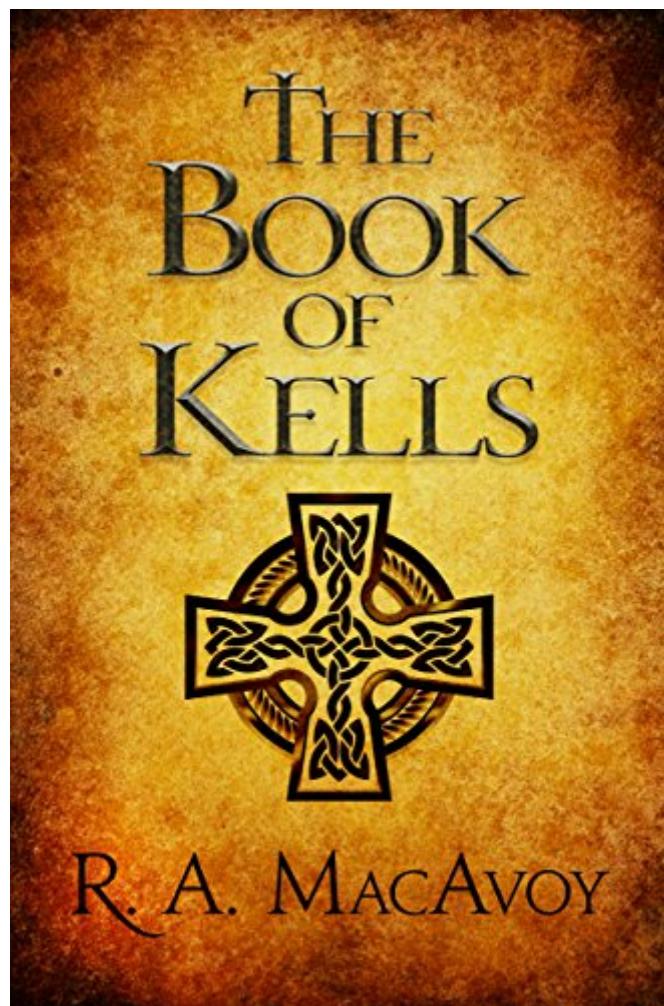


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The Book Of Kells



Synopsis

A contemporary couple journeys back in time to ancient Ireland in this delightful fantasy by the author of *Tea with the Black Dragon*. John Thornburn is an artist, mild-mannered and nonviolent. To make ends meet, he teaches some courses in Celtic design. And although his background is half Micmac Indian, he lives in Ireland for two reasons: his far more confrontational and warrior-like girlfriend, Derval O'Keane, and his fascination with the beautiful illuminated manuscript known as the Book of Kells. But he's about to take a journey to a far more distant place, one that he could not have imagined. Along with Derval, John will find himself in an ancient Celtic realm, where a Viking attack begs to be avenged and a fantastic and sometimes terrifying adventure awaits. From a master of magical fantasy, the author of the Damiano Trilogy and a winner of the John W. Campbell Award, this is a tale of warriors, love, danger, and Irish history that will cast a spell on anyone who dreams of discovering treasures in long-lost worlds.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have been a MacAvoy fan for decades, and this was the first of her books that I ever read. The story is compelling, the characters are well-developed, and her writing style is excellent. If you are a fan of fantasy, Celtic mythology, and/or Irish history, you will enjoy *The Book of Kells*.

Fascinating book. A lot of detailed Irish and Norse history and culture. The fiction is time travel. Well done. Multifaceted characters. Good plot. Particular fun for people into the Goddess Brigid.

The book involves accidental time travel. If you can't get past that, skip it. I used to seek out time-travel fantasies as a kid, but not so much as an adult as it tends to be a little formulaic. Not knowing much about ancient Ireland, I'm glad I read this on a Kindle with an easily accessible on-line dictionary. It was heavily used while I was reading it. The best part of the book was the development of the main characters. None are complex, but they are definitely unique from each other and from other books of fiction. The pace and plot are mostly steady, but the characters make up for it. The characters go by more than one name; pay attention as the informal and formal aliases are introduced lest you think they are new characters.

This is the first book I have bought after reading the free sample. Wow, am I glad I bought the book! When you are dealing with a time-travel heavily invested in hard history that has chapters prefaced by epigraphs, be prepared for some real meat & prepare to engage your brain. I can't say enough good about this amazing book & the scope of the historical research by the author. I love the flawed main characters, just because they are so flawed. The mismatched couple are not only terrible together, but they bring out the worst of each other. It takes guts as an author to make your main characters unlikable. We're supposed to root for them, after all. This book is so good, I simply must poke at a couple little flaws I found in an otherwise masterful work: The Christian Irish of 1000 years ago are portrayed as more hedonistic, Pagan and polytheistic than I ever imagined. Yes, we all know many of the saints are simply deities disguised for Christian consumption, but great work, MacAvoy! Now, if only the author had worked a little harder at the history of the Vikings in Ireland. In contrast to the happily "Pagan" and "polytheistic" nudist, unhidden, happy sex lives of the "Christian" Irish, you have the "Heathen" Vikings depicted as monotheistic (there is only mention of Odin, who in this story is depicted as demanding human sacrifice--OOPS, not so! And Thor, portrayed as a thuggish dimwit--but the men worship only one or the other) The women are portrayed as repressed and powerless--which happened in Viking culture only AFTER the forced conversion to Christianity.

Prior to that women had a lot of power. Plus, the Heathen Norse were true polytheistic with numerous Gods and an equal number of equally venerated Goddesses. My last complain is about Tinker, the heroic horse, but this must start with another compliment: The author not only knows equines, but knows the equines of Ireland. Tinker is an Irish Sport Horse, that is a modern breed (star of Grand Prix events up to & including the Olympics) which has as one parent a wonderful rare breed called the Irish Draught. Derval, besides being a PhD professor of Irish history, is an expert equestrienne, yet, we know that she objects to the "Irish Draught" half of Tinker's parentage because "there are no draft horses native to Ireland." For shame on the author who was such a horse lover's rock star--and even had the only hinnies (jenny mother, stallion father) I've ever seen in fiction. Despite the similarity in the names, an Irish Draught is *not* a draft horse. Instead they are world famous as heavy hunters, sport horses & the parent (in an outcross to a light breed) of the coveted Irish Sport Horses like the valiant Tinker. Do not let my couple of criticisms daunt you. If you love history--especially Irish history, you will love this book. If you love great storytelling, you will love this book. If you love horses, there are some unusual star equines I can guarantee you've never seen the likes of before.

This is the first book by R.A. McAvoy that I have read. I feel lucky that I read it and look forward to the other dozen books she has published. Originally published in 1985, The Book of Kells is nicely set in both 1985 and 985 with some back-and-forth time travel. Reading it more than thirty years later, I was struck by the absence of things that date a story. For example, computers have changed enormously in that time so anything that connects closely to the technology may seem clunky to a reader on a later point of the technology timeline. Other than several mentions of a specific model of a car, this story has no technology burden. The lack of cell phones, tablets, or microwave ovens does not make the story feel old. Ironically, the hero, John Thornburn, listens to music on a record player. A twenty-year-old in my family also listens to a record player so it all seemed very normal. The story moved briskly. Characters were well developed. There were plenty of unpredictable twists of plot. The ending was a bit neat but still enjoyable--even Downton Abbey closed up shop on a high note so there's no fault there. A Masterpiece: Downton Abbey Season 6 The story includes a goodly bit of Celtic and Norse names and some dialogue. The glossary explains many of those mysterious names and phrases. However I found no pronunciation guide in my Kindle version. While "correct" pronunciation is not vital in the privacy of your own mind, it still may feel important at times. In his Iron Druid Chronicles, author Kevin Hearne strikes an ideal balance of providing good background for pronunciation even while observing with good humor that

you can fuss about it, or not. Perhaps Ms. McAvoy would consider an updated edition with expanded glossary for those who like that kind of thing. For an example of Kevin Hearne's attention to pronunciation see [A Hounded](#) (with two bonus short stories): The Iron Druid Chronicles, Book One. But back to The Book of Kells. It was one of those delightful reads that you don't want to put down, that keep you up late despite the need for sleep, or that cause you to speed through the chores of the day so you can get back to the book. It is easy to give 5 stars in this case. I hope you find this helpful.

This book's story is excellent, with good character development and excellent plot line. And I'm sure the places and actions are authentic, however, due to many of the place names, people's names and much of language being Celtic or Olde English, the book is slow reading. There is a dictionary in the back, but stopping every few minutes to look up a word, or finding the word not in the dictionary, makes it a very time consuming read.

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