

6 JAN 2003

SOAP BUBBLES & MATRIOSKE (AN IMPORTANT NOTICE TO ALL READERS)

Holidays are a great invention for sure, especially with a few spare time, a PC and some ideas for a new post about episode 72 floating in mind. But this time I had so many things to say that in the end my post resulted in a SMM (Super-Monstrogoth Message); it's in fact a kind of self-answer to a previous (funny) MM of mine about the Italian edition of ep72 which followed an Agnes' post about soap bubbles in the same episode. As somebody asked me to explain better my opinion about ep72, which I left suspended in my previous MM, I tried to attempt the task at best, but now that I watch the number of printed pages of this effort I feel ashamed of myself and a bit worried you could be annoyed by the length of this post. Yet my aim would be REALLY to launch a discussion about episode 72 with ALL of you because I tend to suppose it's a special and important episode for every Grendizer fan and of course any contribution from anybody would be warmly welcomed (in whatever language of course!)

So I ask for forgiveness in anticipation for me having been so "bavard" and in order to help in the reading of this SMM I give you hereafter a little summary of the topics covered by my ep72 investigation (yeah, I tried to write a not so boring post, hope I succeeded... ☺): this way you could choose to avoid the reading of some paragraphs or you can decide to even read the premises after the final only in case you will find it interesting.

- some general considerations from mine about of ep72
- my personal overview of the episode
- an analysis of some visual aspects related to Actarus & Rubina's relationship
- my theory about the reason of Actarus' desperation at the end of ep72

Let's start the game...hope you will follow me and enjoy!

SOAP BUBBLES & MATRIOSKE (AND EP 72...)

Here I am again – this time finally with a SERIOUS (over)analysis about ep 72, inspired by great Agnes' mail about soap bubbles in this episode left on the Forum some weeks ago. Well, I am afraid maybe I will end enlarging a bit the topic of the discussion – poor you - but I asked Agnes to not tempt me on episode 72 and she did not listen to me... ☺

Agnes main thought – if I have understood correctly her post of course – is that all soap bubbles polluting in ep 72 are there to build a bridge between past, present and future, and particularly to prepare the viewers to the close departure of Actarus and Maria to their native planet. Well, to a good extent I agree - particularly with the idea of the bridge - but I see more in episode 72 than a subtle way to advise us viewers about the possible ending of our favourite show, or the story of Vegalia's love for Duke Fleed. I don't know how many of you had the courage to read my previous mega-MM about Italian edition of ep72, but if you have been so kind to do it you could remind that I told you I believe the screenwriter of ep 72 was a genius. As a matter of fact I think episode 72 is like a matrioska doll.

For more, I believe whole Grendizer anime concept is like a file of matrioske (its multilayred aspects which we talked about sometimes) we are invited to open and play with for 71 episodes, and then all of a sudden we are gifted with the last one which is the most coloured and well dressed but also the most complicated to understand how to open and play with. Call me crazy, but I believe that episode 72 can be considered as the REAL end of Grendizer, as I see episode 73 like its natural continuation and no matter what happens in episode 74 (which is a total mess – I have an opinion about the two final eps but it's not the today topic of the discussion). I mean that 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 – and I am not referring only the period covered by the anime episodes but also his whole life. And his story would have sense only if he DID NOT love Rubina. If contrary, the whole anime would be based in my opinion on a giant plot hole, and all in all I think this possibility is unlikely. Because to me ep72 was directly written by Go Nagai himself – or at least he gave the main inputs to his collaborators - with the purpose to bring back his most loved character from Toei executives in order to give him in his own way the closure he deserved. After all the craps of Araki era, the scriptwriter of ep 72 succeeded in saving the anime giving us back the "adult" story the Author tried to develop during Komatsubara era and that get nearly lost after the change of character designer.

Seeing too much in an anime and writing MM's is a game, of course, but a great game. It's funny and a good mind exercise. Like playing with matrioske: if you are lucky enough to own a group of them you can play with all the big but you can also open them and play with all the other incarnations, or even with only a smaller group. You can fill a room with all your matrioske or place them in an ordered file, in a word you have unlimited possibility to play with. And now I know why I love so much Grendizer: it's to me like a big group of beautiful matrioske and the last one – ep72 - is the most loved & hated because it's stunning but also hard to be opened to see its content.

To continue this game, I could tell you which are the MAIN matrioske I personally find in episode 72 (there are also others but of minor impact IMO):

- 1) Actarus

- 2) Venusia
- 3) Actarus & Venusia
- 3) Alcor
- 4) Maria
- 5) Alcor & Maria
- 6) Maria & Venusia
- 7) Actarus & Alcor
- 8) King Vega
- 9) Zuril
- 10) Planet Fleed
- 11) Planet Earth

and they are all interconnected in such a genial way that really playing with the frame-by-frame tool of the VCR in some moments is an insane but useful system to discover all the hidden tricks. Agnes is right, the "visual" aspects are in this case crucial plus the best and maybe only correct way to approach episode 72 because its dialogues – and we don't know the Japanese version for instance – are not enough to explain what happens. The choice of Araki-Himeno team to design ep72 was the best possible one for instance as only them has the ability given a good script to show in a few frames feelings and situations without the need of explaining words. Episode 72 is a masterpiece in my opinion because of the incredible amount of information which are given to us in such a short time coupled with the most beautiful design I have seen in an anime for years and an animation that in some scenes is still unsurpassed even after 25 years. If I was asked to select a significant example of what is a Japanese anime respect to a classical western cartoon, I think I would probably choose Grendizer episode 72.

No, I have not forgotten Vegalia, but I purposely left her outside of the list. For me she is not a matrioska, but the dress of the main doll which is called ep 72. She is a plot device, nothing more, like Aphelie in ep 25 or Ergastul in ep34 or Alizée in ep63: fake main characters in episodes that have a different purpose and a deeper meaning. I don't mean at all that Rubina has to be disregarded but that her sudden introduction in ep72 – two episodes ahead of the end! - is not a casualty, like it was not an accident Naida's arrival in ep25 – two episodes after Venusia's discover of Actarus true identity. And I am not doing this comparison unintentionally: these two particular episodes are in my opinion strictly related, and not only because of the common topic of Actarus past engagements.

Maybe this introduction has scared somebody – well we are all on the same boat as I am a bit scared of myself too ;-) - but as I can hide behind a PC screen you cannot throw me anything to convince me to stop, eh eh. ;-) So before analysing deeply my little matrioske I would like to add something more about my personal view on the role of episode 72 in Grendizer anime. Stay tuned...

SOAP BUBBLES & MATRIOSKE (AND AN EP 72 INVESTIGATION...)

Overanalysing is a funny game, I told you so. Unfortunately soap bubbles analysis are not my speciality because I have not enough literary background to attempt the task. What I would like to do instead is to continue this playful mind exercise applying an investigation story approach to ep72 overview analysis. Well, I am confessing a secret of mine: it's true that at 12 years old I "fell in love" for Actarus so to speak but as a matter of fact he was not the first fictional character to fascinate me. Because I was 10 when I met Perry Mason on the screen and I was literally blown away. So I started to love investigation stories in parallel with sci-fi. And overanalysing Grendizer – particularly ep72 - is a bit like mixing Colombo with Perry Mason: we already know "who is the killer" (= the end of the story) but also we have anyway to reconstruct some pieces of the puzzle on the basis of the information available and the anime scenes, like if we don't know instead the name of the guilty. Evidences, I am talking about evidences. We won't ever have proves but collecting and ordering little evidences probably we will arrive close to the truth (this is a bit more of a Poirot approach, actually). Hey, I hope we will enjoy this game together!

I believe that you all have understood from my previous mega MM about Italian edition of ep72 that it was totally unexpected to me and I hated it with a passion for years. It was called in Italy "Rivoluzione nello Spazio" but then I would have called it instead "Revolution in Grendizer story". Its ending was so inexplicable to me, Actarus behaviour and desperation were so out of character that I could not believe I was watching really a Grendizer episode and the same "person" I "knew" for so long. And this surprise would be valid whatever interpretation is given to his relationship with Rubina, because that reaction was out of character anyway – his best friend died an episode before and we did not get anything similar, for example. Only recently I finally found an explanation – from my point of view of course – as I succeeded in connecting ep72 with the rest of the anime. My "revelation" is not nevertheless based on the Italian dialogues, even if I could have hints about the fact that probably our edition is more accurate than the French one (see the discussion about the use of first names already undertaken in this Forum a while ago for example); I don't know this for sure and without knowing the Japanese version it is impossible to base any important assumption about this particular episode on whatever dialogues. But we are talking about a cartoon so we can discuss safely about the images because it's the common "rule" we have. Whatever sentences or intonation are said by Daniel Gall or Romano Malaspina, we all have watched the same scenes. For more, we have all seen the same previous 71 episodes so we can undertake an analysis with lots of common information available without taking strictly into account dialogues themselves (with a couple of notable exceptions, but I will explain later what I'm referring to).

I never felt comfortable watching the end of ep72, something always bothered me to no end. I supposed it was because I felt so attached to Venusia that I could not accept Actarus sadness for Rubina's death. But in reality this explanation was not good enough to me – the Why Girl. I knew there was something else. In fact rewatching the episode last summer I finally focused my uneasiness better: it was not the first time I felt that way watching Grendizer, I met the same feeling previously so in ep72 I experienced a déjà-vu. Episode 25 and Actarus "madness": that was my first encounter with a totally unexpected behaviour from my hero and a possible important plot hole (the miraculous recovery). Actually I never considered it as a big issue, as it could have been explained this way: an exaggerated reaction to a sad news mixed with the killing tentative by Aphelie (the madness) and a plot device to let Actarus see Naida before her suicide (the recovery). But

honestly this explanation was not so satisfying even if I was not able to find another one: at least there was a reason. Unlike ep72, as I could not believe Actarus' love feelings for Rubina – and I disputed even this fundamental assumption, go figure – could be able to get that unnatural reaction from him. Yet the deja-vu feeling was there, so I started to consider the possibility of a connection between episodes 25 & 72 and possibly others. Then I discovered myself thinking at the whole anime under a new light and also to last episodes as a possible introduction to ep72 ending itself (by the way I still missed ep71 then but I knew its summary). Let's see if the little evidences I have found are good enough to be considered later like proves of my theory by the jury (= all of you dear friends in this Forum!)....

EVIDENCE 1: THE ARAKI ERA

Shingo Araki took the lead of Grendizer development on ep 49, exactly at Phenicia arrival. I leave to a further discussion the analysis of Marie-Grace character and the reasons and consequences of her introduction; some posts exchanges in the Forum have anyway already underlined the fact that for sure Venusia character was left aside from the story for a number of eps after that moment. But I would add that also Actarus seemed to disappear as a character (someone please tell me that ep 59 is an April Fool...), without talking about Rigel, Mizar and Procton. The mood of the serie changed dramatically, like once again there were doubts about the nature of this anime (remember the discussions here about the serie redesign after ep12?). If I think to eps 52-61 as a whole I would say – from a character development point of view – so what? Apart the horror of ep59, the other episodes have some great moments – I don't want to underestimate them - but I don't see any continuos "attention" to characters different than Alcor and Maria excluding maybe ep 56 for Procton. The story is interesting (Vega fight for survival) and continues of course without major plot holes and with a better skilled design team but for me far away from the emotions of Komatsubara era. It's like somebody (Toei executives?) was trying to transform again Grendizer in something different but without knowing exactly what and how to do (of course this topic would deserve a new MM).

EVIDENCE 2: THE FINAL ARC STRATEGY

Suddenly something changes on ep62. Finally an "old style" episode, with attention to character personalities. And similar impressions arrives to me also from eps 63 on, like once again someone who knew what the real story of Grendizer is about takes the lead of the scripts. Am I crazy to think that Nagai came back to take care of his preferred creature in order to save the real Grendizer anime before it was too late? It's only an hypothesis, but I cannot explain otherwise the new change of the mood of the story. My idea is that, knowing that the serie was only 12 eps ahead from the ending, somebody (Nagai?) decided to try to close the story in the appropriate way and started to prepare the final. In fact I find from now on that episodes finally are centred again around characters and their personalities & relationships (ep 62: Mizar, Actarus & Procton, ep 63: Actarus & Phenicia; ep 64: the Patruille; ep 65: Alcor; ep 66: Rigel & Venusia, Venusia & Actarus). But this is anyway the comeback of old-style coral episodes, where eps 54-61 had fundamentally an only main character on stage (Marie-Grace and partially Alcor).

EVIDENCE 3: THE CLOSING EPISODES STRATEGY

But eps 62-66 are for me only an introduction to the real final arc. The real closing of Grendizer starts with ep 67 and goes on up to ep 73 with an increasing dramatic atmosphere that cannot be – IMO – an accident. Somebody (and who other than Nagai himself?) planned the scripts content in an intelligent way and knowing exactly what was

going to happen later both to the story itself and character personalities. This is my personal overview:

Ep67: the destruction of the submarine base and last Alcor&Maria craziness;

Ep68: the comeback of Planet Flead on the main scene, with Phenicia's pray to Actarus to find a way to end the war as soon as possible after Kein's suicide (one of the exception about dialogues I was referring to previously)

Ep69: the story of 3 fathers and 3 sons involved in different ways in the war; Actarus available to leave the enemy (Zuril's son) escaping safely

Ep 70: again Planet Flead on the main scene, but this time with also a presentation of the relationships between another father figure - the King of Flead - and their sons (this ep is absolutely underrated and would deserve instead a number of posts in my opinion) plus other hints about the relationships status between the four Aigles plus the injury worsening even more

Ep 71: Actarus worry to die before having the possibility to end the war; his past as a prince coming back once again in his life; the parallel between his two best friends; Pollux curing the lethal injury

Ep72: the final tragedy: Actarus' past (=Vegalia) taking the main scene once more, Planet Flead coming back to life; Zuril's death; the last chance to end the war without any further fights (plus tons of other tricks)

Ep 73: a natural consequence of what happens in ep72 (ep74 is another story as I already noticed)

EVIDENCE 4: ARAKI/HIMENO AS DESIGNERS OF EPISODE 72

I defined before Araki era as a crap. Of course I was talking about the lack of ability of Shingo Araki to manage scripts, as it's clear that from a pure design point of view his era has a better average level than Komatsubara's and anyway the introduction of Michi Himeno in the design team from ep50 gifted the anime with unforgettable eps from a visual perspective (ep 50 itself and ep 63 for example). So the choice of the team Araki/Himeno to design such an important episode like number 72 is perfectly understandable. As I remarked previously, Araki/Himeno has a special ability in designing emotions (looks, facial expressions, and so on) and personally I believe that ep72 is under a certain extent a masterpiece from this point of view. Given 23 minutes available for an episode and tons of happenings to show, every fragment could be crucial and Araki/Himeno choice as designers can mean something.

But that's more for me. This episode is very complex and so full of strange particulars that I cannot think to some specific visual aspects as accidents. They instead should have been necessary written in the script and consequently they should have a specific meaning, as otherwise we would be forced to think that – even with such a few days of work available (eps were drawn usually a couple of weeks before the airing) – Araki&Himeno wasted precious time in designing meaningfulness scenes. And personally I consider this hypothesis unlikely.

EVIDENCE 5: RUBINA AND THE POSSIBLE PLOT HOLE

This is the most interesting part of this investigation game. I reiterate that my particular theory about ep72 considers a fundamental assumption: Actarus was forced to engage to Rubina in Flead as the last attempt to save his planet from the possible invasion of Vega and he never loved her; on the contrary when he lived in Flead he was in love for Naida instead. I don't mean that he had bad sentiments towards Vegalia, but feeling some sort of affection for a nice girl is very different from being in love with her (I suppose we can all agree about this general affirmation, right?).

What evidences could we have about a possible love story between Actarus and Rubina? Honestly I am able to identify only three: a couple of anyway ambiguous dialogues fragments (the bedroom and the agony scenes), an ambiguous scene (Actarus reminding Rubina at the lake scene with Phenicia) and Duke Flead's desperate reaction after Vegalia's death. Really a very few indications in my opinion, even if the latter could be considered enough at first sight. But do we have any contrary indication? Well, I believe that the analysis of the visual aspects of ep72 could prove my approach is right – I will undertake it soon after – but anyway I think that my assumption could be demonstrated also from a systematic point of view. Let's overanalyse together ☺

I personally would consider the hypothesis of Duke Flead's love for Rubina as a giant plot hole in the anime, and even able to invalid both its whole meaning and Actarus character presentation. Because we get to know 2 episodes ahead from the end of the story (!!!) an incredible news: Actarus was not only the Duke of Flead, but he was destined to become no less than the King of Vega himself. Yes, my friends, think about it for a second: Rubina was entitled to reign after her father (King Vega himself will confirm it indirectly on ep73) so her husband would have become consequently the future King of Vega. So we would have seen for 71 episodes Actarus fighting against no less than his possible father-in-law, also killing the population of the woman he loved deeply and without interruption from 8 years and that he was originally intended to reign upon, without any particular conscience struggle on the matter (I mean, he has several but not this one). Come on, my friends, has this any sense, given the story we have seen and the character of Actarus who was presented to us up to ep72? We are talking about an anime which blew our souls away particularly for the attention to characters personalities: how is it possible to have a similar sudden contradiction in Actarus after 71 eps of coherency?

It's true that Actarus is always presented as a peaceful man who does not like to kill anybody and tries to avoid the death of the enemy when possible, but exactly this part of his personality can exclude for me that he was in love with Rubina or otherwise we would face a giant plot hole. In fact, if contrary, why the hell he did never search for Vegalia before, at least to get aid from her to stop the war? We see Actarus fight and suffer for 71 episodes because of the war and the fact that he is the only one that can drive Grendizer and so trying to defend planet Earth in order to avoid it to undergo a similar terrific experience as Flead, while instead he could have simply and happily asked for his beloved King Vega's daughter's aid to overcome all problems??? Pardon??? What an incredible plot hole would be this? And it would have lasted from the beginning, so in my opinion the whole anime story concept would result this way totally fake. (Well, it could even be – we are talking about a cartoon after all – but personally I think it's unlikely. We have discussed and agreed so many times about Grendizer internal coherency, so honestly discovering an invalidating point at the end it's something that I would evaluate as an extreme ratio and only if no other explanation would be possible.)

For more: Actarus was a fugitive for 4 years before arriving on Earth: why he did not marry Vegalia in the meantime if he loved her so much? Lack of time, lack of information about her location? Come on, she was the heir to Vega's throne, i.e. the future queen of the largest empire of the universe; later she gets also an official role as Planet Ruby's governor. If Actarus wanted to marry her, for sure he would have found the way to track her down. By the way, it would have been also a good and peaceful way to have a revenge against King Vega who destroyed Flead. As Vegalia proposes a new wedding to

Actarus in ep72, it's clear that it was not impossible from a "political" or "legal" point of view for her to marry him, so no obstacles would have existed for the marriage even before.

Nobody knew about this engagement and possible deep love of Actarus for the princess of Vega – no character including his sister mentions it for 71 eps - so we should suppose that:

- a) Actarus suffered of amnesia and did not recall of it up to ep 72 (yeah, right)
- b) he talked to his friends about it "out of the screen" but nobody cared or thought about the possible consequences (yeah, right again)
- c) he was the one who wanted nobody to know about this past engagement because he did not love her and that particular of his past life was one of the memories of his role in planet Flead he desperately tried to overcome – see previous MMs on the Forum on this topic - (more likely to me). In fact no reasons exist for me from a storytelling point of view for Actarus to purposely keep the secret with earthlings about his love affair with Rubina (without talking about Matrioska n°3, but this is another story out of the scope of this post).

Lastly, Actarus does not tell his friends the reason why he is so upset at the balcony scene of ep72 (the other exception to the "no dialogues" rule, but I understand that French and Italian versions are more or less the same here). No words from him neither about the possible wedding nor - and this is even more incredible - about the good news about planet Flead. If Actarus is in love with Rubina, why the hell he does not rush to the Centre jumping for the joy for his native planet coming back to life and for having met again the woman he loved from 8 years and who can for more offer peace on a silver plate? For what we see in the episode, Rubina dies instead without earthlings (including Phenicia) even officially knowing about planet Flead news and what negotiation is going on. I reiterate that to me this has no sense at all.

Sorry, but unless the scriptwriter of ep 72 was mad or hired 5 minutes before the starting of the designing phase without knowing anything about Grendizer story and its characters – and I reiterate that for me there are instead enough evidences of ep 72 being devised and written by Nagai himself - I cannot believe that the hypothesis of Actarus being in love for Vegalia is feasible. There must be of course an explanation about Actarus desperate reaction to her death, but it cannot be the loss of the woman he loved. The explanation should necessarily be different. So the investigation game must continue...(whoooo, I am enjoying so much – I am really THAT crazy, am I? ☺)

SOAP BUBBLES & MATRIOSKE (AND EP 72 VISUAL ASPECTS...)

As I told you, I have a lack of knowledge in poetic and literature references, so my approach to soap bubbles is at risk to be incorrect or too much "rational" so to speak. But this is only a funny online investigation game, so if I fail I won't suffer any bad consequence (or a bad mark!). So I will try anyway an (over-over-over)analysis of the visual aspects of ep72, I hope to have anyway learned some good lessons from my Crazy Trio friends...;-)

I am not going to analyse here all the little matrioske I identified previously: the purpose of this post is to find an alternative explanation to Actarus reaction to Rubina's death different from his love for her. Because – like in every investigation - even underlining the systematic aspects that contradict an hypothesis, without discovering an alternative solution the simpler assumption must be considered the most feasible one (yes, now I have confessed my love also for Agatha Christie...in fact I have already left a little seed about my basic idea eh eh,...).

What visual indications are we able to get from episode 72 about Actarus attitude towards Rubina? Well, whatever dialogues we are listening to, we can see that:

- 1) at the lake scene with Phenicia, while reminding for a brief moment a young Vegalia, Actarus expression is mostly inscrutable: no particular feelings are revealed by his face. Personally I think this scene has the main purpose to directly connect Rubina and Actarus for the first time in the episode and nothing more, as Actarus reminds her soon after looking at his sister jumping in lake while he is playing guitar (and his memory is in fact related to the boat trip in Fleed which has more or less the same particulars), but it could even be a nostalgia thought from him so I put this scene in the ambiguous evidence list.
- 2) the first reaction of Actarus when he first meets Rubina (= when she presents herself) is of total surprise (his expression is clearly visible even under the helmet)
- 3) after a few scenes, when Rubina's spacer arrives close to Grendizer and he sees her for the first time, he is surprised once again seeing her crying for joy, like he did not expect her to have still feelings for him (his motion of surprise is clearly designed)
- 4) while Grendizer and Rubina's spacer flies in parallel and she continues to cry for joy, he for sure does not share a tear or a possibly happy expression. A natural reaction from a man deeply in love for a woman who he did not see for 8 years, right?
- 5) when Vegalia's spacer is ahead of Grendizer some seconds later, Actarus expression is everything but moved or happy; I would call it instead angry or hateful
- 6) at the first flowered grass scene, she runs to him joyfully, while he makes only a couple of steps outside Grendizer giving to me the same feeling of a dead man walking
- 7) when Vegalia recalls the Fleed dialogue she is designed full of enthusiasm at the idea of the possible wedding, unlike Actarus who for the most time avoids to look at her including the moment he tells her his best possible compliment (if I would like to do another exception to the no-dialogues rule, I would add that of all possible word exchange between two lovers Rubina is not able to find anything better to remind her man how deeply in love he was for her 8 years ago than that he told her she was "beautiful like a flower" or "you are a little red flower" – depending from the versions. Wow, I really hope nothing similar ever happens to me).
- 8) once Vegalia has proved her identity, Actarus attitude does not change at all. So we cannot suppose that his previous behaviours were due to the possible disbelieving about meeting really the girl he loved as now he doesn't neither smile nor show any little joyful reaction in being 5 meters close to his unforgettable love.

9) the first emotional reaction from Actarus arrives instead when Rubina shows him the picture of Flead. Even through the helmet, we are clearly exposed to his surprise and shock.

10) after learning the good news about his native place, Actarus turns to look at the sky (I suppose towards Flead – no alternatives are possible for me) and continue to rest motionless along whole Rubina's discourse about the need for them to get married in order to end the war and allow Vega population to transfer on his native planet. Actarus does not stop to look at the sky not even when he comments about her proposal. He looks at her only for a second when she embraces him but soon after his eyesight comes back to the sky again and we see a tear falling from his left eye. Again I get an unique impression: no love feelings towards Vegalia at all, and instead the complete different guess that his thoughts are all concentrated on planet Flead only

11) in my opinion, the balcony scene is one of the best one of whole Grendizer anime, and personally I can hardly find anything worth of a comparison even in other cartoons. It's so full of tricks that really playing with the frame-by-frame tool of the VCR could be the key for appreciating all the hidden matrioske in it. But anyway this is for sure the topic for a new post. What I would like to underline here from this particular scene is instead the total lack of enthusiasm from Actarus after the first meeting with the woman he is supposed to love and willing to marry from 8 years. His facial expression is instead sad, worried and distressed. Actarus is looking at the sky while Alcor, Phenicia and Venusia arrive, he does not change attitude when his dearest friend and his sister talk to him and reverses his eyesight to the ground when he turns to come back to the building. Yet he has just received the best possible news for him: he could marry the woman he has been loving from such a long time and he could go back to live with her as a prince on his native planet. Sorry, I find the visual aspects of the Centre balcony scene in total contradiction with the love affair hypothesis. However we know Actarus as a reserved person and usually without an expansive personality, this seems to me really too much. IMO something is wrong here if he has a love story going on with Vegalia; the visual evidences seem instead to let me believe that Actarus is in deep trouble and probably facing a conscience struggle

12) more or less the same visual evidences arrive from the Centre control room scene, where Actarus has a worried expression after Vegalia's call: he turns his eyesight left and right with what I intend is a scared expression – like somebody who is discovered doing something forbidden for example - then rushes out of the room without a word. Without getting too much romantic, a really inexplicable behaviour if Actarus would have listened to his beloved woman asking him to reach her for a meeting.

13) the bedroom scene is somewhat visually interesting too. First of all, it takes place at the ranch – we will discover it later – so this could mean that the new meeting with the princess of Vega was not generally considered as a feasible hypothesis so the whole Patruille (including Actarus) is confident enough to move to sleep in a quiet place away from the Centre. Then Actarus once again seems to have more a serious than happy expression for the perspective to meet again his girlfriend. And we can notice that he never looks at Alcor for the whole scene. Lastly, the most interesting particular to me is that, whatever words Actarus says to define his relationship with Rubina, he maintains the serious expression and even closes his eyes at the very crucial words, like if he is recalling a painful memory. It's an ambiguous situation, because the painful memory could be both leaving Vegalia due to Flead destruction (French version) or recalling an imposed wedding (Italian edition). But for sure, talking about his relationship with Rubina seems to not let him show any happy look.

14) finally, after circa 20 minutes out of 23 of total duration, we see Actarus moved towards Rubina when she reveals the exact location of the Moon Base. Interesting coincidence. I don't dispute the fact that he is sad for her being close to die, but I would add also something else. May I suppose that his main feeling now is guiltiness for being the cause of a betrayal and getting to know in such a way that crucial information?

15) Actarus anyway does not share a tear along whole Vegalia's agony. He is very calm instead and seems to be in control of the situation. Like in every other similar circumstances faced before: to remind only the most recent episodes, Kein's suicide in ep68 – a guy he should have known as he was a childhood friend of his sister – and Pollux death just the ep before. I would say that being close to loose the beloved woman should be for every sensible man a bit worse than every other situation, right? Well, it's not the impression I receive looking at this scene, whatever dialogue I am hearing. For sure this is another ambiguous scene, but anyway I don't find particular evidences of an Actarus' strong attachment to Rubina

16) only after Rubina is dead we visually face a total change in Actarus attitude, suddenly increasing from sadness (his first tears) to a total desperation (the first scream, the erratic circle, the rush through the flowered grass, the other scream at the precipice). One evidence in favour of the lovestory opposite to 11 in total contradiction and 4 that can be evaluated in both ways. Well, not exactly, we still have to examine a couple of further evidences

17) the very final scene of episode 72 is another surprise. Actarus is shown looking at the daylight without a single tear in the eyes (this scene should happen few moments after the desperate cry as the sun started to appear during Rubina's agony) and with a strong and fiery expression. Okay, maybe I am stupid, but I don't understand how this is possible if his desperation was due to the death of the woman he loved. I must otherwise suppose his desperation was caused by something different in order to let this final scene to have a meaning.

18) I admit I am not completely honest in jumping to ep73, but another evidence I would like to underline is related to the scene where Procton's satellite is flying to the moon and Actarus recalls Rubina telling him the location of his father's base. Again, no particular moved expression is shown from his side, he is serious but not sad or desperate thinking about her. I find this strange and to be generous I would define this as an ambiguous evidence taking into account Araki is not the designer of this episode so there could be some inaccuracy in the drawing (which I believe anyway unlikely – but the final episodes are another topic deserving MMs!!!)

19) to close the evidence collecting, I would like to recall briefly some visual aspects of episode 25. In that case, Actarus rushes to Aphelie with a big smile on the face when they first meet, he embraces her, he shows joy and anger and sadness during their talks and he is not afraid to introduce her to his friends. Ep25 is the only episode we are shown Actarus as a passionate man (to quote a few examples: he and Aphelie rolling on the grass, Actarus caressing her face with a flower and then keeping their hands together while running to the lake). His eyes are always shining when he and Naida are together. Call me a stupid romantic girl, but what I see in ep25 from Actarus is not friendship but love. A "teeny" kind of love maybe but anyway love. For instance, ep25 is designed by the same person as ep72 (Shingo Araki) so a possible not co-ordination between drawing teams should be excluded. And I would add that lots of hints in ep25 let me suppose that also in this case the script has probably to be entitled mainly to Go Nagai himself, so I believe the different attitudes shown by Actarus in ep25 and ep72 with the two girls have been purposely included in the storyboard in order to let us understand something.

At the end of this playful investigation, the final count of visual evidences about Actarus/Rubina relationship is to me 1-13-5 (love - no lovestory - ambiguity). So, even considering as a pure theoretical hypothesis that all ambiguous evidences are in favour of the love affair, the contrary indications are anyway more than double.

Coupling this result from visual indications analysis with the systematic considerations of the previous paragraph, I personally exclude that the script of ep72 meant Actarus being in love with Rubina. She is of course in love with him but not viceversa.

But collecting evidences is not enough in an investigation, even if only playful: to convince a jury, it's necessary also to establish an harangue. So I am going to end now this funny game with my personal theory about the real reason behind Actarus sudden desperate behaviour after Rubina's death. Follow me if you like... ;-)

SOAP BUBBLES & MATRIOSKA N°1 (AND MY OPINION ON EP72 FINAL SCENES MEANING AT LAST...)

Finally this playful investigation game is nearly finished: I think to have collected all possible evidences related to Actarus and Rubina (lack of) love affair, so I should be able to explain to the virtual jury of this Forum my theory. I know it has been a long journey, but I love investigation stories so much...I enjoyed playing this game really, so I hope you will forgive me if it took me a bit to reach the final point. ☺

I said in this SMM introduction that episode 72 has IMO a deeper meaning than the story of a possible forgotten love or a simple preparation to episode 74 ending. I think in fact ep72 is one of the possible keys to the entire anime and it's placed here in the final countdown to tell us something fundamental about Actarus personality.

What is the biggest matrioska of all in Grendizer? I believe from what I have read up to today on this Forum that everybody here agree about the wide spectrum of topics covered by this anime and that it has deeper meanings apart – obviously – entertainment and business. And my personal answer is that one of the core topics of Grendizer is Actarus personal journey, in a way that he is the real tragic figure of the story. Because to me Grendizer is mainly the story of a tragedy, the tragedy of a man that cannot escape his destiny. A typical Nagai approach for instance, and honestly coherent with his usual storytelling style (Devilman, Jeeg, ...). Nagai has never written romantic tales and he has always enlighten more the "dark aspects" of life more than its happy side. And I personally recognise the same approach to be present also in Grendizer (I know, I know, this is a possible further MM to come..).

What happens really during episode 72? Well, here is my vision. Actarus discovers for the first time that the peace is a real possibility: the war could finally end and Planet Earth would be saved if he accepts to marry Rubina. For more, his new-born planet Fleed could be part of a diplomatic exchange with the man who destroyed his native place as he could allow the enemy to live in Fleed instead of its original population. So Actarus must reconsider his whole life once again.

He already offered his life to save peace when he accepted his father's request to engage to Vegalia even without loving her (it's not said explicitly neither in ep25 nor in ep72, but given his joy in meeting Aphelie it's possible that he split with her for the official engagement purpose. It's only an hypothesis of course but I don't find it totally unlikely). Despite his father's tentative, Fleed was anyway attacked – personal opinion: it would be interesting to know why, maybe somebody did something wrong from a diplomatic point of view? Actarus is able to escape thanks to Grendizer, but cannot save neither his family nor his friends nor his real girlfriend nor anyway his population. I believe he brings with him throughout his life as a fugitive and also on Planet Earth a terrible sense of guiltiness for this. He tries to start a complete new life with a new name, a new father, a new job and a "low profile" so to speak. Nothing to recall he was Duke Fleed. So as Vega forces attack Earth he decides this time he will stay and fight until the very end. But when Aphelie accuses him to be a traitor, his guiltiness feelings totally overcome him, because he has always believed in the deep of his heart he maybe did not do enough to save his people. In fact when Naida tries to kill him, Actarus is already "mad" (his expression is fixed and he does nothing to stop her). Locked in the room while Venusia and Aphelie talk, he is persecuted by the ghosts of planet Fleed dead population (maybe these are some of the

scenes censored in France, but they were shown in the Italian edition). Well, hoping to not offend anyone, I would say Actarus' craziness in ep25 is more similar to depression than madness; in fact Procton's cure is not a miracle but has the characteristics of a strong electroshock - a method very rarely but still sometime used in early 70s for high depression cases (Jerome, I owe you this theory of mine from such a long time by the way... ☺ hope you like it).

After having overcome in some ways the guiltiness feelings following Aphelie's forgiveness, Actarus must face another trouble: the poisoning injury. He is substantially a dead man walking who wants to use his last days for a good cause. He cannot plan a long distance future for himself but he can anyway give a future to his friends. But destiny has more surprises for Actarus: first his sister come back in his life and finally – just when he worries to have a very short time still available to live and accomplish his task - Pollux cures his injury and allows him to totally change once more the perspective of his life.

Soon after this last incredible event (by the way, I would have some ideas about the timeline of the last episodes of the anime), Vegalia arrives with the news about planet Flead and the offer of peace. What could it mean for Actarus? He never loved her, but his personal sacrifice would at the same time save Planet Earth, Vega population and give a new sense to his life. He could even have the opportunity to become the King of Vega so being the master of that "evil" empire and possibly influence its "bad" politic. This would mean he should change once again his lifestyle and become again Duke Flead for good, but would his personal sacrifice worth it?

That's why I believe the scriptwriter of episode 72 was a genius and very likely Grendizer's creator himself. Here is the explanation to Actarus tears while looking at the sky towards planet Flead, to his distressed expression at the balcony scene, to his silence about the news about his native planet even with his sister: he is facing a terrible conscience struggle. And here is the explanation to his decision to go anyway to the second meeting with Rubina: he wants to communicate her that he is available to accept her proposal - the wedding and the transfer of Vega population to Flead in exchange of peace and salvation for Earth. Here is also the explanation both to Actarus change of attitude and his words during Vegalia's agony, and to Venusia's pain as she suddenly guesses what Actarus would have wanted to do. When Rubina dies betraying for more her father, in reality Actarus sees dying together with her the last possibility to end the war in a peaceful way, because he knows very well that King Vega is probably going to attack in desperation with all available forces now that his only daughter is no more alive. And in that moment all his internal ghosts and his guiltiness feelings overcome him once more – like in ep25 – so he screams in desperation. How many people are still going to die because of him, how many persons will still loose their lives in the tentative to save his one, what can he do to save Earth now, why not even this time he was allowed to use his life to bring peace? Like in ep25, his desperate cry and "madness" are the result of a guiltiness feeling (ep25: being a traitor and the "killer" of the last life form of Flead people – ep72: Vegalia dying to save him and betraying her father to demonstrate her sincerity), but this time his pain is doubled by the awareness that Rubina's death means the end of any dream of peace and the possible destruction of Planet Earth, with further ghosts of dead people to persecute him forever.

And here is the explanation to the final scene of ep72, the meaning of Actarus look without a tear and his fiery expression. His desperation has lasted briefly this time, because Actarus has defeated his ghosts for good now: he is going to end the war, he will use

Vegalia's information to attack the Moon Base, and if he succeeds to win he will return to his native planet because his destiny is to be Duke Flead. Actarus personal journey is ended and now he knows what his life is meant to be.

Okay, those of you who are thinking I am totally out of my mind are probably right. ☺ And I for sure won't ever confess in my life how long it took me to write this SMM ...;-) but it was in any case a very funny way to spend some spare time during holidays in a little mind exercise ☺ Hope you have enjoyed this investigation game; of course I will gladly welcome jury's verdict whatever it is. Luckily for you and me, I have a degree in law but my current job is very different....

Love to all,
Gerdha

(proud member of The Crazy Trio – which is still waiting for more subscriptions)

☺

PS: Agnes, I am sorry and please forgive me as I did not probably answer in reality to your soap bubbles post, but now you know why it was dangerous to challenge me on ep72...this poor Forum was intended to a MM invasion from my side!!! ;-) because I have still to analyse the other matrioske!!! Well, see you next holidays?!

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Jérôme
well Your the Cicero of our times!!!
Tue Jan 7 00:09:05 2003
212.198.0.96

Dear Gerdha, I must say that your analysis has thrilled me and convinced me in many ways if not totally. It's impressive and indeed I must agree and see that the French version is somewhat corrupted. Your vision of Actarus finding a new hope is great : 1) he's cured therefore he can project himself in the future, he may outlive this bloody war and stay on Earth with his dear friends (and why not marry Venusia? we can dream, can't we?).

2) ep 72, Vegalia arrives with breaking news : Euphor is recovering and she proposed him in order to save both Earth and the dying Vega Empire. Here your analysis is even more impressive. I would add that somehow just one episode after being able to see the light of a future, Actarus is again drown back into his own destiny which he can't escape. Wether he accepts Vegalia's proposal against his own will or the war might go on and on. Vegalia when rejected could even become as evil as his father in order to get even with him and would seek revenge. That's why he's got to accept and forget his own feelings once more. His life is again a sacrifice.

3) Rubina's death means the end of this futile and awful hope. The war is again a war of attrition meant to destroy completely the enemy. And nothing will slow down Vega now that his daughter is dead.

4) That can explain surely the attack on the moon base.

5) Another hint for Actarus' crazyness : He may have realized that had he known it before he may have sought for Vegalia before. She could have been an ally before. But what should he have known? The only answer is that she was in love with him. He never somehow suspected it because it was an arranged marriage and that he didn't love her. Therefore he thought that it was the same for her : she couldn't love him either. And maybe the attack on Fleed was the result of her refusing to go on with this masquerade.

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Agnès

Woohooo! (-) and I need some coffee ...)

Tue Jan 7 00:20:13 2003

193.168.1.253

Wowoowoww, Gerdha! That was an interesting read. Did you know that Poirot is my favourite detective? I recognised his touch even before you mentioned him!!!

A lot of what you say makes sense, though I need to reread all of this before I even attempt an answer. If you don't mind, I would like to continue the game, and since you used the "trial" metaphor, I will try to come up with a "defense" of the love story theory (everybody has the right to the defense, even silly love-stories!) before we reach a conclusion. (If we ever do!)

To be honest, and to give you a little hint as to what my personal opinion on the matter is, I think that the love/arranged marriage theories, which you separate absolutely, are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and indeed, if we accept both/part of them simultaneously, the story can still make sense, and the character of Actarus can also remain coherent, though he may become darker and more ambiguous, which is the way I always perceived him.

What do you think - should I, or any other member of this community, attempt a "defense" of the love-story metaphor?

I'll have to start collecting evidence tonight (watching ep. 72, yeahhh!)

Thanks again for this wonderful SMM. And HAPPY NEW YEAR to everybody on this Forum.

Ciao, ciao,

Agnes.

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