



The Moon of Gomrath

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The Moon of Gomrath is the name of the one night of the year when the Old Magic is at its most powerful. Had Colin and Susan known this, they would have never obeyed the strange compulsion that drove them to light a fire on the Beacon. But now it is too late--the horsemen called the Wild Hunt are awake and on the ride, and no one is safe. Colin is captured, Susan falls under the sway of the hideous Brollachan, and all along Alderley Edge the forces of evil rally for the conflict to come. For there will be a battle, the likes of which cannot be imagined by mortals. The outcome--and all the hopes of the world--will depend on three unlikely champions: Susan, Colin, and their ally, the wizard Cadellin.

The Moon of Gomrath Details

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From Reader Review The Moon of Gomrath for online ebook

Robert Day says

When I was a young boy, I knew of a book called The Weirdstone of Brisingamen and I coveted it but never read it.

Years and years and a little while later, the sun fell from the sky and I was to resort to listening to audio books whilst walking to and from work - it avoided the unpleasantness of walking into lampposts in the dark whilst trying to read paper books.

One of the items on offer was the aforementioned tome and I on listening, I was mightily smitten.. apart from the parts where they were running about underground lost, which seemed mightily boring.

Anyhow, being as the second and third books in the series were on offer at the local library, and the sun had bounced back into the sky, I put in my requests for the books and waited..

..and waited..

..and waited..

..and then asked the nice lady at the library what the hold up was.

"Oh, I know who's got this one" she says "it's one of the other librarians; but she's in Wales at the moment!"

So I waited..

..and do you know: Librarians don't pay fines on overdue books! Can you imagine! Even if someone is waiting patiently for it!

This book is a children's book. It's better written than the first in the series. The action is intense and sustained. There is something different happening on every page and so by the end of the book, you're thinking 'Wow!'

In fact, two pages from the end, you're still in the thick of the action and you're thinking 'By golly, how is this going to come to an end in such a very short space of lines?'

But it does, and it's a good ending and all the twists and turns are nicely resolved and the threads tied into a pretty bow. Nice.

So, yeah; definitely the best of the trilogy.. so far?

But, as of 2012, more than half a century later, there's more!

That's not to say there are no influences. There are a few *Lord of the Rings* echoes still -- the magical McGuffin is now a series of ancient bracelets of lunar power, one of which is revealed to be wielded by the last book's Galadriel substitute -- and the focus on the Morrigan as primary villain recalls CS Lewis' White and Green Witches in the **Narnia** books. (Rather shockingly for a trilogy whose third volume has just been published, it was less than half a decade between the publication of *The Last Battle* and that of *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*.)

That said, *The Moon of Gomrath*'s evocation of a matriarchal Wild Magic pre-dating the masculine wizardly magic of Cadellin and co prefigures multiple examples of children's fiction, from the weird hierarchy of High, Dark, Light and Wild Magics in Susan Cooper's **The Dark Is Rising** sequence to Terry Pratchett's treatment of witchcraft in the **Tiffany Aching** books.

For me there's nothing quite so memorably upsetting as the underground sequences in *Weirdstone*, but the developing both of Garner's cosmology and of the individual characters of the children (especially Susan, emerging triumphantly from her brother's shadow here) make this the better, more sophisticated book. The hints of Susan's and Colin's futures (we're told casually on the penultimate page that the latter "never found rest again") make the eventual publication of *Boneland*, if not inevitable, then something many of this book's readers have probably been waiting fifty years for.

Claudia Putnam says

If *The Weirdstone* (Garner's first novel) leans a little 3-, this leans 3.5 or maybe a little more. *Weirdstone* has a lot of unfortunate-nesses like a goblin named Slinkveal, the general batch of bad guys called the morthbrood, and of course the main villain, Grimnir. The best decision in *Weirdstone* is to make the tunnel scary because spelunking is terrifying, not because of lurking fell beasts. *Gomrath* gets more complicated, the kids, especially Susan, develop as characters, and so does the mythology. I was interested to learn, upon Googling, that the wizard story is real. That is, Alderley is an actual place, it has an ancient legend of a wizard stopping a farmer from Mobberley (seriously, where do the English get these names), buying his horse, showing him the sleeping riders, etc. Garner grew up on the Edge, and so I can see him having played with his friends or maybe alone, making up some of these stories.

That makes these books feel better to me.

You can also see how these stories start to get conflated. Perhaps the sleeping knights were a separate story from King Arthur, originally.

This is a re-read (unpacking my library). I never heard of these books till adulthood. Perhaps Garner is more widely read in Britain. He's better than Cooper and deserves more of an audience here.

Leah says

What a weird and impressive little book.

This one was leaps and bounds better than *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* (my review here), which was not

by any means devoid of skill or interest, but compares relatively poorly to its sequel. While the same oddments still stand - where *are* these people, where do the dwarfs come from, how come no one else notices this stuff happening? - the truly impressive thing in this story is Garner's absolute mastery of the action scenes. Page after page is filled with his inventive capers, all tightly controlled and fingernail-bitingly gripping. I am really, really enamoured of this kind of fast, breathless storytelling. Pages flew before I realised I was hooked, and then once I did, I thoroughly enjoyed the ride.

It manages to be both weirdly magical and fantastically exciting at once, without the one ever seeming detached from the other. I think if I'd read this as a child, I may have grown up stranger than I did reading the Redwall series. I'm sad I didn't, though, as I imagine reading this as a young'un would be pretty bloody amazing.

As an adult it was only mildly less so, but I lack the ability, now, to retreat to my bedroom and devour a book whole until Mum calls that dinner is ready. Which is what this book truly needs.

Cadiva says

A million years ago!

Graham Crawford says

I remember I adored this as a kid.... it really got under my skin. I must have been about nine years old and after reading this I convinced myself the wild hunt was coming for me on the first of May.... and I nailed an iron horseshoe over my bed so they wouldn't get me. A good book that seriously spooked the daylights out of me... and made me get into old English myths and legends.

Michele says

I loved The Weirdstone of Brisingamen with a passion (pay no attention to the appallingly bad cover on the linked edition; it's a shameless knockoff of Star Wars, I know, and it embarrasses me to look at it) so I was really excited to find out there was a sequel.

Can I just say "Er, huh?"

So much is crammed into this book that it's very nearly incoherent -- as if Garner had a million ideas and was afraid he'd never have another chance to use them. The Wild Hunt, the Morrigan, a mysterious ruined house that's real only in the moonlight, elves dying off due to industrialization (the "smoke sickness"), the Lady of the Lake, some sort of Celtic version of the Valkyries, bracelets and runes and a demon water horse and some sort of black smoke beast and mines and female moon-power and tunnels and mysterious horsemen and the Eternal Warrior and and and and and...

Whew. I'm out of breath just writing it all down. The book would have to have been twice as long to have any hope of pulling all of this together in a coherent form, and even then I'm not sure it would have been possible. It's not a bad book, just not nearly the book it could have been with a little discipline applied to it.

There's a third one out, Boneland. I hear it's much more for adults and very different than the first two, but I plan to give it a try. I'm not sure where he can take it from here but I'm very curious!

Peter says

This is a book to read only if you thought it was a favourite as a child. The vivid images it conjures from landscapes and celtic references is excellent, a real fire for the mind if you are young. The downside: old and jaded maturity will grumble about the writing, how rushed it is to the end and it's for kids.

Well a pox on us all for these thoughts. Grow down, not up dammit and enjoy.

Judy says

I re-read this in preparation for Boneland! It was a wonderful re-visiting of a past pleasure. This second book is perhaps the more writerly, edgy (no pun intended) and sophisticated book, but I have to say the first book still stands out for its unbelievably gripping underground scenes and great storytelling. As for Boneland... have read it now :-). It goes further again from traditional storytelling and more towards edgy and sophisticated... but it's not a kids' book, so must be looked at differently. I'm inspired to read more Garner fiction for adults now.

By the way, this 1981 paperback has yet another awful cover! But it does strangely awaken my sympathies for poor Colin (who looks nondescript and put-upon here) and it depicts an intriguingly different kind of Susan - a scruffy little gamine. This is rather appropriate, given her character development towards independence and wilful defiance in this second novel. The idiotic character in fancy dress in the foreground is probably supposed to depict one of the Einheriar, unless it is an even worse interpretation of a dwarf. This could be a case for illicit re-covering :-).

<http://alexisdeacon.blogspot.com.au/2...>

Becka Sutton says

The Moon of Gomrath by Alan Garner is the second of "The Alderley Tales". The first of which I have also reviewed.

"Moon" was first published in 1963 and is still in print today. That alone would be testament to its strength - before print on demand came along books generally went out of print pretty quickly due to the cost of print runs.

However "Moon" is not quite as strong a book as its predecessor - but given the strength of "Weirdstone" that would be a struggle. Taken on its own merits, however, it is a very strong book.

Colin and Susan - the protagonists from "Weirdstone" - are drawn back into the otherworld and the ancient struggle between good and evil when they accidentally rouse the Old Magic, and thus the Wild Hunt, from its slumber. As enemies and allies from the previous book return and new ones appear only the children's

courage will enable them to survive the ordeal - and if they don't it's likely the world won't either.

There is a depth to Garner's characters that is breathtaking. While the Wizard Cadellin is undeniably good and the Morrigan evil every other character exists somewhere inbetween. Some of the 'good' characters really get my back up - and this is quite intentional.

For example his his elves are prats. They aren't evil, they're creatures of light who fight on the side of good. But they are also arrogant, uncaring and lack empathy for humans. When you learn that they have been forced to flee to the edges of Britain because smoke pollution makes them ill you get the point but you can't help feeling it's not that much loss.

I'm conscious in this review that I don't want to give too much of the plot away, but the ending is a bittersweet thing like the best dark chocolate. There is death and life, sorrow and joy all wrapped up in one package and it works. It works very well.

Where it's weaker than "Weirdstone" is that it all feels more contrived. Some of the dangers and solutions that face Colin and Susan - especially early on - are the result of unfortunately combining events. For example the Elves ask for something Susan has at the same time as something else happens, and Susan ends up in danger from event two only because she's given the thing in question to the Elves. In "Weirdstone" the coincidences felt like the hand of fate guiding things - in "Moon" it's less so - though by the end you wonder, because it does all wrap up well. It's certainly not a deal breaker.

I gave "Weirdstone" Five Stars. I give "Moon" Four and a Half - listed as four even though I don't usually round down, because I want to make sure it's clear I feel it's slightly weaker.

Emkoshka says

Nowhere near as good as *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* and filled with fantasy tropes like fighting dwarves, aloof elves, and evil creatures like goblins, wild-cats and a shapeshifter. The story started out in a promising and creepy way, with a devilish creature called the Brollachan being released from its pit by men doing excavation work. But things got convoluted quickly with too many different magical folkloric beings to keep track of and no backstory to make you care about any of them. Even Colin and Susan, child heroes of the first book, were no more than vehicles for the story here. I'll be curious to read the third book, *Boneland* which was written 49 years later.

Nikki says

I liked this book better than the first book, *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*. Maybe that's because I've already had some of the world building from the first book and I know kind of what to expect, though. It was weird to me that it was a sequel, but it completely ignored the ending of the last book. There was virtually no reference to it at all, which is amazing considering the total lack of resolution I felt at the end. The only references are in a recurring enemy -- the Morrigan -- wanting revenge, and the fact that the characters are the same, plus the backstory about the sleepers in the cave.

The mythology in this one was interesting, anyway. I'm amused at how often the concept of the Wild Magic

and the Wild Hunt comes up in fantasy books -- here, in *The Fionavar Tapestry*, in *The Dark Is Rising*... I like it. The descriptions of Susan riding with them, and the way she gets left behind and feels both joy and anguish, are lovely.

Again, I felt a lack of resolution at the end of this book. Both books just end, with no reactions from the characters, nothing. Just. An end. It's weird, I like things to be rounded off a little better. It's not that they stop with big plot things left to happen, but they stop without making it feel satisfying.

It also feels like there should be more books in the series -- you have all these comparatively little events, dealing with Grimnir and the Brollachan and the Morrigan, but throughout there's the threat of Nastrond hovering over it, and the idea of the waking of the sleepers, but nothing happens with them. It feels like the focus is on the wrong thing. In one way it's nice to have a big story hovering in the background, but when you know you're never going to find out how that story resolves, it's not so nice. There's plenty of room for sequels, but I read that Alan Garner never intended for there to be another book. There's so much that feels unfinished, though...

At least he didn't write a shoddy page long epilogue in which we find out exactly what happened to everyone in as few words as possible.

This book is fun enough to just read, but I didn't really get emotionally invested in it. Characters can die and I don't really care. Not good!

Janet says

It wasn't either of our faults, book. Really. It just didn't work out. Maybe it was the age difference, maybe our different cultures. But I'm sure you will meet lots of wonderful readers soon, and have long and happy relationships with them.
