



Brilliance of the Moon

Books Reviewed:

[Brilliance of the Moon](#) [1]

Issue:

[153](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Clive Barnes](#) [3]

Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Like many others, I was much impressed by **Across the Nightingale Floor**, the first of the 'Tales of the Otori' trilogy. **Brilliance of the Moon** closes the sequence of books tracing the rise to power of Otori Takeo and the consummation of his love for Kaede, although Hearn now promises two more novels that will carry the story further. Hearn's achievement is the creation of a chronicle of power and romance that bears the same relation to medieval Japanese history as the Arthurian legends do to European medieval history. It is an entirely convincing and enticing blend of the real and the fantastic, of cultural delicacy and warrior ruthlessness, of political intrigue and private passion. Without in any way belittling that achievement, I feel that **Brilliance of the Moon** does not quite live up to the promise of the beginning of the trilogy. Some of the stylistic shadowing of a Japanese sensibility now feels a little mannered, particularly in the movement from violence to contemplation of natural beauty. There is a preoccupation, too, in this last novel, with the playing out of stratagems, alliances and battles, rather than the exploration of social and emotional tensions. The personal inclinations and aspirations of the two central protagonists - Takeo's aversion to distinctions of rank and Kaede's restlessness under the restrictions of a woman's role - remain, but their expression has become muted in their growth to adulthood and their acceptance of social and political necessities. Takeo is to be found musing on the paradox that peace can only be achieved through violence; but Hearn, true to the ethos of the society she has created, leaves the reader to make the moral judgements that those within the story do not make. There is, no doubt, a lot to be said for that, even if I find it makes for a less interesting and varied read.

Running Order:

6

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[1] <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/brilliance-of-the-moon>

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[3] <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/clive-barnes>