



Jérôme

meaning... + Ergastul ep 34

Thu Nov 21 07:56:58 2002

212.198.0.96

Hi Gerdha, Execrable means unbearable, loathsome, abominable, so You guessed accurately by writing 'worst'...

I watched yesterday the episode with Ergastul (ep 34). I don't know the name he had in Italian. I was quite surprised again I may say by the fact that this enemy changed his mind and actually killed himself by not defending him properly against Actarus and Goldorak. He died with the asterohache in his torso holding flowers in one hand, wishing his planet hadn't been destroyed.

Once again i do have several question : first the Golgoth didn't explode, so what happened to it? Ok a plot hole maybe or it's irrelevant.

Then I rediscovered this episode which I had almost forgotten, and I found it to be wonderfully designed and drawn. Actarus is most handsome and Alcor appears more mature. Do you know who drew it?

Plus I do find this episode intriguing. indeed the episode 33 saw Actarus saving a little bird and falling from the horse he was riding. in this episode a bird is killed by Ergastul when he played the harmonica. Is this another trick somehow? Ergastul is also saved by Actarus when he nearly drowned. through this deed, our prince appears as usual expressing his mercy, but somehow he has to kill his 'enemy' later own. All these contradictions and oppositions (the plot I mean) appear to me as essential to show once more the difficulties Actarus has to get to the killing. He's obliged to do it, regrets it later on but when fighting does it and even sometimes enjoys it. In that I do believe Actarus expresses humanity far more than most other heros in anime or anything else. He caught up in a guilt complex and has to overcome it all the time. In a sense, like a child who has to lie to his parents to get to have a life of his own (haven't we all done that), he has to lie to himself, fight his own nature and essence to reach his humanity, that humanity that somehow he wants to deny himself in order to fight. In that i do believe he's like an ancient hero, such as Ulysses or Oedipus who were caught up in a drama they couldn't control. Actarus can't either. I'm quite sure that somehow Nagai must have analysed his characters through these classical tragedy lenses. And as far as I remember (even though I never saw them) he used a lot of references to the Greek times in Great Mazinger...

What do you think? I hope I wasn't too obscure in that long post...

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Agnès

warning MMmmm :-)

Fri Nov 22 00:08:56 2002

212.24.201.29

Interesting indeed. I do think that Actarus is an ambiguous character in more than one way (this is even more apparent in the manga version), and it does seem particularly relevant in this particular episode.

Usually, we take Actarus' ambiguity to mean that he has divided feelings about fighting, that he loathes war, but is given no choice.

In fact, I do think that Actarus is a bit "darker" and there is a less "likable" side to his character. His first reaction to Alcor (and his admittedly ridiculous OVT) is interesting in this respect, and though one could argue that he is worried for Alcor's safety, at the beginning, his behaviour towards him is "condescending" at best. There is one scene (in the first or second episode, I don't quite remember), where Alcor confronts him openly and tries to start a fight (the famous "comment un palefrenier peut-il savoir de telles choses" scene, where Actarus first warns everyone that the red moon is a sign that something is about to happen).

His reaction is one of non-violence (he pushes away Alcor's hand and leaves the room) but his expression is one of utter arrogance and contempt, which is not a sentiment we usually associate with him. At this stage, he clearly does not consider Alcor as an equal, and "fitting into human society", as an equal amongst equals, I should say, is part of his own personal development. From the beginning, Actarus appears as a multilayered character who can also be rather unpleasant and even arrogant at times.

In 'Le mercenaire de l'oppression', he is not only dealing with an equal, but with the kind of person he could have become, had it not been for the love and friendship of his friends on earth. This is something that he is very aware of (learning to be human, and less of a macho-man certainly did require considerable efforts and compromises on his side). He does not want to fight, or kill, Ergastul, and he even identifies with him, but he knows that he may have to.

In many ways, Ergastul's posturing reveals a medieval sense of self and personal importance. His provocations, his use of Venusia as a bait/prize (perverted though it may be – you don't get to keep but to kill the woman) is reminiscent of a medieval tournament (where legendary knights/enemies fought for the 'favour' of the lady, but where only one of them, the "good knight" actually respects her as a person) and Ergastul especially seems to exhibit this type of behaviour (the taunting and his insistence on winning, etc).

At the same time, his character is also perceived in animalistic ways (I won't mention fighting over females here :-)). Indeed, he is presented as no longer fully human (or whatever the Vestalie equivalent may be) but part wolf or werewolf, into which he actually transforms. He openly admits to having lived with wolves to learn their behaviour. In the series, wolves and wolf-like behaviour are often used as an antithesis to civilisation and the repression of animalistic instincts, which are seen as negative (vengeance, greed etc. cf. Procyon's comments in 'Le festin des loups').

This mixture of a medieval sense of self with animalistic tendencies (which we do sometimes associate with the Middle Ages) is I think, something that Actarus himself is not quite immune to. Yet his behaviour in this episode celebrates the victory of reason over unguided instinct (symbolised by the wolves). Actarus does not want to kill, and even saves, his adversary, thereby extending the hand Procyon and his friends have offered him to Ergastul and clearly positioning himself as "human" (the word "human" is to be taken in its positivist or humanist sense here). This, and Venusia's comment on Actarus' nature ("C'est un prince. Il est bon comme devraient l'être tous les princes" or something to that effect), allow him to reconnect with his human side, the way most of the lost souls (whose souls were actually stolen by the Vega and his regime of terror), do throughout the series.

The final tournament takes place, and though their armours (Goldorak and Anterak) still signal the good and the evil knight, Ergastul has managed to reclaim his soul (the imagery here is "kitsch" as ever: he sees his little sister gathering flowers (!), which echoes Venusia's intervention and her appraisal of Actarus as the real prince – she was bringing flowers to his sickroom when she made that comment.)

In conclusion, I would say that Ergastul can be read as an alter-ego for the Prince, an echo of what he could have become. In this particular way his story also reinforces the main moral message of the series, which invites us to choose sense and generosity in times of conflict rather than the spiralling violence of unbridled emotions and revenge.

Thanks for reading all of this. You were very brave!

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Bernard Cunningham

Designer de l'épisode 34 (en français)

Fri Nov 22 01:11:39 2002

24.226.240.216

Le designer de l'épisode 34 est le même mec qui a dessiné les épisodes 31-43-47-54-59-60-65-66-70 entre autres.

Le style de ses visages, est selon moi, celui qui se rapproche le plus des visages que dessinait Gô Nagai dans ses mangas...

L'épisode 34 reste un de mes préférés, même si je n'aurais pu le verbaliser aussi bien qu'Agnès et Gherda. Merci mesdemoiselles...

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[Jérôme](#)*Accurate and I do agree...*

Fri Nov 22 04:56:39 2002

212.198.0.96

with most of your MM message. Your analysis is quite impressive in a sense but even if I see the connection with the Middle Ages Knights and Ladies relationships (in other words 'l'amour courtois'), i do think that the whole episode hence the series is influenced by ancient mythology as well. We do find in the Ancient Times a lot of possible explanations for the scenario and especially for the psychological analysis of the characters. Moreover since you were implying that the series had been influenced by a kind of feudalism, this would undoubtedly come from Japan's history itself since according to most scholarly research, Japan is the only country in the world to have developed feudalism in the way it aroused and spread in Europe from the 11th till the end of the 15th century, when Humanism and Renaissance clashed the old ways of thinking enlarging the European conception of the world and affirming the birth of the individual.

So I would say that Japan feudalism (and amour courtois but we find that in Japan as well cf : Le Dit Du Genji) + ancient Greek mythology have deeply influenced Goldorak and the way the characters were developed. Especially in their relationships with one another, that of women and men, parents and children, that of siblings, and most of all towards war and manhood.

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[Agnès](#)

AVOID - unless you like intellectual flights of fancy ...

Fri Nov 22 07:36:35 2002

212.24.201.113

Thank you for your comments and reactions! They are thought-provoking indeed, as you will probably find out from this very messy message! (apologies in advance)

I wasn't disagreeing with you on the classical stuff, and indeed, I do agree, especially with your comments on Japanese feudalism, though I didn't want to start discussing that as well, because that would also involve discussing codes of honour, (VERY RELEVANT, but THAT would make for a megaMM, I'm afraid.) What you said just "inspired" my own interpretation.

I was thinking of a type of feudal system too, though I am not quite sure that the relationship between the characters is feudal in the strict sense (as in hierarchy + loyalty) at that point. Hence my use of the term "medieval", which may not have been entirely appropriate, especially as it involves a perception of self as "better" or "in a different league" perhaps(?) in Europe, and may differ according to culture and place.

I wasn't thinking about "amour courtois" or "literature courtoise" specifically, but that too is an interesting point of view. In fact, I was referring to the actual representation of the role and position of women in society (woman as object/property, means to transmit your property from one generation to the next etc.). What did strike me was the fact that Venusia's position in that particular scene is that of the goal or prize, and that she is objectified (which is not really culture- or period-specific, sadly). I also thought that the idea of seeing Goldorak and E.'s antarak as armours was both amusing and potentially stimulating.

Indeed, weapons and armours are tools of war, and how they are used depends on who wears them. In many ways that too, is one of the essential messages in Goldorak. (Perhaps I was also thinking of Gundam's concept of "mobile armours" at the time.)

Anyway, this should explain the European references. There are obvious "classical" features (the classical concept of tragedy and characterisation would among these, as you point out), but there again I am not always sure as to what is Japanese and what is western. That is perhaps due to the nature of myths and mythologies, and the fact that in some uncanny ways they do echo each other. (you mention 'Le dit du Genji' - can you tell me more about it?)

It would be interesting to look at all the different "influences" in Goldorak, though, don't you think? Even graphically, we find Rome/Ancient Greece, the European Middle Ages (both in Euphor flashbacks), the Wild West and Japanese Traditions (Rigel and the New Year's episodes) and even Central America (the very popular Banta). How can we interpret this? Are they meant to represent precisely that - the existence of difference and its influence on and interaction with a given (here the Japanese) society? In a sense, perhaps, what you say about the Renaissance and Humanism in Europe is essentially true of the series as well: in many ways, identities are being renegotiated here - whether on the level of generations, or gender, or race - and in many ways too there is a shift from the traditional communal concept of society towards a more individualistic perception of life. Japan, as it appears in the series, is at the crossroads and in negotiation with itself - its past and the results of a clash with other cultures and worldviews.

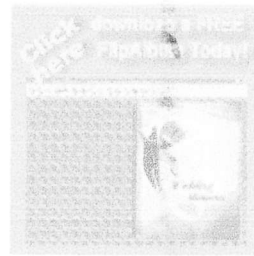
Perhaps I should add that I would not have looked at any of these as "direct" or "conscious" influences, but more as categories that to some extent transcend time and place and may take different forms and shapes according to the culture(s) one is moving in. My categories would obviously be "European" as that is what I am ... :-)

Thanks for reading this ... and sorry if you're bored. Can't say I didn't warn you ... :-)

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Jérôme

I'm not bored...on the contrary...

Fri Nov 22 19:55:22 2002

212.198.0.96

It's interesting and gerdha will perhaps add her own ideas to these posts, which I didn't expect to develop that way, I mean in that 'intellectual' "scholastique". I'll try to answer as best as I can :

1st Le dit Du Genji is one of the most revered story in Japan since it's the story of a prince, his loves his adventures on more than 800 pages. It was written in the 12th century if my recollection is good, and I never read it completely (lack of time, energy...), since as for many classics it can be extremely boring though interesting.

I guess we've talked in other posts about codes of honour (I don't know if you took part in them, but Gerdha did), in that matter I mentioned as far as I can remember Mishima and the impact he had (good or bad) and the way he could embody this transforming Japan (you mentioned in this post : past vs future/ woman emancipation/ Other cultures influences) torn between its traditions and its technologies, world economy and attraction for what's European for instance. In Goldorak there is definitely this code of honour and I do agree with you that Actarus is far more complicated than the Nice (hence boring) hero that one might want to only see in him. He fight his own instincts, he can be condescending, selfish, self indulged... But this gives him relevance and personality. He's far more interesting that way otherwise would we be discussing him so often? there must be something there or are we just taking an excuse to get out for a moment of our day to day lives?

Anyway, I most agree with you about Venusia, though I never quite went that far in my thinking than you did. The reason might be simple, I'm not a woman, and though I do share your feelings and fight for emancipation, and feel concerned by it as for other fights by minorities or other communities, I remain a man hence I may be sometimes guilty and enslaved by my gender's reactions, prejudices and behaviour. I try not to be and honestly I hope I do well.

Indeed Goldorak is an armour and I never thought of Gundam wing as a comparison (may I admit that I'm not a Gundam wing fan).

Don't you think that somehow the fact that Goldorak didn't have the success expected in Japan is because it was so culturally different or mixed as you pointed it out? This may be a hint!

As for the clash of the cultures, it has been in the air (both scholarly and in the media) for 10 years, since S.P. Huntington issued his book 'the Clash of civilisations' which has since become the Bible of the CIA especially since Sept 11. The problem with this expression and esp. with the book as it's written is that they both imply the ineluctability of clashes hence wars. Even though Goldorak is a war anime, it's not only that as you know and said. But as far as the clash(es) is/ are concerned I'm most perplexed. Indeed, the book ends up in a total delirium about a general civilisations' war in 2020 or so. really it's crazy and even though the 1st part of it is quite interesting I'm not quite sure the ideology behind it is, how could I express it,...humanist! It implies somehow and the expression as well to my point of view (and I make it clear here, I do not imply you share these idea(l)s, on the contrary I would say by reading you), that there is a hierarchy between the civilisations, and even though western countries are declining they have to fight the best they can to keep their hegemony. (all this is extracted from the book of course). As far as I'm concerned, I do think that there are many civilisations in the world, I do not deny that, I just think that this analysis, (the clash one) is dangerous because it implies this hierarchy (hence everything that comes with it : racism, etc.) and above all and

paradoxically a fixed vision of the history that unfolds before our very eyes. And what one must say about the clash(es) of the European countries in the XXth century? It is far too reducing to my point of view. Indeed, even in one civilisation people are so mixed and different that it's really difficult to regroup everyone under the same label! But I didn't want to initiate a debate on that far-fetched subject, just to give a more detailed explanation on the expression. Because it can be interesting for the Goldorak development as a blend of our human cultures fighting against an enemy that comes from outer space in order to enslave humanity in general whatever the gender, the culture or civilisation, the colour, the language...etc. And that may be a reason why there are so many different characters in Goldorak (you mentioned Banta dressed like a Mexican, Riguel like a cow boy etc.) That may epitomize all the cultures hence humanity fighting against Vega, obliging them to live with one another (Riguel got to change completely his point of view towards Vega after Venusia got hurt). that way the ethical tale which is underlined in the series could be : whatever the differences we are all human and we might need one another to fight against a far worst enemy than our neighbour who happens to be a bit different. And of course in order not to fall in a human vs alien fight, Actarus and Phenicia are here to remind us that there are good guys up there too! As well as all the enemies who whanged their minds and sacrifices themselves. Hope it wasn't too long but it's stimulating to connect Goldorak with issues that are at stake at the moment, don't you think? thanks Agnès!

Gerdha, I do hope you'll be able to add your 'grain de sel' as we say here, when your computer at home works! et les autres n'hésitez pas à écrire aussi en français en anglais ou dans une autre langue pourquoi pas!!!!

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[Agnès](#)

Re: I'm not bored...on the contrary...

Sat Nov 23 22:35:14 2002

212.24.201.221

Thanks for the info on "Le dit du Genji" ... I'll try to find out more about it!

You said: "Anyway, I most agree with you about Venusia, though I never quite went that far in my thinking than you did. The reason might be simple, I'm not a woman, and though I do share your feelings and fight for emancipation, and feel concerned by it as for other fights by minorities or other communities, i remain a man hence I may be sometimes guilty and enslaved by my gender's reactions, prejudices and behaviour. I try not to be and honestly I hope I do well."

:-) In a way it is natural. But I do think that it is interesting that you mention "women" in the same breath as "minorities", because in many ways gender does determine majority and minority positions and roles in society. In the series, the whole of the human race, and indeed all the other races except for Vega's army, find themselves in a "minority position" in the sense that they have to fight an enemy or adversary who tries to establish himself as lord over everybody else, i.e. they try to institute the point of view and interests of their own group as the norm or as dominant/more important than everybody else's. Towards the end of the series, there is even a hint that this was also done at the expense of the (civil) population of Stykade, who is left behind on a dying planet, and that the point of view of Vega and his generals is by no means shared by all of his people.

The "minority position" everybody else experiences is one of "resistance for survival", and in many ways Vega stands for the many invading forces or even explorers and pioneers into "other" territories we ourselves have produced. In terms of 20th century conflicts, the term of "Lebensraum" and presumably its Japanese equivalent do come to mind here, though I would extend it to any invasive activity, like the conquest of the American West for instance. That too may be an interesting "solution" to Rigel's "cowboy" past, a hint that though now, as a "race" we have to fight a common enemy, Rigel himself, as one of the potentially oppressed, may be associated with similar "activities" or attitudes. I may be extrapolating too much here, but one could read the connection with the US activities in originally "Indian" territories (the name too, is an act of colonisation, incidentally) as a hidden comment on the Japanese activities during World War II, as I doubt that a direct reference would have been a very persuasive commercial argument in Japan. :-) Again, I should never dream of suggesting that this is an open or conscious reference, but I have always wondered about Rigel's past as a "cowboy au Texas" ...

I do agree that the variety of "cultures" encountered in the series may be intended to symbolise that in this type of situation, we have to unite to fight a greater evil, and that this new alliance does rely on the acceptance of otherness, even in its most extreme form (accepting the help of aliens or non-humans). In the first episode, Alcor does seem to suggest this in a discussion with Procyon and you get the feeling that he thinks that his generation should unite and act.

As for the clash of cultures, I do agree that the word clash is extremely problematic, and I do prefer the idea of "negotiating differences" though that too, may now be a concept of the past (witness your own comment on post 9/11 international politics and attitudes). However, I do believe that in the instance of Japan, there was a kind of "clash" or if you prefer, a move from conscious isolationism to a (forced?) acknowledgement of and interaction with other cultures. Having lost the war when one thought of

oneself as superior does involve a renegotiation of one's own identity, position and hierarchies. I am by no means an expert on Japan, but I do think that in post-war Japan, this was a real issue, philosophical as well as "generational". There is a novel by Kazuo Ishiguro (A Pale View of Hills) that beautifully plays out this conflict of identities between generations and genders in post-war Japan. Have you heard of it?

Thanks for your posts, Jérôme. This is stimulating indeed. I AM looking forward to Gerdha's comments too ...

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Jérôme

renegotiation of one's identity...

Sun Nov 24 00:26:14 2002

212.198.0.96

I do hope I didn't hurt you by mentioning "women in the same breath as minorities". I just wanted to make a parallel between fights for more equality and less prejudices, that's all. gender as you surely know has been quite an issue in the past 20-30 years in the US and I've worked a bit on that, that's why I kind of made a blend. But it was not intended to hurt any feeling. I repeat! Being conscious of our own reactions is already fighting against our own prejudices whatever they may be.

As far as Japan is concerned you mentioned Kazuo Ishiguro whom I don't know about but will definitely try to read the books. I've read most of Mishima's novels and plays and in a sense he represented and still does this fight between past and present hence future. Japan indeed was invasive in the 1930s, wanting to achieve the Dai Nihon (Grand Japan) (equivalent of the German Lebensraum in a way). But it had to draw back after the disaster of 1945. Then as you said it had to deal with occupation (1st time in its History, since the only time it could have been occupied was in the 13th century when the Mongols tried to invade the archipelago with its mighty fleet but was defeated by a typhoon, a Divine Wind for the Japanese, i.e. in Japanese KAMIKAZE hence the term used by the suicidal pilots in WWII who were metaphorically trying to preserve their country as the Typhoon had done it 7 centuries before.

Maybe and I do agree with you (again) this adaptation of the society was in Goldorak's psyche or better in its authors'/conceptors. As for everything they lived in a society and reacted to it, therefore there must have been influences at least on a subconscious level.

As far as Riguel is concerned, he's definitely a riddle for me. His past, what he represents, everything makes him most interesting and intriguing as well. In order to know him better we'd need definitely the opinion of Go Nagai who must know what was the purpose of this character apart from making us laugh from time to time.

And at last you wrote: "a move from conscious isolationism to a (forced?) acknowledgement of and interaction with other cultures" about Japan. Indeed, it has been a forced acknowledgement since the Meiji Revolution in 1868 and even more in 1945 with the presence of Americans on the territory and the obligation for the emperor to acknowledge publicly that he was not of divine descent. That must have changed a lot of things in the country which somehow tried from that moment on to become the economic success we now know renegotiating its own military power in a far more powerful economic one (with flaws one must admit!)

In a sense I would see in Goldorak a metaphor for the acknowledgement of the foreign power that Japan had to endure: I mean, that even though there is Procyon's centre of research, the one who saves them all is Actarus with his Goldorak. In that, it could represent somehow the US which became a strong partner, protecting militarily Japan after WWII, the country becoming somehow a neutral one redirecting its forces in research and economy in order to take its revenge (in a more peaceful way, though it has been difficult in the 1970s for the US economy, esp. the car industry).

Goldorak could be a synthesis for Japan's recent history and changes in the past decades. Is it still up to date? or are we just overinterpreting this phenomenon?

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[Agnès](#)

no offense taken

Sun Nov 24 08:06:13 2002

212.24.201.140

"I do hope I didn't hurt you by mentioning "women in the same breath as minorities". I just wanted to make a parallel between fights for more equality and less prejudices, that's all. gender as you surely know has been quite an issue in the past 20-30 years in the US and I've worked a bit on that, that's why I kind of made a blend. But it was not intended to hurt any feeling. I repeat! Being conscious of our own reactions is already fighting against our own prejudices whatever they may be."

Don't worry ... my feelings weren't hurt in any way, and I did understand what you wrote as it was intended. The connection or comparison is interesting to notice though ... and I couldn't resist!

Kazuo Ishiguro also wrote "The Remains of the Day" - you may have seen the movie version with Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson. He left Japan quite early and finished growing up in Britain. His books thus have a double vantage point, combining Japanese and British/European attitudes and points of view.

As to whether Goldorak is still up to date ... well! That is a rather difficult question. Any attempt at an answer would require a better knowledge of Japanese society than I could ever pretend to have. I do think though that these types of conflicts take more than one generation to negotiate ...

As for "overinterpretation" ... I should probably be first to plead guilty to that, though I would not interpret anything INTO the story personally. I would rather see some issues within the narrative as symptoms of ethical, philosophical or social dilemmas and questions, which anybody is entitled to discuss and think about freely, or in relation to the series ...

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Gerdha

here I am...with an MM!!!

Mon Nov 25 01:03:49 2002

57.67.17.3

Wow, it seems that the discussion has gone on and on and on during the weekend...unfortunately my PC at home is still broken :-((((so I am writing again during lunch time and between various meetings at work.

I am impressed by Agnes and Jerome analysis skills, and I have to say I agree with a big part of your posts. But I personally prefer to be cautious in "seeing too much" in Goldorak episodes. I understand we have very different cultural backgrounds and personal attitudes: working in law, insurance and accountability has probably enlarged a certain part of my spirit in the sense that I prefer to stay "strict" to episodes itself. I am not at all saying that your analysis are wrong: it's possible that really the authors of Goldrake had in mind all the things you have said. But I don't know, because we don't have a clue about who wrote episodes screenplay. I mean, Nagai for sure gave the overall setting-out of the serie, and I am quite sure he also had a major part in writing some screenplays personally (I recognise his writing style for example in ep 1-2 and mostly ep 25) but I am not confident that he could follow the building of all episodes. I believe that instead the major part of episodes were written by some of his collaborators together with Toei people, and it can explain why we sometime see such different moods between episodes placed closely in the serie. Yes, the OVERALL "strategy" is clearly fixed and the character development is coherent, but the WAY the single stories are told can be very different because of the short time given for the development and the large number of people involved (as far as I know episodes were created just a couple of weeks before airing and that's why also so many different design teams were used – see the different styles of drawing). So it's possible for me that from the analysis of a single episode we could take details meaning in a different perspective because they are entitled to different persons.

For example, I take the whole "Venusia issue" in ep34 in a different way from yours. As a matter of fact, I understand your point of view – the "middle-age perspective" - if looking at the episode only through the Actarus/Gauss fight. But you forget Venusia herself. She has a direct big role in the episode, which honestly I didn't recall of before this weekend when I rewatched the ep after Jerome first post (I never watched it for years because for some reasons I found it somewhat disturbing even if important). It's interesting to note where this ep is placed in the serie: Hydargos is dead, Zouril is doing his first steps as new strategue, Actarus is already sick and had a terrible experience just a couple of episodes before (La Reine Fantome – ep32), Alcor is without his own spacer, Venusia has already received the blood transfusion and is searching a way to help Actarus and be closer to him. Be aware that her involvement in the war as a spacer driver is only 3 episodes ahead. So I think that ep34 has a different meaning: the two "knights" are fighting in a "middle-age" spirit indeed, but the female this time is not staying at the tower window whispering for her champion to succeed. She is the one that advices Actarus about Gauss being at the ranch searching for him. She interposes herself in the duel (the "middle-age" reference) to save personally the man she loves; please note that Actarus does not say a thing about this, he does not scream "What are you doing here? Go away!" or "Come on Venusia, this is not your business!" which I could expect to be his natural reaction if the story was meant in the classical mode (the heros defending the poor insecure woman) and considering also Actarus himself is certainly not the kind of person who does not cries out loud his opinion when he desires. Strangely he accepts her aid. And I use the word "strangely" because we all know how difficult is for Actarus to accept other people aid. Remeber: at that point of the story he is alone in the fight against Vega as

Alcor is still without a spacer! So I can only think that his new reaction is due to his evolving relationship with Venusia: he trusts her, at the contrary of classical knights who did not have an equal relationship towards the woman. And this is the first time he acts this way: in ep 27 – just 7 ep before – he had to save Venusia's life giving her his own blood. The maximum aid a human being can do for somebody, right? But now the situation is different: it's Venusia that – for the first time – directly saves his life. And please note that Gauss is so surprised by the situation that cannot react properly and decides to leave the fight.

Actually he represents really the "ancient-regime" instead of Actarus. In fact immediately after Gauss accepts to go with Venusia at the research of the horse without possibly imagining that her goal is different. And here is the second big difference I see respect of your analysis. Again, it's Venusia acting which lead the situation. I don't know what the french edition says, but in the italian version Venusia warns Gauss that he has to promise he won't kill Duke Fleed otherwise she will shot him so Ergastul uses the trick of the harmonica to hit her before she does the first step. If I look at Ergastul facial expression during the discussion I can see a bit of contempt in his eyes towards Venusia, so it's somewhat understandable he uses her soon later as a price for the fight with Actarus. In this way, what you said about the "middle-age" scenario is not completely applicable for me in the case, as Actarus and Gauss are not fighting FOR Venusia, but only one of them is USING her for his own goal. It's interesting to notice that when Gauss falls in the precipice Actarus seems to not care about Venusia as he prefers to save him instead. Well, this can be seen as a good example of his multi-layered personality. Agnes is absolutely right about Actarus being an ambiguous character in more than one way: I am soooooo sick of reading about him as the "good poor homeless prince fighting for us". Really, he is NOT this way, and that's why – even only at unconscious level – we loved him so much to still be here after 25 years discussing Grendizer. In this particular case, I tend to think his preference in saving Gauss instead to help Venusia hanging on the waterfall is due not only to the fact that, at rational level, after all he is more in danger to die than her, but only because he is anyway still struggling with the "misogynic" part of him so the need to react quickly and without a second thought to emergency situations lead to his unconsciousness to "take the lead" so to speak.

Finally, the final act opens with the dialogue between Gauss and Venusia. Actually, the italian version is different from french one and could give a different meaning, so that's why I see something different from you. When Ergastul asks why Actarus saved him, Venusia's answer is "because that's how Duke Fleed acts. He knew you could have killed him but he saved you anyway". First, it's interesting to notice that Venusia seems not to feel any anger towards Actarus for his choice to save Gauss first, and justifies his acting, like she recognises he made the right choice. In our edition, this explanation is what leads Ergastul to understand he was fighting the wrong person as it was Vega who destroyed his planet, killed his sister and obliged him to become a wolf (I trust you about the interpretation of this symbol :-)). He is forced to continue to fight Goldrake because the full moon has leaves his "animal" side to take somewhat the lead of his personality. But why he let Actarus kill him? Well, I am not sure he "killed" himself purposely; in fact in the italian edition when Actarus asks him if he did it so, he answers "you're wrong". So I tend to believe he suffered from the same phenomenon of Shira/Alizée: meeting the "goods" (take this expression with a grain of salt please) stirs up so much reflections and personal ghosts in Gauss&Shira that they are not able to act properly even in dangerous situations so they loose their life in the end. In fact when Ergastul exists his Golgoth (by the way, the middle-age reference can be found also in its aspect, as it seems to me a shogun-like armour, but I can be wrong) he takes Venusia for Rumia and the flowers of Earth for its planet's. And I would note also that the Asteroache hits Ergastul the same way the latter was nearly to kill Actarus in the first fight. Last but not least, I would add that it's interesting that Venusia is there when Gauss dies: I would say she remarks her role in the story and the difference her character has in Grendizer respect not only to the other females already met and to be met later in this anime but also towards the classical women stereotypes she could have been referred to.

As a conclusion, as I said in my previous post, I think ep34 construction was created like a "balance point" (you know, I am an accountability expert! Eh eh ;-)) of the serie, just before starting a new phase of the history. We are shown here where both Venusia and Actarus personality evolution have arrived, and an antagonist who represent – and I agree with you – many of the stereotypes of the classical

"hero versus enemy" novels.

Okay, I have cancelled one MM from my agenda, but maybe I have ended up in overanalysing the ep too from my side... Sorry friends, but I love to discuss about these kind of topics!!! Hey, any opinion from anybody is welcome!!!!!!

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Agnès

Hi Gerdha!

Mon Nov 25 02:55:57 2002

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Nice to have you back and sorry to hear about the prolonged "illness" of your computer.

I agree with what you say on Venusia's active role in this episode. I do think that the whole episode renegotiates the identities and roles/positions the characters have in society and amongst themselves, and indeed, Venusia's attitude and role are changing. She is very proactive in this episode, and in an increasingly efficient way.

What you say about Ergastul's look and treatment of her is both significant and symptomatic: he sees her first and foremost as a woman, who is interfering (for silly, presumably sentimental reasons) into "men's" business (which fighting is, traditionally - and in this sense he is medieval, patriarchal, reactionary, macho and whatever other adjective one can come up with to denote antiquated attitudes to gender). His challenge to Actarus (embodied by his threat to kill Venusia) is obviously inscribed in that particular logic and worldview, and Actarus does, to some extent, accept to the challenge by accepting the duel. What he does not accept (no longer, we should say, perhaps) are its cultural implications. What Ergastul is interested in in much of the episode is very basic - who is the strongest, the fittest to survive, which he perceives in terms of physical strength and cunning. The episode on the whole, however, presents other values, those of Actarus, of reason, empathy and generosity, as "fittest to survive".

Indeed, as you point out in your analysis, he deals with the most pressing situation first - he saves Ergastul, which is not the "conventional" thing to do - you're meant to save the lady first and then deal with your enemy/adversary. That to me is eminently significant as it signals his "alien" nature on the one hand (he does not always react like a hu/man) and, on the other hand, most significantly perhaps, his changing attitude towards Venusia (and women).

The reason I chose to focus on the two princes' attitudes first (I was going to get to Venusia's attitude later) is that their attitudes provide the context in which Venusia's evolution takes place. In a way, their fight/duel and the role she is FORCED to play in it (hanging from a dead branch) does not correspond to the way she sees her own role in society and in the war, and thus symbolises the kind of social forces and expectations she is forced (again) to deal with. In a way, the influence these expectations have on her is doubled by the fact that both these characters are "princes", and are thus representative of strict social hierarchies and authority on the one hand, and of "every girl's dream" on the other. (Yes, we all remember Cinderella and her "prince charming"!)

The social forces she has to counteract are thus multiple and intertwined, and compounded by tradition and habits, and I think that the "male posturing", both in its pure sense and in its more temperate variations, does in fact highlight Venusia's predicament, as well as her development as an increasingly independent woman. It also highlights a modulation or shift in Actarus' attitude towards both Venusia and women in general, moving away from a binary attitude to gender.

Neither Actarus nor Venusia finally achieve this negotiation (re-distribution?) of roles and positions in this episode - they are still "developing characters" - but it is clear that they are both working at it ...

Well, I hope you are happier with this interpretation :-). I haven't seen the episode for many years, but

that fight, and Venusia's role in it have stayed with me. In many ways, it has also epitomised - in a rather tragicomic way - what women's place is really meant to be in these glorious fights and deeds of honour and valour. The fact that her interference (which was brave and courageous) ended with her hanging over a precipice - a mere bait to be fought over - first impressed me with the real injustice of the situation (Why could she not be allowed to succeed in her original attempt at solving the problem?) The fact that the narrative eventually allows(!) her to fight must be one of the first things that kindled the feminist flame in my (then) young soul ;-)) And the fact that she has had to fight very hard to be granted that right has sadly come to mirror our emancipated and "equal" reality in some rather disturbing ways. However, at the crucial moment, in this episode, Venusia is forced to take a passive role - a role that she does not want for herself - and to watch passively, as the issues (who is the fittest of the two) is played out between the two male characters.

She could scream her head off, argue, reason, recite poetry (or dance naked) - anybody who watches that scene would know that at this particular moment, she would not be heard (or seen): this particular fight is not about her, but about the respective worth of the two fighting antagonists. She does get her chance, later, when the struggle is over, but I also think that by that time, the fight is already over: Ergastul is asking questions (for the first time in many years, I imagine) and Actarus has already won. Perhaps, if I may be allowed one last very small and insignificant "feminist" comment, this fact is brought home to him by Venusia's choice: "he doesn't get the girl", or in other words, Venusia chooses wisdom and generosity over physical power. Her choice seals his failure, and although he could physically beat Actarus, he does not. Is this a conscious choice? I don't know ...

I am not suggesting that any of what I have just said is the point of view of any particular character involved here, or that Actarus, or Venusia, or Ergastul are meant to think any of this. What I am suggesting is that this is a way of disentangling the different codes and behaviours represented in this particular scene.

Again, I wouldn't suggest that any of the ideas I talked about were conscious influences, and I would never dare to attribute them to Go Nagai or to any of his team ("influence" is a very inappropriate word here, in my opinion). I do think, however, that gender and difference are depicted according to certain codes, which do vary with culture and individuals, but which do also, to some extent, transcend cultures and individuals. Unfortunately, most individuals are also subject to these codes or instincts, sometimes, whether they live in Japan or in Europe, or anywhere else.

Thanks, Gerdha and Jerome - this has been a most stimulating discussion. I AM looking forward to your posts and ideas!

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Gerdha

Whooo! And...

Mon Nov 25 03:34:02 2002

57.67.17.3

I have 5 minutes free at work so instead to drink a tea I will write further comments.

I subscribe nearly whole your statements. In particular, I will tell you that what I found disturbing in ep34, and the main reason I didn't watch it for years, is precisely the scene at the waterfall. I watched it for the first time at 12 years old and I was even at that young age like WTF???? That particular scene remained impressed in my memory frame by frame together with the strange sensation of a big injustice. So I forced a bit myself last weekend to see it again, but I am glad I did it - thanks Jerome for the input - because I discovered so many things I could not understand then and I tried today to summarize in my MM.

I disagree instead with your view about "That to me is eminently significant as it signals his "alien" nature on the one hand (he does not always react like a hu/man)" Well, I think that instead he acts exactly like hu/men. If he was considered in the storyboard like an "alien", he would have had a different attitude. I take the whole Actarus development process throughout the serie as a symbol of the fact that all the people living in the universe must face the same relationship/personal evolution/living issues. Actarus is a human being meaning the word in the possible most extensive way (= a living entity with brain and soul). I know this would deserve a deeper mail, but I have no time now...

"She could scream her head off, argue, reason, recite poetry (or dance naked) - anybody who watches that scene would know that at this particular moment, she would not be heard (or seen): this particular fight is not about her, but about the respective worth of the two fighting antagonists."

Your imagine is great, and you are absolutely right. That's what I found disturbing. But remember: ep37 is nearly to come. When I read around the web that "suddenly Venusia starts to drive spacers after a blood trasnsfusion from Actarus" I would like to scream my disappointment: instead it is precisely the experience at the waterfalls that probably convinces her that being polite is not the correct way to be listened by Actarus. We will see in 3 eps what it will mean.

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