

An archetype for the superhero: substitution and configuration of the personal world in *Big Hero 6*

Un arquetipo para el superhéroe: sustitución y configuración del mundo personal en Big Hero 6



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Abstract:

This article examines the notions of substitution and archetypes in the film *Big Hero 6*, in both its narrative and audiovisual dimensions from the perspective of poetic possible worlds, exploring how these two notions shape the personal world of the film's protagonist, Hiro Hamada. Our research makes a novel contribution to the field of Superhero Studies, offering an analysis of the audiovisual characteristics of a superhero film and exploring a work within the genre that has not yet received attention from researchers. The research identifies and explains several narrative strategies and their function: the role of the mediating substitute, the mimetic aspect of exemplary storytelling, and the mechanism of preserving the world's structure through substitution. Camera position, framing and lighting all serve as audiovisual counterparts of these narrative strategies.

Keywords:

Archetype; film analysis; substitution; possible worlds; superhero movies.

Resumen:

El artículo estudia la sustitución y los arquetipos vitales en Big Hero 6, tanto en su dimensión narrativa como en la audiovisual. Se adopta la perspectiva de los mundos posibles poéticos, en la que se integran las dos nociones anteriores para comprender cómo estas configuran el mundo personal del protagonista de la película, Hiro Hamada. El artículo supone una cierta novedad en el ámbito de los Superhero Studies, pues realiza aportes en lo que se refiere al estudio de la realización audiovisual de una cinta de superhéroes y explora una obra del subgénero que todavía no ha recibido mucha atención por parte de los estudiosos. Al final de la investigación se identifican algunas estrategias narrativas y se explica su funcionamiento: el rol del sustituto mediador, la mimesis de una historia ejemplar, o el mecanismo de conservación de la estructura del mundo mediante la sustitución. La posición de cámara, la composición del encuadre o la iluminación muestran el correlato audiovisual de estas figuras narrativas.

Palabras clave:

Arquetipo; análisis filmico; sustitución; mundos posibles; películas de superhéroes.

1. Introduction

In the field of *Superhero Studies*, it has been observed that cinema superheroes are, generally speaking, depicted as unique individuals without peers or others at their side to serve as a guide or role model. Those with superpowers are without references, lacking anyone with whom they can compare themselves or who surpasses them (Encinas Cantalapiedra, 2016). This is especially evident in films with a single superhero, the most prevalent type until 2010. Beyond philosophical or sociological reflections on the loss of references in postmodernity, and the manner in which cinema serves as a reflection of contemporary society (Orellana & Martínez Lucena, 2010), it is common for superhero films to highlight the absence of role models or archetypes.

As opposed to other genres, the absence of a father, mother, or both parents, is often emphasized within superhero narratives, commonly presented as a trauma or highly relevant to the origins of their heroic vocation. Examples of this include: Bruce Wayne/Batman (*Batman*, Tim Burton, 1989; *Batman Begins*, Christopher Nolan, 2005; *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*, Zack Snyder, 2016), Dick Grayson/Robin (*Batman Forever*, Joel Schumacher, 1995), Peter Parker/Spider-Man (*Spider-Man*, Sam Raimi, 2002; *The Amazing Spider-Man*, Marc Webb, 2012) and Kal-El/Clark Kent/Superman (*Superman: The Movie*, Richard Donner, 1978; *Man of Steel*, Zack Snyder, 2013)¹. In these cases, the absent person represents an exemplary moral figure who has now disappeared. The repetition of patterns of loss-substitution does not mean these stories are all identical, but it does suggest that in superhero cinema the absence of a moral reference, usually an immediate family member, triggers the need for others to play their roles within the dynamics of filiation.

This form of substitution is not entirely in line with mimetic theory proposed by René Girard (1972; 1982; 2001): the figure of the substitute victim, the symbolic scapegoat who takes the place of the true victim, the official scapegoat, whose sacrifice would be a loss for the entire community. Here, the substitute temporarily assumes the role of another, and is sacrificed to pacify the community. In our case, the substitution habitually found in the superhero genre should be understood as a form of mimesis which differs from that proposed by Girard: here we refer to the mimesis of world, which follows on the Aristotelian notion of mimesis of action (Ricoeur, 1983; García-Noblejas, 2019; Abellán-García Barrio, 2023) of which we shall speak. Girard's theory proposes that the cosmic and social order is preserved thanks to the elimination of a victim; the substitution proposed here responds to the effort to repair an absence which, while it persists, threatens to destabilize the world of the protagonist.

From the ample catalogue of the superhero film genre, we will refer to a specific film in which the dynamics of substitution acquire particular significance: *Big Hero 6* (Hall & Williams, 2014). The protagonist of the film, Hiro Hamada, loses his older brother, Tadashi, who was a father figure. Both brothers were raised by their aunt Cass, as their parents died when the brothers were very young. After the loss of Tadashi, the young Hiro finds a companion in Baymax, a robot caregiver created by his brother, who helps him solve a dramatic question around which the entire film turns: to clarify the circumstances of his brother Tadashi's death and discover who is the sinister masked man who stole his microbot technology and is employing it for sinister ends.

The substitution of the principal figure of reference in Hiro's life provides the central structure of the narrative of *Big Hero 6*. In addition, the protagonist is torn between two different role models: on the one hand, his brother, Tadashi; and on the other, representing a contrary set of values, the businessman Alistair Krei and the enigmatic masked man who, to the surprise of all, is in fact Tadashi's mentor at the San Fransokyo Institute of Technology, professor Robert Callaghan.

This research project proposes to study the narrative development of substitution and the presence of archetypes or models within superhero cinema using the specific example of *Big Hero 6*. Our proposed hypotheses are that: 1) in *Big Hero 6*, the substitute supplements the absence of the reference as the primary element in the world of the character and profoundly conditions the narrative of the film; and 2) that the artistic choices in the audiovisual production of the film enrich and add

1 Despite the family nature of these tragedies, Ryall and Tipton (2005) maintain that the only superhero film in which family is truly relevant to the narrative is *The Fantastic Four*.

nuance to this aspect of the narrative. This second contribution supposes a certain degree of novelty in terms of the analysis of audiovisual superhero narratives, since it is common to find, not film analyses - texts such as Polo Montilla's (2012) are an exception - but rather studies on the stereotypes found within these stories (Gray & Kaklamanidou, 2011; Hu, Liu, & Qian, 2023), their political ideas (Dittmer, 2013; Picariello, 2019; Jenkins & Secker, 2021), anthropological or religious questions (Garret, 2009; Mills, 2014, 136-184; George, 2023) or other themes that cultural studies have dealt with extensively. This research also aims to make other contributions to the field of *Superhero Studies*: to analyze the film *Big Hero 6*, which has not received attention within this field of study; to highlight the importance of substitution as a way of understanding the structure of the world within superhero narratives; to propose the perspective of mimesis of world as a fruitful approach to research in this field and to present a way of integrating the study of audiovisual content in the perspective of poetic possible worlds.

2. Methodology

In order to verify our hypothesis, it is necessary to first establish the following research objectives:

OBJ 1. To create a map that contemplates the most relevant cases of substitution in *Big Hero 6* and verify if the film offers visual clues that reinforce and underscore this dynamic of substitution.

OBJ 2. To study the role models or archetypes presented in the film, especially two figures: the existential relation of Tadashi Hamada and professor Robert Callaghan, aiming to uncover the nuances and emphasis within their representation in the film.

OBJ 3. To show, narratively and audiovisually, the way in which the role model of Tadashi is assumed by his brother, Hiro, thanks to the mediation of Baymax, a substitute figure capable of effectively communicating the exemplary model of his creator, Tadashi.

To achieve these objectives, we must first clarify how we analyze, from the perspective of mimesis of world, the narrative aspects and the articulation of audiovisual elements within the film. White and Arp (2008) see in the notion of "possible worlds" an opportunity for a synthetic explanation of these complex concepts related to everyday existence presented in superhero narratives such as Batman. Ricoeur (1983: 11) explains precisely that the mimesis found in fiction offers a "synthesis of the heterogeneous" in life which "approximates the narration to metaphor". The cognitive advantages of metaphor lie in its capacity to address practical matters in the personal world which would be difficult to communicate through the literal meaning of language but which can be expressed through images that are, in a way, similar to these often ineffable human realities. According to Hernández Ruiz (2023: 181): "In order to create the fictional world, it is necessary for the author to correctly link the present expressions, or metaphorical symbols, with the absent notions that refer to the real world. The reader recreates the imaginary world through the correct interpretation of these literary elements and so, the literary communication is effective".

2.1. *Narrative and mimesis of world*

In analyzing the narrative we focus on two fundamental notions: function and model. In both cases, we start with the meaning of these concepts within the field of narratology, in the case of function, and a reflection on archaic myths, in the case of model or archetype, and so integrate these into the theory of poetic possible worlds.

The notion of function within the field of narrative, the actantial model in all its diverse variants is immediately invoked (Polti, 1924; Propp, 2009; Greimas, 1971). We admit that within a poetic work there are actants which can fulfil more or less standard functions, although our interest in studying substitution in the film is not to find functions predetermined by a particular model of analysis. We are interested in functions which are performed by a particular person and when that person disappears, another appears to take their place. It is therefore more profitable to turn to the theory of poetic possible worlds (Abellán-García Barrio, 2023).

In adopting a personal and existential perspective, we assume that the world is not limited to the material world or environment, but also includes the way in which the person experiences reality (Zubiri, 2010; Marín, 2019). The world structures certain elements which impart dynamism. The world is respective; that is, things exist in relation to others, implying that the elements are not merely placed one beside the other as in an inventory (Zubiri, 1989). The perspective of poetic possible worlds understands that in fiction there is mimesis which generally corresponds to this personal and respective notion of the world. From this point of view, we assume that elements in the textual world can fulfill certain functions which are not pre-established. To clarify the functions or roles, and following the principles of hermeneutics, it is the narrative itself that suggests the type of functions which are most appropriate to explain its own fictional world.

Function is related to the dynamics of substitution. From our perspective, substitution should be understood structurally; that is, it informs the perpetuation or modification of elemental structures of the world. When tracing the different instances of substitution throughout the film it is necessary to differentiate the ways in which it takes place. There are two alternatives: the substitute displaces the one substituted, whose narrative archetype is that of one displaced; or the substitute appears after the disappearance of the one substituted, and thus the archetype of the substituted is of one preserved. To this can be added the result of the substitution which may be constructive or destructive. An example of the latter is seen in the Spielberg film *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (2001), which suggests that the culture of substitution is the origin of the annihilation of the world (Encinas Cantalapiedra & Lin, 2021). In any case, the identification of the functions performed by a substitute can clarify the place occupied by the one substituted within the world of the text.

We also wish to study the possible characteristics and the influence Tadashi Hamada may have over his brother as a role model. For this it is necessary to identify the most salient parameters within the narrative arch and the actions of the older brother of the protagonist. Again, we do not wish to adhere to a pre-established model of analysis, such as a Jungian model or Campbell's mythological model, which have been applied to explain the evolution of a number of heroines (Housel, 2005), but rather

prefer to be guided by the principles of a theory of archetypes, as seen for example in the work of Eliade (2011)². According to Eliade, the repetition of the archetype, that is, the initial feat performed by the hero, ensures that one who performs this rite can access the source of being and so prolong the creation of the world. We may say that this archetype is a figure of existence that offers itself as an authentically human way of inhabiting the world. In other words: following this referent is the path towards personal fulfilment. It is this final aspect which we incorporate into our approach.

This notion of archetype puts us on the track of what we might find in Tadashi. What we propose is to review the fundamental narrative characteristics of the actions of this young scientist in order to then identify its possible influence as a role model. We will also consider the character who, in principle, represents the opposite model of Hiro's brother, professor Callaghan. Thus, it is important to analyze the discourse of the film in terms of which of these figures offer inner growth and which do not, since the character's achievements in life are not necessarily equated with reaching desired goals (Brenes, 2012).

2.2. *Audiovisual elements and mimesis of world*

The audiovisual dimension of the film is generally approached from the textual-audiovisual analysis, a common methodology in *Film Studies*. The aspects sensitive to audiovisual analysis are amply described in works that effectively reveal the extensive range of audiovisual resources available to a creator in articulating a particular discourse. Prominent among these works are the compendiums by Castillo Pomedá (2012; 2013) and Zabaleta Urkiola (2005). The methodology takes into account the symbolic dimension of the various audiovisual resources that articulate the story on film. The central idea of this analysis is expressed by O'Rawe (2011: 1): "As much a metaphysical conundrum as a compositional device, the frame does not simply surround and present the image; it structures it, and what is framed and not framed, included and excluded, centered and de-centered, invariably reveals a method, a choice, a way of seeing the world".

The analysis we propose seeks to clarify how audiovisual diegesis underlines narrative aspects of the story, since there are countless ways to bring a story to the screen, and not all necessarily emphasize the same aspects or potentialities found within the script. The novelty of our approach is how we interpret the final results from the perspective of the mimesis of world.

There are numerous applications of the methodology of possible worlds in the field of cinema and fictional series (García-Noblejas 2004; 2019; Villen, 2019) although its adaptation to the plastic arts and film generally has yet to be fully developed. There are several strategies for an initial approach, beginning with more or less conventional uses in studies of audiovisual iconology (García-Noblejas, 1988). We propose to consider the triad formed by elements, structure and dynamism of the world; three aspects which when applied to film can orient the analysis in three specific ways:

First, to identify the predominant modes of representation of situations within the story. The depiction of certain realities in specific ways, through the type of shot, lighting, mise-en-scène, etc., speaks of certain defining elements, which may be

2 The use of mythological perspectives has become increasingly prevalent in the analysis of contemporary audiovisual fictions, offering an understanding of the meaning found within the organization of narrative elements on the screen. See, for example, recent research by Gutiérrez Delgado, Ceballos-Saavedra and Rivera-Betancur (2022) and Fedele, Planells de la Maza and Rey (2021).

characters, situations, spaces or thematic ideas, revealing how these are related to the totality of the narrative and participate in the unfolding action.

Second, it is important to identify regularities or repetitions in the audiovisual discourse of the film. This, for example, speaks of the relational and metaphorical value of the audiovisual representation: when the same type of visual depiction is applied to different realities, these are put into relation, or, perhaps, one of them is being explained using the visual categories proper to the other.

Third, it is important to look for shared figures, forms, colors or symbols appearing throughout the film given that the opportune positioning within the visual field may help to explain the structure and dynamism of the world, either by identifying or valuing elements within the story, or by associating different scenes with each other, to offer just two examples.

3. Results

The results are presented following the thematic stages of the film, not exclusively linear but with a degree of circularity. Within each of these stages, the story unfolds using two devices: the narrative and audiovisual images.

3.1. Substitution

The dynamics of substitution and the functions to which they refer are indicated in Table 1, showing how substitution is a fundamental aspect of the world of Hiro which, where damaged must be repaired in order to preserve the initial structure of reality.

Table 1. Substitution in *Big Hero 6*

| Absent (the substituted) | Substitute | Function |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| The parents of Hiro and Tadashi (premature death). | Aunt Cass. | Referent and caregiver. |
| Parents of Tadashi (premature death). | Professor Callaghan. | Role model. |
| Tadashi, brother of Hiro (death in a fire). | Baymax. | Care, collaboration and role model. |
| Street fighting robot (created by Hiro). | Baymax. | Occupation and project. |
| Robot street fights. | San Fransokyo Institute of Technology. | Occupation and project. |
| Tadashi, as a member of a scientific group. | Hiro. | Leadership. |

Source: prepared by authors

The parameter referring to function, and the provisional entries assigned in each case, indicates the roles which cannot be remain vacant within the world of the film, and that another must fulfill in order for the story to move forward and the prevent the world of the protagonist from collapsing entirely. Tadashi sees how Aunt Cass has substituted his parents and he himself, in a way, has assumed along with his aunt a parental role for his brother Hiro. In turn, Tadashi plays the role of a disciple of professor Callaghan, who appears to fulfil Tadashi's psychological needs in a way that Aunt Cass cannot. With the death of his brother, Hiro experiences an existential crisis that neither his aunt nor anyone else can resolve. This indicates that Tadashi played an essential role in the world of Hiro, and without him the basic functions of life are stalled and forward movement is stopped. The situation changes with the accidental activation of Baymax, who takes on the absent role of the older brother in certain key aspects which allows Hiro to move forward. The figure of the substitute, Baymax, advances the narrative and helps identify and provide closure to the drama in Hiro's life. Hiro even goes on to play the role of a substitute for his brother among a group of Tadashi's friends at the San Fransokyo Institute of Technology. Hiro is also raised to another level by modifying their inventions. The culmination of this substitution comes at the end of the film, through the repetition of the creative act of his brother by reprogramming Baymax. This suggests to the spectator that Hiro has thus reached a level of maturity similar to that of Tadashi and thus closing the circle of substitution.

The one absent is not always substituted. We must not forget that the main motivation for the misdeeds of the villain, professor Callaghan, is to recover another absent person, his daughter Abigail, who cannot be substituted and who remains trapped in an undefined space after crossing the Krei Technologies teleportation portal. Paradoxically, those who find substitutes in *Big Hero 6* are those who serve as references for others, not those who have other models to follow.

In some cases, the cinematographic image highlights the dynamics of substitution, especially by means of a strategy which combines the *mise-en-scène* and camera position: by using a scene similar to a previous scene, one character can be put into the place of another who is absent. In our case, Baymax can be seen occupying a place similar to that of the absent Tadashi. The most evident case is the similarity between the medium shot of Hiro on a motorcycle sitting behind his brother Tadashi holding onto his shoulders when fleeing from a street fight between robots (Figure 1) and another medium shot of Hiro on Baymax's back, holding onto his shoulders just before they take flight.

Figure 1. Tadashi and Hiro flee from a street fight between robots



Source: *Big Hero 6* (Hall & Williams, 2014)

Figure 2. Baymax and Hiro prepare for a test flight



Source: *Big Hero 6* (Hall & Williams, 2014)

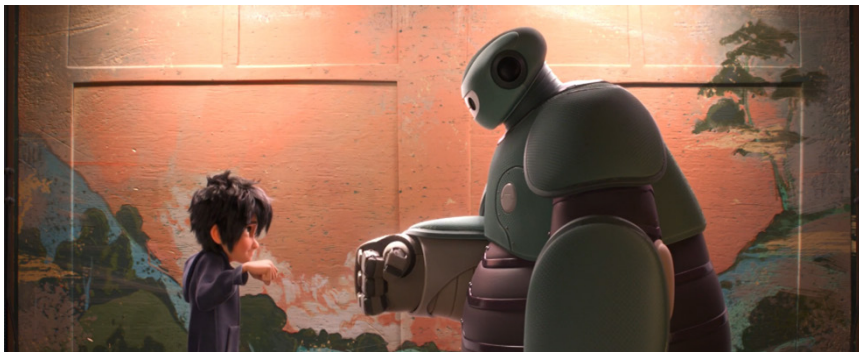
There are other moments in the film when only certain formal elements are shared by scenes underscoring substitution, but enough to suggest the link between Tadashi Hamada and Baymax; for example, when the Hamada brothers greet each other with a fist bump (Figure 3), a gesture that Hiro teaches Baymax after the death of Tadashi (Figure 4).

Figure 3. Tadashi and Hiro make a special gesture



Source: *Big Hero 6* (Hall & Williams, 2014)

Figure 4. Hiro teaches Baymax a special gesture



Source: *Big Hero 6* (Hall & Williams, 2014)

In one of the final scenes of the film, after the heroic act of Baymax, a close up of his open gauntlet holding the card signed by “Tadashi Hamada” (Figure 5) reinforces what other scenes depicting this internal card of Baymax also communicate: the robot is the substitute of Tadashi, carrying in some way his essence and remaining at Hiro’s side in the place of his brother. Hiro’s world can only exist if Tadashi is present and acting within it, and Baymax is the guarantee of this presence. On several occasions, Baymax touches his round “heart” and says: “Tadashi is here”. The archetype of the substitute-absent, paradoxically, retains the attributes of the one substituted; this is a relational figure, becoming present through the fidelity of others.

Figure 5. The open gauntlet of Baymax



Source: *Big Hero 6* (Hall & Williams, 2014)

3.2. Narrative template of Tadashi

As shown in Table 2, the actions of Tadashi are presented as a template for the actions of Baymax. Furthermore, the entire narrative which follows his disappearance seems to reconstitute and rewrite the fragment of the story which took place when he was alive.

Table 2. Correspondence within the narrative between the initial story of Tadashi and the subsequent story of Baymax

| Story of Tadashi | Story of Baymax |
|--|--|
| Tadashi saves Hiro when he is in trouble after the robot fight | Baymax saves Hiro after the chase by Callaghan, when they discover he is crating more robots |
| The friends of Tadashi work on their inventions | With Hiro's help, Tadashi's friends increase the power of their inventions |
| Tadashi persuades Hiro to give up robot fights by showing him the Institute | Baymax persuades Hiro to give up his desire for revenge by showing him a video of Tadashi. |
| Tadashi helps Hiro with his invention of microbots | Baymax helps Hiro with the only microbot left after the fire |
| Tadashi sacrifices himself for professor Callaghan when he enters the burning building to rescue him | Baymax sacrifices himself for Abigail Callaghan when he enters the portal for her |
| After this act of salvation by Tadashi, only his hat remains | After the act of salvation by Baymax only his gauntlet remains |

Source: prepared by authors

Tadashi's journey, marked both at its beginning and its end by an act of salvation, is a template for action and, as far as the action structures and configures the story, it is also structures the script itself. Baymax functions as a mechanical ambassador

of one archetype contrasted by another model, that of the masked man, professor Callaghan. As is often the case in fiction, this other model is presented as contrary to the main archetype, in this case Tadashi-Baymax, and misleads and deceives the protagonist into thinking they must adopt the attitudes and actions of their sinister opponent in order to prevail rather than adhere to the values of the positive archetype.

The scene in which Hiro fully receives the image of the world of Tadashi, which is a revelation for Hiro, is when he meets Baymax in the laboratory of the Institute of Technology. At the end of the scene professor Callaghan appears, although not yet identified as the villain. This scene thus synthesizes the two paths Hiro is presented with (Figure 6). The lighting in the scene already anticipates this disparity of possible archetypes. When Callaghan enters the laboratory there is a change of space, Baymax is hidden behind a wall and a growing darkness is perceived, a habitual occurrence whenever Tadashi's former mentor appears (Figure 7).

Figure 6. Callaghan examines Hiro's robot



Source: *Big Hero 6* (Hall & Williams, 2014)

Figure 7. Callaghan admires Hiro's microbots



Source: *Big Hero 6* (Hall & Williams, 2014)

3.3. *From substitution to mediation: the configuration of the personal world of the hero according to the model of Tadashi*

Baymax's actions as a substitute is for Hiro testimony of a way of being in the world. This manner of inhabiting reality, or the archetype, serves as a model for Hiro, who must decide if he accepts or rejects Tadashi's model. This is the fundamental conflict of the film: to defeat the villain using the same methods as the villain or to assume the archetype of Baymax-Tadashi. The robot caregiver, for all of these reasons, serves as a mediator between the archetype and Hiro, acting as a bridge to achieve the way of living embodied by Tadashi. Not without eloquence, in the scene introducing Baymax using various shots, as shown in Figure 8, the camera emphasizes the mediating position of the caregiver robot between the brothers.

Figure 8. Tadashi shows Hiro his new invention: Baymax



Source: *Big Hero 6* (Hall & Williams, 2014)

Beyond the evident circularity of the story, with Hiro ultimately repeating the creative ritual of Tadashi and re-creating Baymax, there is the constant theme of the return to the archetype. In the scene when Baymax is first introduced, he is symbolically marked by a circle, this being a geometric sign that he serves as a proxy between the model and the modelled. Baymax stands before an enormous round window (Figure 8), an image that appears both in this first scene and in one of the final scenes, after the climax of the story when Hiro manages to reprogram the robot caregiver. The image repeats in the brothers' room, which is divided in two by an enormous round window; and again in a scene showing a round clock in which a figure clearly similar to Baymax can be seen (Figure 9). There is of course the theme of circularity in the character of Baymax himself, notably in the card port where it reads: "Tadashi Hamada".

Figure 9. Baymax is activated in response to the pain felt by Hiro and tries to help him



Source: *Big Hero 6* (Hall & Williams, 2014)

The card is a guarantee of this eternal repetition, the rebirth of Tadashi both through the first activation of the robot and also later through events related to the black hole in the final part of the film. While Baymax can never fully substitute Tadashi, he can serve as a role model for Hiro. As Tadashi says to Hiro: “He’s going to help a lot of people”, with Hiro himself being the one most helped by Baymax and for whom he has a purpose. In Tadashi’s words, the “he”, suggests both an “I” and a “you”.

4. Discussion and conclusions

In this paper we have shown the various aspects of our research hypothesis: from the mechanisms of substitution that maintain the overall structure of the personal world of the protagonist, and the archetypal nature of the narrative and role model of Tadashi, to the effectiveness of Baymax in substituting the role of the older brother, and the destiny the younger brother Hiro eventually assumes for himself. Aunt Cass occupies the place of the absent parents but it is Tadashi himself who acts as a father figure for Hiro. By the end of the film, Hiro reaches a level of maturity and enters into adulthood.

We have also shown how the film incorporates a series of audiovisual techniques that underscore these narrative and thematic ideas. The camera angle is such that it empathizes with the substitution and depicts Baymax “as if” he were Tadashi. In addition, in specific situations the camera reproduces the same techniques and strategies from previous scenes, referencing an earlier and similar situation in the film. Thus, at the start of the film, the camera takes Tadashi’s story as a model that is later repeated, and in this way not only depicts the scene but also is marked by how that moment is presented and later reproduces that diegetic strategy when similar situations take place. In *Big Hero 6* there is a reproduction of order and meaning of reality in terms of its audiovisual presentation.

Five broad conclusions can be drawn from our research. First, that in the specific case of *Big Hero 6*, we see a dynamic very common to the superhero film genre, although also found in other types of fiction: that is, the mechanism of the preservation of the structure of the world through the substitution of elements of particular importance to the protagonist. This substitution is not necessarily the product of the actions of the main character but rather that the dynamics of the world itself tend towards

the preservation of this structure. The more or less institutional or fortuitous ways in which substitution is made effective may vary in different works and serve to determine and delimit the type of world within the text.

Second, we identified a specific type of substitution, that is, substitution through mediation. Here the substitution of one character for another has a dual narrative function: firstly, to replace the substituted character in the place they occupied within the structure of the world, taking on their role or functions in relation to another, usually the protagonist of the story; and secondly, to embody an archetype in order that the subject ultimately assumes this same archetype as their way of being in the world.

Third, we can conclude that the film employs a narrative strategy of parallelisms which we may call “mimesis of exemplary history”. It consists of a course of action or narrative stages of a brief initial story which serves as a mold or template for the rest of the film, and for the actions of the characters.

The fourth conclusion is that the film *Big Hero 6* is an interesting example of superhero cinema, where the orphanhood of the protagonist is not as important to their heroic character as the loss of a *primus inter pares* in the figure of Hiro's older brother. This is particularly important since, while the absent father figure is sometimes beyond reach, or seen a source of trauma in some films of the genre, the archetype of the lost brother, perhaps due to their closeness to the protagonist, serves as a more attainable model for life. The greater viability of this possible archetype favors the similarity between the configuration of the personal world of the hero and existential structure that inspires the hero.

Fifth, and finally, this research project demonstrates some of the audiovisual possibilities for undertaking the narrative strategies we have mentioned. In order to suggest that a character substitutes another it may be sufficient to present the same type of shot for two narratively similar scenes, placing the substitute in the position of the one substituted. In order to signal that a character serves as a mediator between two others, their position in the scene is preferably between the two protagonists a physical indication of their role as mediator. Thus the camera places the mediator in the center for the frame with the other figures on one side and another. Another way to indicate the role of a character as a substitute, mediator or both, is to associate them with certain symbols, such as a circle, appearing at strategic places throughout the film to symbolically reinforce the idea of their role.

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7. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest contained in this article.

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