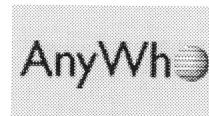


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Agnès

*TTOTC: Preliminary Comments by the Defense Attorney*

Sun Mar 30 23:21:52 2003

193.168.1.253

### Preliminary Comments

Taking on the defence of ep.72 is no mean task for this poor Defence Attorney, and I would like the court to consider the following points:

In principle, the Defence agrees with many of the points made by the Prosecution in their very elaborate and thorough act of prosecution (AOP), which does not make our job any easier.

Our main issue with the AOP, however, is its claim that there is only one possible interpretation, that "the story only makes sense if [Actarus] DID NOT love Rubina" (AOP, Part 1).

Independently of personal opinions and interpretations, this seems a preposterous claim to the Defence. How can there be only one possible interpretation?

Unlike the Prosecutor General, the Defence Attorney has no legal training whatsoever beyond "Perry Mason" and "Ally Mc Beal". Indeed, her training is literary and she is thus used to dealing with words and language as symbols and signs or codes. For the Defence, "meaning" is thus intrinsically "open", in the sense that the accessibility or even the existence of a "true meaning" of a work of art is a highly dubious concept in itself, as it relies on the interpretation of symbols, which by nature admit and even encourage different interpretations. Indeed, she is trained to look at contradictions and paradoxes, at those moments when the signified ("meaning") evades the "signifier" (symbol and here words and images do not differ much), as the locus where interpretation becomes both possible and impossible.

This constant awareness of the unreliable nature of "facts" and interpretation is perhaps the element that separates Defence and Prosecution in this trial, as the Prosecution seems to suggest that it is possible to consider "proof" without circumstance (visual input without the influence of the framing narrative).

This is why the Defence has a major difficulty with the aim implied in this trial, and explicitly posited by the prosecution, i.e. to discover or establish the "true meaning" (correct interpretation) of ep.72, and thereby of the character of Daisuke/Duke Fleed/Actarus/Prince d'Euphor throughout the entire series. ("episode 72 is for me the final point of all main characters development, but in particular it's the place where we are shown finally who really Actarus is as a person and can fully understand his personal journey throughout the whole story.")

In a sense, this is true, and even tempting as it satisfies our instinctive need for endings and conclusions, endings that explain and order all. We always tend to judge events and people by their "endings": nobody is a criminal until they are caught, for instance, and this very moment marks the end of their career as "honest citizens". Similarly, to keep the interpretation within the field of Grendizer, we tend to judge the elusive secondary characters by their ending: Atlas, for instance, is perceived as "honourable" because he fights honourably to the end and because he has a moment of self-awareness, where he realises that he has given in to superior power, sold himself and become a killing machine. The same is true for Ergastul and to some extent also for characters such as Alizee. Those who do not experience this sense of honour and self-awareness are disposed of in the "hopelessly bad guys" category. Ultimately, however, our judgment relies on that one factor, the ending.

On the one hand the Defence would like to challenge this idea, the idea that a character can only be judged (finally) at the end. Indeed, we are constantly invited to judge the character of Actarus – each of his actions is in a sense, an invitation to judge: each fight, each statement, each dilemma ... as the hero, Actarus is the centre of moral debate(s) the narrative promotes. To judge his character in the light of the final (emotional) showdown in episode 72 is indeed tempting, as it could provide us with a conclusion to all the questions left open in the narrative, a character-defining moment that closes interpretation and cancels out all questions and paradoxes.

Yet, judging from the reactions on this forum, this is not the effect the episode had, least of all in the case of our dear prosecutor. Indeed episode 72 seems utterly problematic, and rather than “closing” all meanings, episode 72 seems to have opened up a new can of worms just before the end, thus denying the audience the satisfaction of “knowing and understanding it all”. In other words, it opens the narrative to a whole new set of questions that not only challenge everything we had hitherto believed our “hero” to be, but more importantly it reinforces our ignorance of his “reality” past and present. In terms of structure, the ending of the series should bring about clarity both in terms of narrative mysteries, but also in the resolution of the central narrative conflict – “good” is meant to win over “evil”, and we are meant to see “clearly” for the first time. This is precisely NOT what happens in episode 72, as it literally begs for reinterpretation, and, the Defence would venture to argue, it presents us with a (nearly) unsolvable paradox: reconciling “all that was before” with this new/old element in Actarus/Daisuke’s life – and of course this is where the paradox life: this new element was already part of “all that was before”, and thus “all that was before” should also explain this new element.

Now we are presented with two major alternatives: either we try to fit this new element in our existing assessment of the character (or to “make it fit” as it were) or we readjust our opinion of the character to allow this new element to make sense. (Alternatively, we can also grant the character the right to paradox and contradiction in their life, but who wants that?)

It is the first alternative, the one apparently chosen by the Prosecution, that worries me – indeed, imposing coherence on the character in this matter does limit interpretations in other matters dear to the prosecution, if I remember correctly.

Indeed, to give but one instance, if we base our assessment of Actarus’ love/not love for Rubina/Vegalia on his facial expression, as suggested by the prosecution, it becomes difficult to read this expression as an indication that he does not love her, since it is the same facial expression used in all “serious” confrontations with Venusia/Hikaru as well. If facial expression (in this particular situation) is proof that he does not love Rubina/Vegalia, then we cannot admit, within the same interpretation and on the same evidence, that he loves Venusia/Hikaru. His facial expression is earnest, as the situation demands, and expresses “care”, at least, in both cases, but whether it expresses more or less is not clear, without the dialogues, and thus highly debatable.

As these preliminary comments suggest (I have not started yet!! :-)), the Defence does not necessarily disagree with the Prosecution’s analysis and points of view, but we do not accept them as the only possible solutions to or interpretations of the character of Actarus/Daisuke as seen through the correcting lens of episode 72 (that is what this is all about, isn’t it – the way in which episode 72 forces us to reinterpret Actarus/Daisuke and his role in the war and in the narrative, or at least to adjust our interpretation of episode 72 to allow us to keep a coherent picture of his character?).

It will thus be our task, as with the example above (Actarus/Daisuke – Vegalia/Rubina – Venusia/Hikaru) to establish REASONABLE DOUBT as to the validity of the evidence presented by the prosecution. Can there be other ways of interpreting events (internal and external, i.e. production, etc.)? If reasonable doubt can be established, then the coexistence of different interpretation will have to be admitted. I think we can agree on that, can’t we?

+++++

I hope this makes sense ... my lunch break is over and I have to get back to work. Please feel free to intervene.

Ciao, ciao,

Agnes.

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Dear Defense Attorney,  
It seems really smart of you to instore a debate on how a person is actually considered through the lens of his last actions. The endings are what we eventually are. But it's true that the process to this ending should not be forgotten in a thorough analysis. You've made your point and the prosecution will definitely have difficulties to overcome this first statement of yours.  
Congratulations.  
The judge is delighted!!!

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