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Colin Kerford  
JPNT 179

### Project Critique

For the purposes of this critique, I will assume the role of a professional writer in the fantasy genre critiquing this manga from that perspective and focusing on the writing in the manga (as opposed to the art, which I am not knowledgeable about enough to reasonably critique).

This is a fairly standard fantasy piece, as far as the plot goes. Capitalizing on the recent resurgence in popularity of pirates, what with the great success of the Pirates of the Caribbean movie franchise, the plot is concerned with a pirate crew led by Captain Cara Grey. What separates Captain Grey's pirates from the rest is that her crew has the (assumably) magical ability to become made of fire at will and burn to death any who oppose them, with water having no effect on them while they are in this state. The first chapter of the manga—the only part of it with which I have been presented—is simple, a clash between these supernaturally-enhanced pirates and another crew without such a gift. Suffice it to say that Captain Grey's pirates have an unquestionable advantage, and win the engagement with barely any effort expended. The chapter ends with an appropriate hook in the introduction of a new character: one a young woman who has defected from the other pirate crew to Captain Grey's—killing her former Captain in the process. Overall, it is not spectacular, but is enough to interest me and make me wonder what will happen next, which is, in my opinion, all the first chapter of a work should endeavor to do.

The plot is fine. Where the work falters somewhat, however, is in creating its universe. By the end of the first chapter of a work, the reader should have some idea of what the universe of the story is like, where to locate themselves as they read it. The level of technology described

is minimal, appropriate for the pirates of past centuries that are so romanticized nowadays, but the transformations that occur make it difficult to definitely say that this story is located on our Earth. It may be that this story is located on Earth in an alternate universe, but conjecture is the best I can do since the first chapter offers so little explanation. I assume that this question of defining the universe will be answered—or at least, clearer—by the end of the first volume, and so I shall set it aside in anticipation of a complete volume to focus on other issues with the work.

The characters in the work are interesting, but mostly one-dimensional—which, I suppose, may be expected, given that we are only with them for one chapter of their story, and a short chapter at that. The mundane pirates--particularly the unlucky Roland—are all lumped into the category of sexist, violent men, save for the defector, Gabrielle. The reader is introduced to and made to dislike Roland within fifteen pages, at the end of which he dies in a rather spectacular—and, perhaps, unnecessarily violent—fashion. The main character—so far, anyway—Captain Cara Grey, fits into the mold of many recent fantasy heroines. That is, she is intelligent, confident, sassy, and not to be messed with. Most of her lines are witty one-liners, easy to remember and quote, which will certainly lend this manga some popularity. That being said, while Captain Grey may function as a strong female protagonist in the sense that she is unquestionably the winner of this first chapter, I worry that this may be all she is, which would make her one of many and therefore uninteresting. I hope that as the series progresses the writer will develop Captain Grey's personality outside of her leadership and fighting ability. Few other characters are given time, or even names, though I appreciate the inclusion of Gabrielle, who seems set up to function as the viewpoint character for the audience. Again I will say that the characters are not problematic in and of themselves, they just need more time to properly develop.

good

Interesting

The writing is fairly standard fare for fantasy. Being about pirates, there are a fair few stereotypical accents throughout—the phrase “lazy scoundrels” is used—but that is used sparingly and stops just short of being irritating. It flows decently well, and nothing feels out of place, too modern or too old. The dialogue isn’t beautiful, but I’ve certainly read worse. Knowing that this is an adaptation of a work of prose, I do wonder if the original work might not be the preferred form in which to read this story, as I feel that much of the beauty in the piece comes from its art, which would most likely be the aspect on which the writer spent most of his time. While I would not go into this manga expecting writing matching that of Tolkein or Rowling, the writer could certainly have pushed a bit further, even if he is working in the very well-defined genre of fiction about pirates.

Overall, I enjoyed the work, short as it is, and I look forward to reading a complete first volume and perhaps more, as just having more to read would probably address, if not completely solve, the issues I have raised. With more attention paid to developing the characters further and establishing firmly the universe in which the story takes place, this could do well. While this manga may not break any ground for being particularly spectacular or revolutionary, I can certainly see it having success as a weekly or monthly serial, perhaps in something like the American publication *Shojo Beat*. I look forward to seeing where this story goes.

1) well done.

2) One unintelligible line.