



One of several shows I was late to the party with for the summer season - it's not a good time of the year for me to keep up-to-date with things - but I got a message telling me that if I enjoyed *Aria*

(and I did) then I should really check this out. That comparison was borne out within the first few minutes of the opening episode - but there was something missing...

Late 19th Century Paris. One day, the sound of unusual shoes clip-clopping along echoes throughout the old-fashioned shopping center, Galerie du Roy - it's the sound of a young Japanese girl named Yune who, although perhaps a little sad and homesick after coming all the way from Japan for her apprenticeship, is sparkling with excitement as she meets people for the first time in the Galerie. Her first job is to clean the windows of the shop she's working at - but while working, she has the strangest feeling that someone is spying on her through the shop window...

So, let's get those *Aria* comparisons out of the way first: the pacing, style, soundtrack, and the general idea of *Croisée*, all just scream *Aria* from the rooftop.

Akari moved from Earth to Mars to do her dream job; now, Yune has moved from Japan to France to do her dream job. You can see where we're going, and on that level there's no problem. There were two particular things that really sold me on *Aria*

, though. The first of those was the setting - I've been to Venice, several times, and absolutely love the city. Neo Venezia took all that was good about Venice, glossed over some of the not-so-good, and was a faithful enough representation of the real thing that there were scenes where I could sit and pick out places in Venice that I'd been to myself. On the other hand, I've been to Paris, and I can't say that it's a city that I'm in any great rush to go back to, so the appeal of the setting simply isn't there. Venice is also essentially timeless - the buildings you see now are the same as they were 100 years ago - but the same can't be said for Paris.

One-nil to

*Aria*

Second, there are the characters. Yune's a poor man's Akari, and Claude and Oscar, to put it bluntly, don't have the same appeal as Akira and Alice. We do have an Alice here, but she's of the annoying rich ojou-sama archetype, and I have limited patience for them. Two-nil to *Aria*.

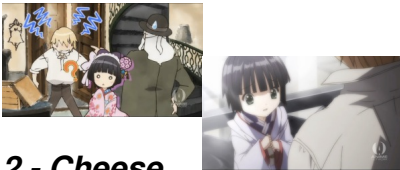
There's one other crucial difference, as well: by the time I took a break from the series (end of episode 6), there were signs of a plot (or at the very least a theme) bubbling under the surface, of Claude and his opinions of the more privileged classes, as represented by Alice and her family, and the disdain in which she holds the lower classes. This didn't really get time to take hold before I dropped the series, but it's definitely there and from what I hear becomes more prominent as the series goes on. I'm not entirely convinced that it belongs there, as it's rather serious subject matter for a show that starts off as the light-and-fluffy story that it seems to be.

That said, despite its flaws there is enjoyment to be had here. Yes, I've put the series on hold / dropped it for now, but not because I wasn't enjoying it - simply because there's too much to watch at the moment, and something had to give. I'm planning to get around to watching the rest of it when I get the chance. Yune herself may be a simple character, but her innocence and naivety has a charm to it that forms a large chunk of the show's appeal - and if that sort of character appeals to you, there's a reason for watching *Croisée* right there. But it could also have been a whole lot better.



### 1 - Entrance

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### 2 - Cheese

Yune wakes up early in the morning so she can help cook for the day, but she's puzzled when she discovers that the French don't have warm miso soup and white rice like they do in Japan. Instead, there's hard bread, foul-smelling cheese and bitter-tasting coffee - all things that she doesn't exactly find appetising. While she's told that she doesn't have to eat everything on her plate, she wants to get used to French food, and so tries to take the leftover cheese with her. Claude, meanwhile, is just as puzzled by Yune's Japanese values...



### 3 - Japanese Labyrinth

Claude is still unable to get his head around Japanese culture and has no idea what's going through Yune's mind. Trying to learn more, he asks Yune and Oscar questions about Japan, and they tell him about how Japanese homes are built around "tatami," "water wells," and "Japanese gardens", but the more he listens to their stories, the more confused he gets. Meanwhile, at the Blanche Residence, Alice, a daughter of the noble family that owns the Galerie, gets a brand new kimono to add to her collection...

# Croisée in a Foreign Labyrinth [Dropped]

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