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Narrating Success in Contemporary Anime: Platformized Subjectivity and The Cultural Logics of Datafied Growth

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Abstract

This study examines how success is narratively constructed across commercially visible non-realist anime produced in Japan between 2005 and 2025. Drawing on award-recognized anime and combining interpretive content analysis with discourse analysis, it identifies recurring patterns in protagonist development and traces historical shifts in anime success narratives. The findings suggest a reconfiguration across three overlapping narrative regimes: exceptional power, adaptive success, and reflexive selfhood. While earlier works frequently positioned protagonists as exceptional individuals capable of transforming the world, later narratives increasingly emphasize adaptation to existing systems and, more recently, reflexive engagement with memory, uncertainty, and affect. To explain these shifts, this study introduces the concept of datafied growth, referring to narrative systems in which achievement and self-development become legible through processes of measurement, optimization, and recognition. Situating anime within broader transformations in platformized media culture, the study argues that contemporary anime functions as a speculative site where changing forms of visibility, selfhood, and social value become narratively imaginable. More broadly, the findings suggest that anime success narratives provide insight into how platformized cultures increasingly organize recognition, achievement, and subjectivity.

Keywords: anime; platformization; subjectivity; datafication; success narratives