

When Agency Collapses: Narrative Position, Falling, and Technological Mediation in *BEATLESS* and *Angels of Johannesburg*

Sanghyuk Lee & Eugene Chung

Abstract: Japanese science fiction of the 2010s shows a reorganization of narrative agency shaped by technological systems and mediation. In two works from this period, *BEATLESS* by Satoshi Hase and *Angels of Johannesburg* by Yusuke Miyauchi, representations of falling, girl-related agency, and technological mediation distribute unevenly across narrative progression. These distributions point to narrative change structured by localized reconfiguration rather than gradual accumulation. Each domain is traced through recurrent lexical and action cues across segmented narrative units. Position-based analysis differentiates cumulative development from abrupt shifts, while topic modeling clarifies changes in surrounding semantic contexts at key turning points. Agency does not change evenly across narrative time. In *Angels of Johannesburg*, agency appears in situational and reversible forms without consolidating into a dominant configuration. In *BEATLESS*, redistributed agency loss concentrates at a limited set of turning points and persists thereafter, accompanied by expanded technological mediation and a retreat of human-centered action. Taken together, these patterns show that narrative change in 2010s Japanese science fiction emerges through redistribution across narrative positions rather than cumulative development.

Keywords: *BEATLESS*; *Angels of Johannesburg*; narrative progression; falling imagery; digital literary analysis

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标题: 能动性崩塌之时:《BEATLESS》与《约翰内斯堡的天使》中的叙事立场、坠落与技术中介

内容摘要: 21 世纪 10 年代的日本科幻小说呈现出一种由技术系统与媒介所塑造的叙事能动性的重组。在长谷敏司的《BEATLESS》与宫内悠介的《约翰内斯堡的天使》这两部作品中,坠落的表现、与少女相关的能动性以及技术媒介在叙事推进中的分布呈现出不均衡的特征。这些分布所指向的叙事变化,并非通过渐进式的积累,而是由局部性的重构所结构化。在每个领域内,这种变化通过跨叙事单元反复出现的词汇线索和行动线索得以追踪。基于位置的分析将累积性发展与突变式转变区分开来,而主题建模则有助于厘清在关键转折点周围语义语境所发生的变化。能动性在叙事时间中并非均匀地变化:在《约翰内斯堡的天使》中,能动性以情境化且可逆的形式出现,并未凝结为一种主导性的构型;在《BEATLESS》中,能动性的丧失集中于有限的几处转折点,并在之后持续存在,同时伴随着技术媒介的扩大以及以人为中心的行动的退却。这些模式表明:21 世纪 10 年代日本科幻小说中的叙事变化,是通过叙事位置之间的重新分布而非累积性发展而呈现的。

关键词: 《BEATLESS》;《约翰内斯堡的天使》;叙事推进;坠落意象;数字文学分析

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1. Introduction

Since the early 2000s, Japanese science fiction has undergone a notable shift in narrative organization, particularly in how agency is distributed between human and non-human actors. Cultural critics have observed that contemporary Japanese media increasingly favors modular composition, in which characters, settings, and motifs function as relatively independent units rather than as elements integrated into a single, coherent narrative arc, as Azuma notes.¹ In science fiction of the 2010s, this tendency becomes apparent as artificial intelligence, automated judgment, and technologically mediated systems come to structure narrative development.

In these texts, technological development does not appear as a linear extension of human capacity. Systems and protocols take over decision making, while mediation renders agency uncertain. Hayles has described how the separation of information from embodiment reshapes assumptions about subjectivity, while

1 See Hiroki Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, translated by Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009, 33-54.

Braidotti has argued that the posthuman condition destabilizes the figure of the autonomous human agent within technologically governed environments.¹ Studies of Japanese science fiction have often emphasized ethical and philosophical questions, giving less attention to shifts in agency across narrative time.

Consequently, the temporal organization of motifs has remained underexamined. Scenes of falling or collapse are usually treated as thematic material rather than as moments whose narrative placement reshapes agency. Girl-like or non-human female figures act as mediators within technical systems, as Lamarre has shown.² Existing accounts rarely address how these functions vary across narrative phases or intersect with moments of structural transition.

Three representational domains form the basis of the analysis: falling, girl-related agency, and technological mediation. Each domain is operationalized through recurrent lexical items and action cues, which are tracked across narrative segments to examine how their distribution changes over the course of the texts. Segmenting each work by relative narrative position allows comparison across different stages of narrative development and highlights points at which multiple representations shift in close proximity.

Topic modeling traces changes in thematic distribution across narrative phases and offers an additional view of how meaning clusters at particular positions. Key representational domains are examined in relation to their distribution across narrative progression. Particular attention is given to their placement within narrative time, without presuming in advance how or where they take on structural significance. The following research questions address these patterns.

RQ1. At which narrative positions do representations of falling concentrate in *BEATLESS* and *Angels of Johannesburg*? Do they accumulate gradually across the narrative, or emerge through abrupt shifts (DROPs)?

RQ2. How does girl-related agency change across narrative progression in each work? Where do key turning points intensify or diminish this agency, and how do these patterns differ between the two texts?

RQ3. How does technological mediation vary across narrative phases, and to what extent does it converge with or diverge from changes in representations of falling and girl-related agency at corresponding narrative positions?

1 See N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999; Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.

2 See Thomas Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

2. Previous Research and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Falling in Narrative Theory and Science Fiction

Narrative theory has long treated falling as a recurrent motif associated with disruption and transition. Genette situates moments of descent within broader structures of narrative change, where shifts in order or perspective interrupt linear progression.¹ In science fiction, critics have often read falling as an embodied index of systemic failure, linking physical descent to breakdowns in political or technological order. Suvin, for example, connects such moments to estrangement, where familiar structures lose stability and demand reorientation.²

Yet most existing studies approach falling at the level of symbolism or thematic meaning. They rarely examine how falling distributes itself across narrative progression. Whether falling accumulates gradually or concentrates at specific moments remains largely unaddressed. As a result, the temporal organization of falling often remains implicit rather than analytically foregrounded.

Recent work in digital literary studies offers tools for addressing this gap. Underwood suggests that position-based analysis can reveal structural regularities that escape both close reading and plot-level summary.³ By aligning motifs with normalized narrative position, scholars can compare texts of different lengths without presuming shared plot templates. This study draws on that insight to situate falling within the narrative trajectories of *BEATLESS* and *Angels of Johannesburg*.

2.2 Girl-Related Agency and Mediation in Science Fiction

Studies on science fiction have consistently emphasized girlhood as a critical site for negotiating agency and mediation. Haraway's account of the cyborg reframes agency as distributed across human and non-human actors, challenging liberal humanist models that privilege individual intention.⁴ Building on this perspective, studies of posthuman narratives frequently locate girl figures at the intersection of affect, control, and technological interface.

In the context of Japanese popular culture, Azuma suggests that girl characters function within database-like structures, where agency emerges less from narrative

1 See Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, translated by Jane E. Lewin, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980, 25-48.

2 See Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979, 63-84.

3 See Ted Underwood, *Distant Horizons: Digital Evidence and Literary Change*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019, 64-92.

4 See Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, New York: Routledge, 1991, 149-181.

development than from recombinatory systems of meaning.¹ Palmer extends this line of work by examining early Japanese science fiction, where gender shapes the distribution of agency across speculative frameworks rather than anchoring it in individual characters.² This observation has informed subsequent analyses of science fiction texts in which girlhood operates as a mediating node between systems and subjects rather than as a stable moral center. Lamarre similarly emphasizes how anime and related media embed girl figures within technical and infrastructural assemblages that complicate traditional accounts of action and responsibility.³

Most literary criticism continues to assess agency through character-centered interpretation, often assuming a focus on moments of choice or resistance. While such readings remain indispensable, they often assume that agency holds a consistent narrative value. Relational accounts of agency, by contrast, treat action as something that intensifies or diminishes through interaction.⁴ This shift in perspective supports an analysis attentive to variation across narrative progression rather than static attribution. From the standpoint of ethical literary criticism, these shifting distributions of agency also reflect reorganizations of ethical relationship and moral order within the storyworld. Literary texts, in this view, are essentially records of human moral experience structured by ethical lines that string ethical knots together and shape the conditions under which characters act.⁵ The turning points identified in this study thus mark not only formal shifts but also moments of ethical reconfiguration.

2.3 Technological Mediation in Science Fiction Narratives

Media theory and science fiction studies have increasingly treated technological mediation as constitutive rather than incidental. Latour argues that action takes shape within networks of human and non-human actants, where responsibility and intention distribute unevenly.⁶ Applied to narrative analysis, this perspective foregrounds how systems, protocols, and interfaces organize relations

1 See Hiroki Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, translated by Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009, 33-54.

2 See Sera Palmer, "The Gendered Strategy of Tsutsui Yasutaka's Early Works," *Border Crossings: The Journal of Japanese-Language Literature Studies* 1 (2023): 215-231.

3 See Thomas Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009, 195-228.

4 See Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007, 132-185.

5 See Nie Zhenzhao, "Ethical Literary Criticism: A Basic Theory," *Forum for World Literature Studies* 2 (2021): 191-192.

6 See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 63-86.

among characters and institutions.

Despite this theoretical consensus, most literary analyses isolate technological mediation at the level of concept or theme. They rarely trace how technological discourse expands, contracts, or realigns across narrative time. Digital approaches have begun to address this limitation. Jockers demonstrates that large-scale textual patterns can illuminate structural tendencies that resist anecdotal interpretation.¹ When combined with position-based analysis, such methods enable a more precise account of how technological mediation interacts with other representational shifts.

2.4 Narrative Position and Turning Points in Digital Literary Studies

Narrative position has emerged as a key concept in digital literary studies concerned with change over time. By mapping narrative progression onto a normalized scale, researchers can identify relative concentrations and shifts without imposing a uniform plot structure. Underwood emphasizes that such approaches do not replace interpretation but redirect it toward questions of distribution and scale.² Much of this work focuses on affective movement, particularly sentiment. Reagan and his collaborators identify recurring emotional arcs across large corpora, suggesting that narratives often organize change around a limited set of structural patterns.³ Less attention has been paid to representational turning points that reorganize relations among motifs. By focusing on abrupt shifts rather than gradual trends, recent studies suggest new ways to conceptualize narrative reconfiguration. This collaborative interpretive method matches the paradigm of computational literary criticism put forward by Nie and Ren.⁴ This framework informs the comparative analysis undertaken here.

3. Data and Analytical Framework

3.1 Data Preparation and Narrative Alignment

The material for analysis consists of two science fiction narratives from the 2010s that differ markedly in scale and compositional rhythm. Each text operates as a closed narrative system. Comparison therefore proceeds by tracing how representational features appear and shift over the course of narration, rather than

1 See Matthew L. Jockers, *Macroanalysis: Digital Methods and Literary History*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2013, 72-98.

2 See Ted Underwood, *Distant Horizons: Digital Evidence and Literary Change*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019, 15-27.

3 See Andrew J. Reagan et al., "The Emotional Arcs of Stories Are Dominated by Six Basic Shapes," *EPJ Data Science* 5 (2016), article 31.

4 See Nie Zhenzhao and Ren Jie, "From Technological Tool to Cognitive Restructuring: Paradigm Revolution in Literary Criticism of the AI Age," *Journal of Humanities and AI* 1 (2026): 12.

by aligning plot elements or formal units. Preparation of the texts focused on stabilizing sequence. Page numbers and editorial signals do not enter the analysis. Orthographic normalization curbs surface variation, while standardized line breaks keep segmentation stable. These adjustments preserve narrative sequence and limit formatting artifacts.

Segmentation follows narrative flow, with each segment marked by its relative position within the text. This positional index captures where a segment falls within the narrative as a whole, independent of absolute length. Jockers shows that such relative scaling supports comparison across texts without presupposing shared narrative architecture.¹ The present analysis adopts this approach to keep attention on patterning rather than structure. Token-level normalization precedes measurement and focuses on lexical content. The procedure retains words that carry representational weight and filters out elements that merely inflate frequency. Consistent application of these rules across the narrative ensures that observed variation reflects shifts in narration rather than changes in preprocessing.

3.2 Indicators and Turning Points

Three lines of measurement guide the analysis: representations of falling, configurations of girl-related agency, and references to technological mediation. Each draws on recurring lexical cues and traces their relative prominence across narrative segments. Representations of falling include terms associated with descent, collapse, and loss of positional control. Girl-related agency enters through patterns that link female figures to verbs of action, decision, or constraint. This measure does not resolve philosophical questions of agency. It registers shifts in how action aligns with particular figures. Technological mediation appears through references to systems, protocols, and mediated operations that shape interaction and choice.

Segment-level normalization ensures comparability. Local averaging reduces short-range noise while preserving broader movement, making longer-term tendencies visible without flattening local change. Points of rapid change mark positions of interest. These moments, termed DROPs, occur where a trajectory reverses direction or accelerates beyond its immediate context. The procedure assigns no meaning in advance. It identifies locations where narrative organization shifts pace or orientation. Underwood cautions against treating quantitative signals as explanations in themselves.² DROP detection serves here as a way of narrowing

1 See Matthew L Jockers, *Macroanalysis: Digital Methods and Literary History*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2013, 72-98.

2 See Ted Underwood, *Distant Horizons: Digital Evidence and Literary Change*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019, 15-27.

attention, directing interpretation toward positions where representational strands reorganize.

3.3 Topic Modelling and Analytical Scope

Keyword-based indicators capture localized patterns but offer limited insight into their surrounding contexts. Topic modelling complements these measures by grouping terms that recur together across narrative segments, allowing shifts in lexical association to come into view. Separate models preserve internal coherence, while shifts in topic proportions before and after DROPs indicate changes in surrounding lexical contexts. Topic analysis tracks variation in prominence across narrative phases rather than fixed thematic content.

According to Underwood, digital analysis gains interpretive force when it emphasizes tendencies of arrangement over categorical meaning. Placing indicator-based shifts alongside changes in topic composition links localized change to broader narrative movement. The analytical scope remains deliberately restrained. Indicators signal where attention should concentrate, while topic modelling clarifies what surrounds those moments. Together, these tools support a comparative reading of how the two narratives stage crises of agency over the course of narration.

4. Results

This section reports how representations of falling, girl-related agency, and technological mediation distribute across narrative progression. The results distinguish gradual accumulation from abrupt reconfiguration and compare how these patterns organize narrative change in the two works.

4.1 Falling across Narrative Progression

Representations of falling follow markedly different temporal logics across the two narratives, revealing a contrast between cumulative build-up and abrupt disruption across narrative position (Figure 1). The figure plots length-normalized and smoothed indicator values, allowing broader narrative tendencies to emerge without being obscured by local fluctuation.

Angels of Johannesburg exhibits a sharply contrasting pattern (Figure 1a). Falling concentrates within narrow intervals, producing sudden spikes followed by rapid decline. Extended stretches of the narrative register little to no falling-related activity, interrupted by abrupt surges. Here, falling operates as a disruptive event that interrupts narrative continuity rather than as a condition that builds over time. In *BEATLESS*, falling-related references remain low but persistent through the early narrative and increase steadily toward the latter half (Figure 1b). The trajectory shows sustained intensification rather than volatility, with only limited local inflections.

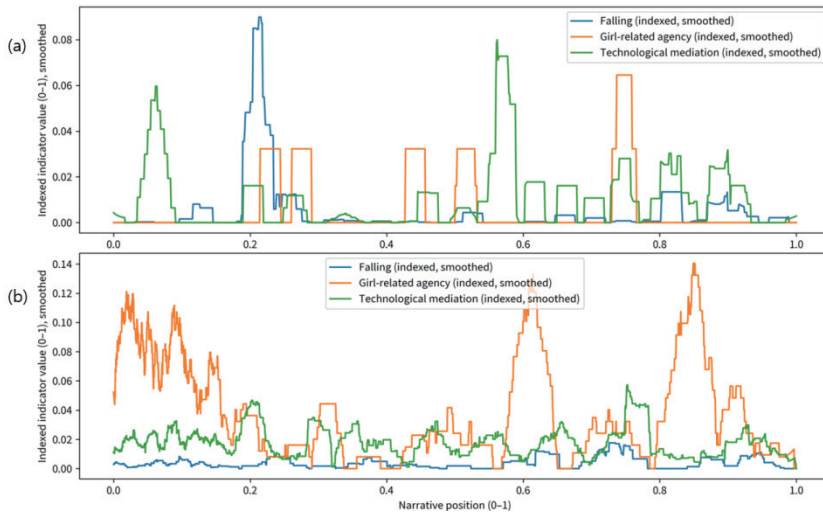


Figure 1. Narrative position-based trends of falling, girl-related agency, and technological mediation across relative narrative position¹

Falling therefore accumulates as a form of narrative pressure, shaping progression through gradual amplification rather than through isolated rupture. The two narratives exhibit sharply different temporal patterns in how falling is organized across narrative progression. *BEATLESS* organizes falling through gradual accumulation across narrative position, whereas *Angels of Johannesburg* mobilizes it through abrupt shifts that coincide with narrative turning points.

4.2 Girl-Related Agency and Turning Points

Girl-related agency follows divergent narrative trajectories in the two works, reflecting contrasting strategies for distributing action and constraint across narrative progression.

In *Angels of Johannesburg*, agency appears intermittently and remains bound to localized disruptions (Figure 2a). Agency-related values rise sharply at a small number of positions and decline just as quickly, producing brief intensifications without cumulative development. These spikes coincide with narrative turning points, but their effects remain limited. Between such intervals, agency remains diffuse and weakly articulated.

BEATLESS presents a contrasting configuration (Figure 2b). Agency begins at a comparatively high level and declines unevenly but decisively across the narrative.

¹ The figure plots length-normalized and smoothed values for falling, girl-related agency, and technological mediation across relative narrative position (0-1), showing how the prominence of each representation changes over the course of the narrative.

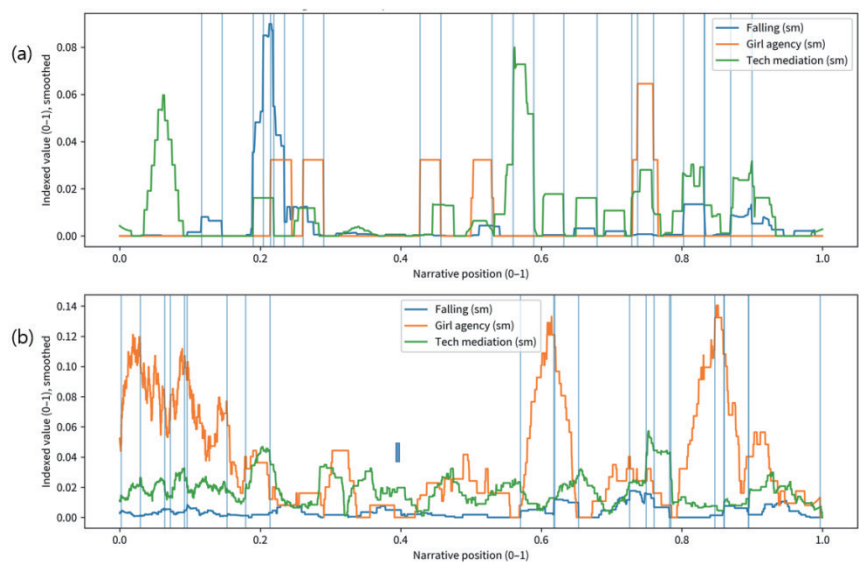


Figure 2. Turning points and trajectories of key indicators¹

Several turning points coincide with pronounced drops from which recovery remains partial or absent. These moments mark lasting changes in how action is distributed, creating extended stretches in which agency no longer anchors narrative progression. Figure 2 shows that changes in girl-related agency rarely occur alone. They appear alongside intensified falling or expanded technological mediation, through which agency loss is redistributed within the narrative.

Figure 2 establishes where and when agency shifts occur; Table 1 shows what those shifts reorganize. Table 1 specifies how meaning clusters shift around these turning points, allowing closer examination of the directions in which meaning reorganizes.

Table 1. Semantic reconfiguration following agency-related turning points²

work	group	delta_sum	delta_mean	n_topics
ANGELS	Other/Unclassified	0.037	0.001	27
ANGELS	Human/Body/Affect	0.004	0.001	6
ANGELS	Technology/Infrastructure	-0.005	-0.001	6

1 (a) Angels of Johannesburg; (b) BEATLESS. Indexed and smoothed values for falling, girl-related agency, and technological mediation plotted across relative narrative position. Vertical lines indicate detected turning points.

2 Changes in the relative prominence of semantic groups before and after detected turning points. Positive values indicate domains that gain prominence as agency declines, while negative values mark domains that recede.

ANGELS	Control/Governance	-0.035	-0.012	3
BEATLESS	Technology/Infrastructure	0.082	0.007	11
BEATLESS	Human/Body/Affect	0.001	0.000	7
BEATLESS	Control/Governance	-0.024	-0.024	1
BEATLESS	Other/Unclassified	-0.059	-0.002	36

In *Angels of Johannesburg*, shifts following turning points disperse across semantic domains without consolidating into a dominant configuration. No single domain stabilizes as a substitute for diminished agency. In *BEATLESS*, declines in agency accompany a shift toward technological and system-oriented domains, as human-centered and decision-related domains recede across subsequent segments.

Table 1 summarizes semantic reconfiguration around narrative turning points by grouping topic-level changes into broader domains. The column *work* distinguishes between *Angels of Johannesburg* and *BEATLESS*, while *group* identifies recurring semantic domains such as Technological (“systems,” “networks,” “protocols,” “automated processes”), Human/Bodily (“bodily states,” “affect,” “individual action”), Control/Governance (“themes of regulation,” “command,” “managerial authority”), and Other/Unclassified. These groupings indicate the directions toward which agency is redirected when it weakens. The remaining columns quantify these shifts: *delta_sum* captures overall magnitude, *delta_mean* indicates directional consistency, and *n_topics* shows how widely each change is distributed across topics.

Table 1 highlights contrasting semantic patterns between the two texts when considered alongside Figure 2. In *Angels of Johannesburg*, semantic shifts remain dispersed across domains, with changes around turning points alternating rather than consolidating into a stable configuration. In *BEATLESS*, by contrast, agency loss aligns with increased prominence of semantic groups associated with technological systems, coordination, and mediated control, while groups tied to individual decision and action recede. Across both works, shifts in girl-related agency appear alongside intensified falling or subsequent rises in technological mediation, situating changes in agency within broader patterns of narrative organization. If agency weakens or collapses at turning points, the next question concerns what comes to organize action in its place.

4.3 Technological Mediation and Narrative Substitution

Technological mediation emerges as the primary mechanism through which the two narratives reorganize action once individual agency weakens, but it does so under sharply different narrative conditions. While Figure 2 shows where and how

girl-related agency weakens at turning points, Figure 3 addresses the subsequent question of narrative organization: what fills the space left by collapsing agency, and whether that space stabilizes or remains unresolved.

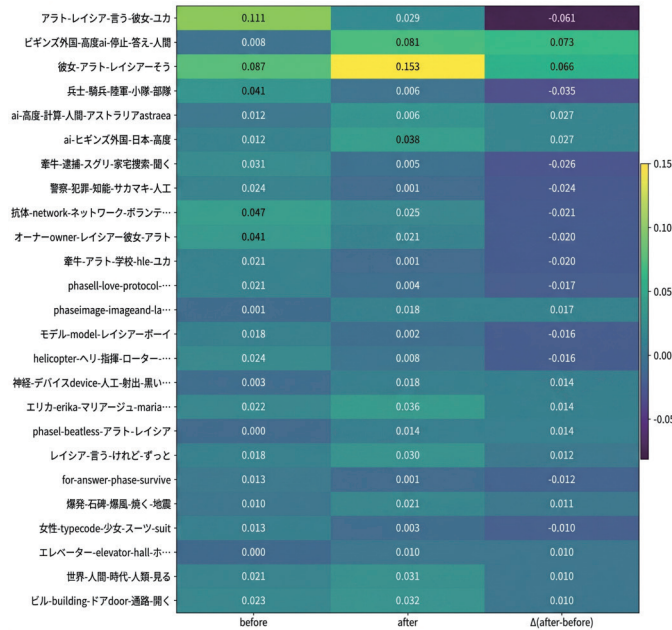


Figure 3. Topic reorganization before and after turning points in *BEATLESS*¹

The heatmap displays topic shares before turning points, after turning points, and their difference (Δ). Color intensity indicates the magnitude of change, with warmer tones marking increased prominence after turning points and cooler tones indicating decline. The rows list topics that show the largest shifts across phases. Read from top to bottom, the ordering reflects a broader movement from topics centered on individual figures and action toward those structured around systems, environments, and mediated control.

This pattern shows a consistent redistribution rather than isolated fluctuation. Topics associated with individual decision, interpersonal action, or character-centered perspective lose prominence after turning points. In contrast, topics tied to technological systems, protocols, networks, and procedural coordination expand and remain elevated. The Δ column makes this substitution explicit: decreases in

¹ Topic shares before and after detected turning points, with Δ indicating the direction and magnitude of change. Topics are ordered by the size of their shift, revealing a transition from agency-centered to system-centered domains

agency-related domains align with increases in system-oriented ones.

Crucially, this reorganization does not reverse. Once agency-related topics recede, they do not recover their earlier share in subsequent segments. Technological mediation therefore operates not as a temporary response to crisis but as a stabilizing structure that consolidates narrative progression after agency collapse.

The contrast with *Angels of Johannesburg* clarifies the specificity of this pattern. In *Angels*, agency weakens at turning points but no equivalent thematic consolidation follows. Shifts in topic emphasis remain fragmented and episodic, preventing any durable replacement from taking hold. Where *Angels* registers agency collapse without successful substitution, *BEATLESS* channels that collapse into a sustained technological reorganization.

These results indicate two distinct narrative strategies. *Angels of Johannesburg* stages agency loss as an unresolved condition, leaving narrative organization exposed to recurrent disruption. *BEATLESS*, by contrast, resolves agency loss through turning-point-centered substitution, allowing technological mediation to assume a governing role over subsequent development. Figure 3 shows not just that agency declines in *BEATLESS*, but how its absence becomes structurally productive through technological mediation.

5. Discussion

The comparison between *BEATLESS* and *Angels of Johannesburg* shows that the crisis of human agency in contemporary Japanese science fiction follows divergent narrative logics. Although both works engage with mediation, control, and autonomy, they distribute loss and substitution in markedly different ways.

In *Angels of Johannesburg*, falling, agency, and mediation interact without stabilizing into a dominant structure. Falling appears abruptly and recedes, while moments of intensified agency surface only in response to disruption. These moments do not accumulate across narrative progression. Technological mediation remains intermittent and closely tied to crisis itself. Agency weakens, yet no durable replacement emerges. The narrative sustains pressure without resolution, allowing instability to repeat rather than transform.

BEATLESS organizes agency loss differently. Agency collapses at a limited set of turning points and does not recover. After these moments, technological mediation expands and stabilizes narrative progression. Systems, protocols, and coordinated operations take over functions previously associated with individual action. This shift marks a durable reallocation of narrative responsibility rather than a temporary adjustment.

Turning points therefore play distinct roles. In *Angels of Johannesburg*, they intensify instability without resolving it. In *BEATLESS*, they concentrate change and fix its consequences. The difference lies not in the presence of disruption but in whether disruption reorganizes narrative structure or merely extends tension. This contrast clarifies the relation between cumulative development and substitution. *Angels of Johannesburg* relies on accumulation without replacement, while *BEATLESS* centers narrative change on turning-point-centered substitution. Agency loss in the latter becomes productive by enabling a new, technologically mediated mode of organization.

The comparison highlights divergent ways in which agency weakens, redistributes, or stabilizes under different narrative conditions. Instead, shifts in agency become visible through how texts place change at specific narrative positions, either by sustaining unresolved pressure or by concentrating transformation at decisive turning points.

6. Conclusion

Across the two narratives examined here, falling, girl-related agency, and technological mediation emerge as position-sensitive features of narrative organization rather than as stable thematic background. Read in relation to narrative progression, these elements mark moments at which relations among action, control, and mediation shift in response to narrative pressure. In *Angels of Johannesburg*, such moments intensify instability without consolidating a new organizational logic, leaving agency situational and reversible. In *BEATLESS*, by contrast, declines in agency align with sustained changes in narrative organization, through which technological mediation assumes a governing role over subsequent development.

Attending to narrative position also makes it possible to distinguish between forms of agency loss that remain episodic and those that stabilize into governing structures over time. This distinction underscores how similar motifs can organize narrative change in markedly different ways, depending on how they align with narrative progression. Reading narrative change through position-based analysis makes visible forms of agency loss and substitution that remain difficult to capture through thematic or character-centered interpretation alone. Attention to where change concentrates within narrative time treats agency as an outcome of narrative organization rather than as a stable attribute of characters. This perspective enables comparison across science fiction narratives in which shifts in action and control emerge through changes in narrative arrangement rather than through gradual transformation.

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