

films. Again, the one American film within this format category still involved an antagonist with the Pure Villain type as a way to increase conflict, showing the preference of American films for a clear antagonist.

Lastly, the storytelling format of *Kishōtenketsu* showed a noteworthy pattern in that both films with this format heavily focused on interpersonal connections and contrast, with archetypes such as the Happy Nature, Friend and Mother supporting a narrative that did not fully rely on conflict or character transformation. These results are in line with the work of scholars such as Arnavas and Bellini (2023, pp. 26-27) as well as Krutiakova (2023, pp. 55-56).

### **5.3 Limitations of the Thesis**

In addition to the limitations regarding scope, methodology and data selection addressed in chapters 1.4 and 3.5, it is important to reflect on further limitations that may have impacted the interpretation of this thesis's findings. While the relatively small sample size of 20 films per country enabled a detailed qualitative analysis, it may not fully represent the narrative diversity in Japanese and American cinema – especially in regard to less popular or experimental films. The assignment of each film to one of 16 storytelling formats allowed for observations about common narrative structures. However, some formats were represented by only a small number of films in one country, which limited the ability to identify patterns or perform reliable cross-cultural comparisons for these formats.

The application of Pätzmann and Hartwig's (2018) archetypal model across both Japanese and American films proved generally viable. Nevertheless, some character portrayals – especially in Japanese films – reflected cultural concepts that influenced character behavior in ways not fully captured by the model itself. Finally, cultural concepts and aesthetics such as *honne* or *mono no aware* offered useful insights into character behavior and relationships. However, unlike the structured analysis of the storytelling formats, archetypes or custom typologies, these concepts were not systematically categorized or counted. The integration of these concepts served solely as contextual support, but therefore introduced subjectivity in the interpretation that must be acknowledged.

Despite these limitations, this thesis offers a structured comparison of storytelling formats, character archetypes and possible cultural influences across Japanese and American films and provides a basis for future research to expand on this topic.

## 6 Conclusion

This thesis explored to what extent archetypal storytelling differs between top-grossing Japanese and American films and how cultural context shapes these differences. This conclusion summarizes the key findings, answers the research question and hypotheses, outlines implications for research and practice and proposes directions for future research.

### 6.1 Summary of Key Findings

The results of this thesis showed that American films strongly favored the Slightly Different Hero's Journey and a clear conflict between a hero and a Pure Villain antagonist. The Japanese films preferred Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict – the most used storytelling format – and utilized a broader variety of conflict types while regularly omitting a primary antagonist. In the Unexpected Twist, conflicts were most often based around a supernatural event. While the Japanese films focused on these metaphysical events, the American film introduced another antagonist, highlighting the American preference for physically present antagonists and confrontation. For archetypes, the Friend, Victim and Leader were the most common archetypes and shared across both Japanese and American films. Aside of these archetypes, the Japanese films mostly focused on archetypes linked to the motivational systems of safety and excitement (Happy Nature, Mother, Explorer), while in American films the archetypes linked to the motivational system of autonomy dominated (Rebel, Amazon, Genius and Avenger). This mirrors the differing cultural values of Japanese and American individuals. Additionally, Japanese films preferred Internal or Metaphysical conflicts without centering around antagonists whereas American films preferred the conflict of Good versus Evil, most often with a Pure Villain type as antagonist. In cases where an antagonist was present, the anti-archetype of Tyrant was the most prominent across both countries, with the Destroyer being common in American antagonists as well. Lastly, many of the narrative differences found in Japanese films corresponded with established Japanese cultural concepts, like *giri*, *ninjō* or *mono no aware*, which influenced how conflicts and resolutions were portrayed and interpreted.

### 6.2 Answer to the Research Question and Hypotheses

This thesis investigated the research question: “To what extent does archetypal storytelling differ between Japanese and American films and how is it shaped by cultural context?” as well

as the two hypotheses: 1) *The character archetypes assigned to protagonists, antagonists and supporting characters differ significantly between Japanese and American films* and 2) *Conflicts in American films more frequently focus on a direct confrontation between heroes and villains than in Japanese films*. As the results of the analysis show, archetypal storytelling differs meaningfully between the two countries, both in choice and execution of storytelling formats as well as in the use of character (anti-)archetypes. American films favored narrative structures such as the Slightly Different Hero's Journey, which included decisive transformations and more autonomous archetypes. Japanese films, by contrast, used varied formats such as the Classic Five-Act Structure with Conflict or the Unexpected Twist, often centered their stories around internal or metaphysical conflict and included archetypes linked to the motivational systems of excitement and safety. These preferences align closely with cultural frameworks that describe different behavioral patterns, communication styles and values. Although this thesis cannot empirically measure the influence of cultural concepts such as *giri* and *ninjō*, these concepts were frequently observed and appeared to affect both character behavior and narrative tone. These findings support the conclusion that archetypal storytelling does in fact differ between Japanese and American films and that storytelling reflects cultural values and may be shaped by these preferences and specific cultural concepts

Regarding the two hypotheses, the findings provide useful results as well. Japanese films more often featured archetypes linked to the motivational systems of relationship and curiosity (Happy Nature, Mother, Explorer). American films showed a strong preference for archetypes associated with autonomy (Rebel, Amazon, Genius and Avenger). Nonetheless, several archetypes appeared regularly across both cultures (Friend, Victim and Leader) while antagonists mostly appeared as the Tyrant anti-archetype in both Japanese and American films. Therefore, the first hypothesis, stating that there is a significant and clear difference in archetype use across all character roles between the two countries, is only partially supported: distinct preferences were observable, but there is also an overlap in frequently used archetypes across Japanese and American cinema. In contrast to this, the results support the second hypothesis. American films preferred using the Classic Good versus Evil conflict structure, building up to a final confrontation of a protagonist and antagonist. Japanese films instead favored Internal, Metaphysical or Nature-related conflict more often, where a subtle transformation was more emphasized than a direct confrontation. This supports the idea, that the choice of conflict differs between the two countries and aligns with the cultural values and preferences found in the analysis of this thesis. Thus, the second hypothesis is supported based on the results shown.

### **6.3 Implications for Research and Practice**

The results of this thesis provide valuable insight for archetypal studies and narrative storytelling. Academically, this thesis proves the applicability of Pätzmann and Hartwig's (2018) archetypal model as well as Pätzmann and Busch's (2019) storytelling formats across cultures, while also highlighting the possibility to adapt these and other frameworks to better reflect cultural preferences and values. This contributes to not only media studies, but also to psychological research and international brand management. In practice, the findings may aid both film productions and fields such as content marketing and brand management. The observed preferences in storytelling structures, archetypes and conflict types suggests that cultural context plays a significant role in how effective a narrative can be. The Japanese preference for internal or indirect conflict, for example, implies that Western storytelling formats may require adjustment for Eastern audiences – and vice versa. This thesis suggests that by utilizing the results of the analysis concerning archetype and storytelling preferences across cultures, both researchers and practitioners can achieve better results in film productions, content marketing and international brand management.

### **6.4 Suggestions for Future Research**

Given the limited dataset and focus on Japan and the United States in this thesis, future research could extend this framework to include additional film industries and cultures, such as those in Europe or South Korea, to explore more cultural differences and patterns. Additionally, future research comparing Japan and the United States could expand the dataset to include more niche films, potentially revealing more narrative structures or patterns not analyzed in this thesis. Other research could focus on expanding the two custom typologies developed in this thesis, allowing for a more accurate categorization of primary conflict and antagonist types across the varying narratives. Finally, as this thesis did not quantify the role of cultural patterns, future work with a priority on cultural studies could more accurately analyze cultural concepts such as *honno* and study their exact influence on archetype distribution and storytelling.

To conclude, this thesis demonstrates the connection between storytelling, archetypes and culture. Storytelling formats and archetypes are shaped by cultural values and expressed through narrative choices. Understanding the emerging patterns identified in this thesis enables a deeper understanding of storytelling across cultures and offers valuable insights for creating more engaging narratives in fields such as branding, cinema and especially content marketing.

## 7 Reference List

- Abrams, J. J. (Director). (2015). *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* [Film]. USA: Lucasfilm Ltd.
- Abrams, J. J. (Director). (2019). *Star Wars Ep. IX: The Rise of Skywalker* [Film]. USA: Lucasfilm Ltd.
- Anno, H. (Director). (2021). *Evangelion: 3.0+1.0 Thrice Upon a Time* [Film]. Japan: Studio Khara.
- Anno, H., & Higuchi, S. (Directors). (2016). *Shin Godzilla* [Film]. Japan: Toho Pictures & Cine Bazar.
- Aristoteles. (2008). *Werke in deutscher Übersetzung: Poetik* (A. Schmitt, Trans. A. Schmitt Ed.). Berlin: Akademie.
- Arnavas, F., & Bellini, M. (2023). Miyazaki's hybrid worlds and their riddle-stories: Western tropes and Kishōtenketsu. *Narrative Works*, 12(1), 18-38.
- Aston, J. (2024). There's more to life than the monomyth: multiperspectival approaches to teaching narrative and story in university film and media departments. *Media Practice and Education*, 25(2), 123-136. doi: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25741136.2024.2331342#abstract>
- Barrett, G. (1989). *Archetypes in Japanese film: The Sociopolitical and Religious Significance of the Principal Heroes and Heroines*. Cranbury: Associated University Presses.
- Bassil-Morozow, H., & Hockley, L. (2017). *Jungian film studies: The essential guide*. New York: Routledge.
- Bird, B. (Director). (2018). *Incredibles 2* [Film]. USA: Pixar Animation Studios.
- Bischof, N. (2001). *Das Rätsel Ödipus: die biologischen Wurzeln des Urkonfliktes von Intimität und Autonomie* (5th ed.). München: Piper

- Broeder, P. (2021). Informed communication in high context and low context cultures. *Journal of Education, Innovation, and Communication*, 3(1), 13-24. doi: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350609284\\_Informed\\_Communication\\_in\\_High\\_Context\\_and\\_Low\\_Context\\_Cultures](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350609284_Informed_Communication_in_High_Context_and_Low_Context_Cultures)
- Cameron, J. (Director). (1997). *Titanic* [Film]. USA: Paramount Pictures & 20th Century Fox.
- Cameron, J. (Director). (2009). *Avatar* [Film]. USA: 20th Century Fox.
- Cameron, J. (Director). (2022). *Avatar: The Way of Water* [Film]. USA: TSG Entertainment.
- Campbell, J. (2008). *The hero with a thousand faces* (3rd ed.). Novato, Calif.: New World Library
- Condon, B. (Director). (2017). *Beauty and the Beast* [Film]. USA: Walt Disney Pictures.
- Coogler, R. (Director). (2018). *Black Panther* [Film]. USA: Marvel Studios.
- Davies, R. J., & Ikeno, O. (Eds.). (2002). *The Japanese mind: Understanding contemporary Japanese culture*. North Clarendon, Vermont: Tuttle Publishing.
- Doi, T. (1973). *The anatomy of dependence* (J. Bester, Trans.). New York: Kodansha International.
- Edwards, G. (Director). (2016). *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* [Film]. USA: Lucasfilm Ltd.
- Favreau, J. (Director). (2019). *The Lion King* [Film]. USA: Walt Disney Pictures.
- Field, S. (2005). *Screenplay: The foundations of screenwriting*. New York: Bantam Dell.
- Fischer, C. S. (2008). Paradoxes of American individualism. *Sociological Forum*, 23(2), 363-372
- Freytag, G. (1887). *Gesammelte Werke. 14, Die Technik des Dramas* Leipzig: Hirzel.
- Garside, P. (2024). The sakoku period and the current state of English learning in Japan. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14767724.2024.2361028>
- Gerwig, G. (Director). (2023). *Barbie* [Film]. USA: Heyday Films.

- Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond culture*. New York: Doubleday.
- Hamamura, T. (2012). Are cultures becoming individualistic? A cross-temporal comparison of individualism–collectivism in the United States and Japan. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 16(1), 3–24.
- Hata, M., & Ichikawa, K. (Directors). (1986). *The Adventures of Milo and Otis* [Film]. Japan: Fuji Television Network.
- Haule, J. R. (2011). *Jung in the 21st century - Volume 1 evolution and archetype*. Milton Park: Routledge.
- Hendry, J. (2019). *Understanding Japanese society* (5th ed.). Milton Park: Routledge.
- Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind, third edition* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Professional.
- Horizont Online. (2011). S&F Strategy Group und Spiegel Institut Mannheim starten Neuroversum. Retrieved from <https://www.horizont.net/marketing/nachrichten/-SF-Strategy-Group-und-Spiegel-Institut-Mannheim-starten-Neuroversum-97813> [Accessed: 18.07.2025]
- Horvath, A., & Jelenic, M. (Directors). (2023). *The Super Mario Bros. Movie* [Film]. USA: Universal Pictures & Illumination.
- Johnson, R. (Director). (2017). *Star Wars Ep. VIII: The Last Jedi* [Film]. USA: Lucasfilm Ltd.
- Jung, C. G. (1966). *Two essays in analytical psychology in: The collected works of C.G. Jung* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans. H. Read, M. Fordham, & G. Adler Eds. 2nd ed. Vol. 7). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jung, C. G. (1968). *Aion: Researches into the phenomenology of the self in: The collected works of C.G. Jung* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans. H. Read, M. Fordham, & G. Adler Eds. 2nd ed. Vol. 9 Part II). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Jung, C. G. (2020). *Archetypen - Urbilder und Wirkkräfte des kollektiven Unbewussten* (4th ed.). Ostfildern Patmos.
- Kadokawa, H. (Director). (1990). *Heaven and Earth* [Film]. Japan: Kadokawa Haruki Jimusho.
- Kleine Wieskamp, P. (2024). *Storytelling: Digital - Multimedial - Artificial. Methoden und Praxis für Strategie, PR, Marketing, Change und Social Media* (2nd ed.). München: Carl Hanser.
- Kogyo Tsushinsha Ltd. (2024). 歴代興収ベスト100 [All-Time Box Office Top 100]. Retrieved from <https://www.kogyotsushin.com/archives/alltime/> [Accessed: 18.07.2025]
- Kosinski, J. (Director). (2022). *Top Gun: Maverick* [Film]. USA: Paramount Pictures & Skydance.
- Krutiakova, A. (2023). The impact of cultural code on communication promotion of Japanese animation in the USA. *IAFOR Journal of Cultural Studies*, 8(1), 47-63.
- Kurahara, K. (Director). (1983). *Antarctica* [Film]. Japan: Fuji Television, Gakken, & Kurahara Production.
- Mark, M., & Pearson, C. S. (2001). *The hero and the outlaw: Building extraordinary brands through the power of archetypes*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review* 98(2), 224-253.
- Miller, V., & Pätzmann, J. U. (2023). *Archetypical roles in startups: Eight personality traits you need in your founding team*. Cham: Springer.
- Mills, J. (2018). The essence of archetypes. *International Journal of Jungian Studies*, 10 No.3, 199-220.
- Miyazaki, G. (Director). (2006). *Tales from Earthsea* [Film]. Japan: Studio Ghibli.

- Miyazaki, H. (Director). (1997). *Princess Mononoke* [Film]. Japan: Studio Ghibli.
- Miyazaki, H. (Director). (2001). *Spirited Away* [Film]. Japan: Studio Ghibli.
- Miyazaki, H. (Director). (2004). *Howl's Moving Castle* [Film]. Japan: Studio Ghibli.
- Miyazaki, H. (Director). (2008). *Ponyo* [Film]. Japan: Studio Ghibli.
- Miyazaki, H. (Director). (2013). *The Wind Rises* [Film]. Japan: Studio Ghibli.
- Miyazaki, H. (Director). (2023). *The Boy and the Heron* [Film]. Japan: Studio Ghibli.
- Napier, S. J. (2005). *Anime from Akira to Howl's moving castle: Experiencing contemporary Japanese animation* (updated ed.). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nolan, C. (Director). (2008). *The Dark Knight* [Film]. USA: Warner Bros. Pictures.
- Pätzmann, J. U., & Adamczyk, Y. (2020). *Customer Insights mit Archetypen: Wie Sie mit archetypischen Metaphern Zielgruppen besser definieren und verstehen können*. Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Pätzmann, J. U., & Busch, A. (2019). *Storytelling mit Archetypen: Video-Geschichten für das Content Marketing selbst entwickeln*. Wiesbaden Springer Gabler
- Pätzmann, J. U., & Hartwig, J. (2018). *Markenführung mit Archetypen: von Helden und Zerstörern: ein neues archetypisches Modell für das Markenmanagement* Wiesbaden Springer Gabler
- Pearson, C. S. (1993). *Die Geburt des Helden in uns: Transformation durch die zwölf Archetypen* (R. Höner, Trans.). München: Droemersch Verlagsgesellschaft Th. Knauer Nachf.
- Prusinski, L. (2012). Wabi-sabi, mono no aware, and ma: Tracing traditional Japanese aesthetics through Japanese history. *Studies on Asia, Series IV*, 2(1), 25-49.
- Pyczak, T. (2023). *Tell Me! Wie Sie mit Storytelling überzeugen* (4th ed.). Bonn: Rheinwerk.
- Richie, D. (2005). *A hundred years of Japanese film* (revised ed.). Tokyo: Kodansha International.

- Richings, V. A. (2022). Japanese folktales: Story grammar in the English classroom. *Journal of Literature in Language Teaching*, 11(1), 3-15.
- Roesler, C. (2022). *C. G. Jung's archetype concept: theory, research and applications*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge
- Russo, A., & Russo, J. (Directors). (2018). *Avengers: Infinity War* [Film]. USA: Marvel Studios.
- Russo, A., & Russo, J. (Directors). (2019). *Avengers: Endgame* [Film]. USA: Marvel Studios.
- Ryan, M.-L. (2004). Introduction. In M.-L. Ryan (Ed.), *Narrative across media: The languages of storytelling* (pp. 1-40). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Sammer, P., & Heppel, U. (2015). *Visual Storytelling: Visuelles Erzählen in PR und Marketing*. Heidelberg: dpunkt.
- Satō, J. (Director). (1988). *The Silk Road* [Film]. Japan: Toho.
- Shinkai, M. (Director). (2016). *Your Name* [Film]. Japan: CoMix Wave Films.
- Shinkai, M. (Director). (2019). *Weathering with You* [Film]. Japan: CoMix Wave Films.
- Shinkai, M. (Director). (2022). *Suzume* [Film]. Japan: CoMix Wave Films.
- Steinecke, S., & Pätzmann, J. U. (2023). Logo creation with archetypes: Using archetypal shapes to design brand-compliant logos for start-ups. In D. Schallmo, J. U. Pätzmann, & T. Clauß (Eds.), *Entrepreneurship in the digital era: Case studies, approaches, and tools for ecosystems, business models, and technologies* (pp. 117-146). Cham: Springer.
- Takano, Y., & Osaka, E. (1999). An unsupported common view: Comparing Japan and the U.S. on individualism/collectivism. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 2, 311–341.
- The Numbers. (2024a). All Time Domestic Box Office Retrieved from <https://www.the-numbers.com/box-office-records/domestic/all-movies/cumulative/all-time> [Accessed: 18.07.2025]

The Numbers. (2024b). Movie Production Countries. Retrieved from <https://www.the-numbers.com/movies/production-countries/#tab=territory> [Accessed: 18.07.2025]

Trevorrow, C. (Director). (2015). *Jurassic World* [Film]. USA: Universal Pictures.

Triandis, H. C. (1995). *Individualism and collectivism*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.  
Reprinted by Routledge, 2018.

Vogler, C. (2020). *The writer's journey: Mythic structure for writers: 25th anniversary edition* (4th ed.). Studio City, Los Angeles: Michael Wiese Productions.

Watts, J. (Director). (2021). *Spider-Man: No Way Home* [Film]. USA: Columbia Pictures & Marvel Studios.

Whedon, J. (Director). (2012). *The Avengers* [Film]. USA: Marvel Studios.

Yagi, R., & Yamazaki, T. (Directors). (2014). *Stand by Me Doraemon* [Film]. Japan: Shirogumi, Robot Communications, & Shin-Ei Animation.

Yamazaki, T. (Director). (2013). *The Eternal Zero* [Film]. Japan: Robot Communications.

Yonebayashi, H. (Director). (2010). *Arrietty the Borrower* [Film]. Japan: Studio Ghibli.

Yukisada, I. (Director). (2004). *Crying Out Love in the Center of the World* [Film]. Japan: Tokyo Broadcasting System, Hakuhodo, Shogakukan, Stardust Pictures, & Mainichi Broadcasting System.

## 8 Appendix

Rupp, Marcel (2025): Film analysis of 40 Japanese and American films. In the folder: FilmAnalyses / Antarctica(1983)\_(Japan).pdf, Arrietty\_the\_Borrower\_(Japan).pdf, Avatar\_(US).pdf, Avatar\_The\_Way\_of\_Water\_(US).pdf, Avengers\_Endgame\_(US).pdf, Avengers\_InfinityWar\_(US).pdf, Barbie\_(US).pdf, Beauty\_and\_the\_Beast\_(US).pdf, Black\_Panther\_(US).pdf, Crying\_Out\_Love\_in\_the\_Center\_of\_the\_World\_(Japan).pdf, Evangelion\_3.0+1.0\_Thrice\_Upon\_a\_Time\_(Japan).pdf, Heaven\_and\_Earth\_(1990)\_(Japan).pdf, Howl's\_Moving\_Castle\_(Japan).pdf, Incredibles\_2\_(US).pdf, Jurassic\_World\_(US).pdf, Ponyo\_(Japan).pdf, Princess\_Mononke\_(Japan).pdf, Rogue\_One\_A\_Star\_Wars\_Story\_(US).pdf, Shin\_Godzilla\_(Japan).pdf, Spider\_Man\_No\_Way\_Home\_(US).pdf, Spirited\_away\_(Japan).pdf, Stand\_by\_Me\_Doraemon\_(Japan).pdf, Star\_Wars\_The\_Force\_Awakens\_(US).pdf, Star\_Wars\_The\_Last\_Jedi\_(US).pdf, Star\_Wars\_The\_Rise\_of\_Skywalker\_(US).pdf, Suzume\_(Japan).pdf, Tales\_from\_Earthsea\_(Japan).pdf, The\_Adventures\_of\_Milo\_and\_Otis\_(Japan).pdf, The\_Avengers\_(US).pdf, The\_Boy\_and\_the\_Heron\_(Japan).pdf, The\_Dark\_Knight\_(US).pdf, The\_Eternal\_Zero\_(Japan).pdf, The\_Lion\_King\_(US).pdf, The\_Silk\_Road\_(Japan).pdf, The\_Super\_Mario\_Bros\_Movie\_(US).pdf, The\_Wind\_Rises\_(Japan).pdf, Titanic\_(US).pdf, Top\_Gun\_Maverick\_(US).pdf, Weathering\_with\_you\_(Japan).pdf, Your\_Name\_(Japan).pdf,

Rupp, Marcel (2025): Film analysis – Excel data/analysis. In the folder: Analysis\_Data.xlsx