

A Journey to the Otherworld

David Major

Illustrated by Midjourney

THE STRANGE VOYAGE
of MÁEL DÚIN

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COMPILED AND EDITED BY DAVID MAJOR

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A DISTANT MIRROR



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*It is in vain to dream of a wildness
distant from ourselves.*

There is none such.

*It is the bog in our brains and
bowels, the primitive vigor of Nature
in us, that inspires that dream.*

– HENRY DAVID THOREAU



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THE STRANGE VOYAGE OF MÁEL DÚIN is a legendary tale from Irish Gaelic literature that holds a significant place in the traditions of myth and history. It recounts the extraordinary maritime journey of the eponymous hero Máel Dúin and his companions as they embark on a perilous quest.

The story begins with Máel Dúin seeking revenge for the death of his father at the hands of raiders. He gathers a crew of seventeen warriors (plus three stepbrothers who decide to tag along) and sets sail in a currach, a small Irish boat.

Their voyage takes them through various mystical islands and encounters with fantastic beings, testing their courage, wit, and resilience.

Throughout the voyage, Máel Dúin and his crew face a series of challenges and adventures. They encounter strange islands inhabited by giant birds, shape-shifting creatures, sea monsters, and other supernatural beings. Each encounter requires the crew to demonstrate their bravery and resourcefulness, often relying on their own intuition, as well as guidance from a variety of mentors and advisers.

One of the prominent themes is the pursuit of vengeance. Máel Dúin's quest for revenge initially drives the narrative, reflecting the importance of honor and justice in Irish Gaelic culture. However, as the story progresses, Máel Dúin learns the value of forgiveness and the limitations of seeking retribution, ultimately choosing a path of reconciliation and mercy.



The Strange Voyage of Máel Dúin is a rich tapestry that weaves together elements of mythology, folklore, and historical references. It incorporates motifs found in other Irish legends, such as the Otherworld, a realm of supernatural beings parallel to our own, as well as the concept of the heroic quest. The tale also draws inspiration from the seafaring traditions of ancient Ireland and showcases the knowledge of seafaring and maritime skills of the time.

As an integral part of Irish Gaelic tradition, *The Strange Voyage of Máel Dúin* serves several purposes. It entertains with its surreal and adventurous elements, capturing the imagination of its audience. It also reflects the cultural values of the time, emphasizing the importance of honor, loyalty, and the pursuit of justice. Moreover, the story embodies the enduring oral tradition of passing down tales from generation to generation, preserving the history, myth, and wisdom of the Irish people.

The main text was compiled and edited by David Major.

The illustrations are by Midjourney, versions 5 to 5.2.

This introduction was written by ChatGPT.

*A world that does not include
Utopia is not even worth
glancing at, for it leaves out the
one country at which
Humanity is always landing.*

*And when Humanity
lands there, it looks out, and
seeing a better country, sets sail.*

– OSCAR WILDE





THE STRANGE VOYAGE
OF MÁEL DÚIN



1. THE WARRIOR AND THE NUN

LONG AGO, there lived among the Eoganacht clan of Ninuss, in the kingdom of Thomond, a warrior named Ailill Ócar Agha.¹

He was a hero and a chief among his clan and family, and he was famed as a brave fighter.

The King of Thomond was leading a raid into Kildare, and Ailill and his clansmen accompanied him.

There, they camped one night near a church, beside which was a convent of nuns.

During the night, while the camp was quiet, Ailill went near the church. When the young prioress of the convent came out to ring the bell for nocturns, Ailill seized her, threw her down on to the ground, and raped her.

“But we are in an unblessed state!” the young nun cried, “and this is the time of my conceiving! What is your tribe, and what is your name?” she pleaded. “Who are you?”

“I am Ailill Ócar Agha,” he boasted, “and I am chief of the Eoganacht of Ninuss!” And he left her in tears by the church, and did not care whether she would become pregnant or not.

The King of Thomond continued his raid, until he had done enough. Then he took his army back to Thomond, and Ailill Ócar Agha and his clansmen went with him.

¹ or ‘Ailill of the Edge of Battle’



2. THE BIRTH OF MÁEL DÚIN

IN TIME, the young prioress bore a son, and she named him Máel Dúin.

Now, she knew that she could not keep the child; and as she was a friend of the Queen of the kingdom of Aran, she took her baby there.

“Take my child,” she begged the Queen. “Please, raise him as your own, for I cannot.”

Now the Queen of Aran loved her friend dearly, and so she agreed, and she took the baby, and raised Máel Dúin as her son, along with her own children.





3. THE DEATH OF AILILL ÓCAR AGHA

NOT LONG AFTER MÁEL DÚIN had been taken into the royal household by the good Queen of Aran, the Eoganacht of Ninuss were attacked in their homes by raiders from Leix, in the kingdom of Loígis.

Ailill's house was surrounded, and he fled for shelter to a church named Dooclone. The raiders followed him there, and slew him in the church, and then burned it down over his body.

The ruins of the church are there to this day.

And so Ailill Ócar Agha of the Eoganacht lived and died, but left a son in the world.





4. MÁEL DÚIN GROWS UP

MÁEL DÚIN was raised with the three sons of the King and Queen of Aran, as if he was one of their own.

He slept in the same room with them, and was fed from the same breast and the same plate, and drank from the same cup.

He had the same tutors, and played the same games.

And he was a lovely child; everyone who saw him had no doubt that there could be no other child in the world who was as beautiful in either body or spirit as was the young Máel Dúin.

He was high-spirited and generous, and he loved all sorts of manly exercises. In ball-playing, in running and leaping, in throwing, in chess, in rowing, and in horse-racing, he surpassed all the youths that came to the palace, and he won every contest.

As he grew up to be a young man, the noble qualities of his mind gradually bloomed, and he became expert in legends, and histories, and poetry, so that soon he knew all the stories of his people.

There was no other young man like Máel Dúin, in all the lands of the Eoganacht.





5. MÁEL DÚIN LEARNS THE TRUTH

ONE DAY, the youths of the royal court were at play, competing among themselves in tests of strength and skill. Máel Dúin was winning every contest, and at last one of his companions, consumed with envy, burst out in anger and frustration:

“To think that you, whose clan and kin no one knows, whose father and mother no one knows, can beat us in every game of skill and strength, on land or on water, on horseback or on the chess board! What shame for us, we who are born to royalty!”

And the others who were there agreed, and they all laughed at Máel Dúin.

On hearing this, Máel Dúin ceased his playing, and stood in silence, deep in thought, for until then, he had believed that he was the son of the King and Queen, and that their three sons were truly his beloved brothers.

Confused and surprised, he went to the Queen.

“Who are my mother and father? I will neither eat nor drink until you tell me the truth!”

“Why are you asking me that?” said the Queen.

“Pay no heed to the jealous nonsense that your brothers speak. I am your mother, for no mother ever loved her son more than I love you!”

“I do not doubt your love, and I also love you,” replied Máel Dúin. “But I must know who my parents are. So please, tell me!”



And as Máel Dúin insisted on knowing the truth,
the Queen at last took him to meet his mother.



The prioress and her son greeted each other with great emotion, and many tears.

Máel Dúin then asked his mother about his father.

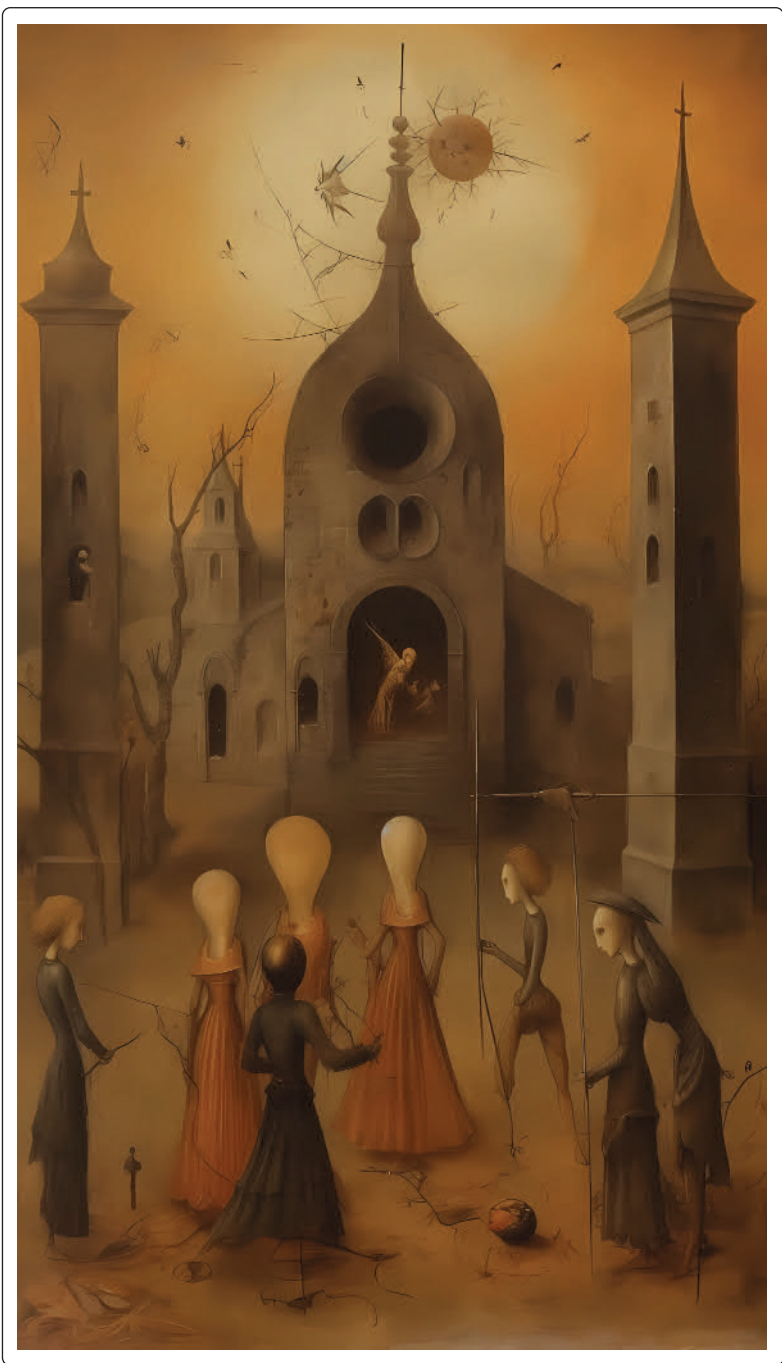
“My dear son,” she said, “it will make you no happier to know who he was, nor will it in any way profit you. He has been dead for many years, and it is no loss to the world.”

“Be that as it may,” replied the youth, “but it is better for me that I know. I must know, mother!”

And so the prioress relented, and told her son.

“Máel Dúin, your father was none other than Ailill Ócar Agha, the chief of the Eoganacht, of Ninuss.”





6. MÁEL DÚIN MEETS HIS FATHER'S PEOPLE

SOON AFTERWARDS, Máel Dúin traveled with his three foster brothers to Ninuss, where his father's people lived.

He was greeted warmly and made welcome, and so much honor was shown to the four visitors that soon they became happy and content, and Máel Dúin forgot all the abasement and trouble that had led him there.

He heard many stories and memories of his father.

One day, it happened that a number of young men were in a churchyard, amusing themselves. The game was to compete in throwing stones clear over the charred roof of the church, for it had been burned many years ago, and Máel Dúin was there, taking part.

Máel Dúin was about to cast his stone, and to steady himself, he placed his foot on a scorched flagstone.

A fellow named Briccne, a monk attached to the church, was close by, and he said to Máel Dúin:

"It would be better for you to avenge the man who was burned to death here, rather than amuse yourself by throwing stones over his poor burnt bones!"

"Who was burned here?" asked Máel Dúin.

"Why, this is the Dooclone church," replied the monk, and the one who was slain here was your own father! It was Ailill Ócar Agha who died on the very rock on which you are now resting your foot!"

“Who slew him?” asked Máel Dúin.

“Raiders from Leix attacked us. They slew our chief, your father, and they burned this very church over his body,” replied Briccne. “And they are still sailing,” he added. “Even today, they are still committing their crimes.”

On hearing this, Máel Dúin dropped the stone that he had been holding. He fastened his cloak around him, and buckled on his shield.

He left the gathering at Dooclone church, and from then on he asked everyone he met whether they knew anything about the raiders from Leix.

For a long time, he could find no news of them; but finally he met some merchants who knew where the raiders’ fleet lay. They told him that the raiders’ home was a great distance away – and that to reach it would require a long and dangerous sea voyage.





7. MÁEL DÚIN BUILDS A CURRACH AND SETS SAIL

BEFORE HE DID ANYTHING ELSE, Máel Dúin went to the country of Corcomroe, to see Nuca the druid, to ask him for charms and blessings for the boat that he had decided to build.

The druid gave Máel Dúin some charms, and the blessings that he asked for. He told the youth on what day he should begin to build his boat, on what day to put out to sea, and how many men he should take with him; Máel Dúin was to take seventeen companions on his voyage – no more, and no less.

Trouble would follow the whole expedition if this instruction was disobeyed, Nuca warned.

On the appointed day, Máel Dúin set to building a large triple-hide currach. It was made of wickerwork, with eight thwarts and a strong mast, and it was covered with three layers of hard red ox-hide. He decorated the boat with the charms that Nuca had given him.

Then Máel Dúin gathered together the seventeen companions who would accompany him on his voyage. Among them were his good friends Germane and Diuran the poet.







Everything was ready by the time the day appointed by Nuca for their departure arrived.

They hoisted the sail to the mast, and put forth to sea. But they had gone only a little way when they heard the cries of Máel Dúin's three foster brothers, who had come running down to the beach, and were standing in the shallows, calling them back.

"You must go home!" Máel Dúin called over the waves. "I may not carry a larger number than are already with me! Nuca has spoken!"

"If you do not come back for us, we will follow you into the sea, even if we drown!" the foster brothers replied. And the three of them plunged into the water, and began to swim towards the currach.

When Máel Dúin saw this, he turned his vessel towards them, and took them on board, rather than let them be drowned. But his heart was heavy, for he remembered the druid's warning.

And they could not turn back, for the current and the wind were strong, and carried them away from the shore. They sailed all day, until finally the evening settled and turned into a long and dark night.



8. THE ISLAND OF THE RAIDERS

THEY KEPT ROWING INTO THE NIGHT, until at about midnight they came to two small and barren islands, on each of which was a fort.

Coming from the forts was the sound of a gathering. They could hear the noise of drunkenness and the commotion of warriors boasting of spoils won, along with the cries and moans of prisoners and hostages.

Máel Dúin and his crew set aside their oars and listened, and soon heard a loud voice, speaking proudly.

“Stand away from me, for I am a better man than you! It was *I* who slew the Eoganacht chief and burned the church of Dooclone over his head, and his kin have never dared to avenge it on me! Have *you* ever performed such a deed?”

The feelings that now seized Máel Dúin and his companions were fierce indeed!

“Now surely,” said Germane and Diuran, “Heaven has guided us to this place! Here is an easy victory. Let us land and utterly destroy these forts, since God has revealed our enemies to us so quickly, and delivered them into our hands!”

But even as they spoke, a wind arose from Heaven, and a great tempest suddenly broke upon them.

And they were driven powerlessly before the violence of the storm, all that night, and for all of the following day and night.





When finally the storm abated and the sky cleared, they were floating in the midst of a great and boundless ocean. They saw neither the islands they had left, nor any other land. They had no way of knowing where they were, or where they were going. They were lost.

“Take down the sail, and lay your oars aside, and let the currach drift before the wind, in whatever direction it pleases God to take us,” Máel Dúin said.

So the crew lowered the sail and ceased their rowing.

Máel Dúin then turned to his foster brothers and spoke the painful truth.

“This is your doing,” he said. “This evil has befallen us because we took the three of you into the currach. Because of you, we have violated the commands given to us by the druid Nuca. There are too many of us. We are cursed. Without doubt, more troubles will come because of this.”

His foster brothers made no reply, but sat in silence, with their heads bowed.







9. THE ANTS

THEY DRIFTED AIMLESSLY for three days and nights, with no sign of land.

But early on the morning of the fourth day, before the sun had risen, they heard a sound in distance.

“It is the sound of waves against the shore,” said Máel Dúin.

When the sun rose and the day brightened, they rowed towards the noise and soon seeing an island, approached the shore.

Lots were cast among the crew to decide which of them should explore the strange land; but even as they were making ready to leave the boat, a great swarm of ants appeared, and every ant seemed the size of a horse.

They swarmed down to the beach, into the very sea, and they swarmed in the air around the boat; and they were agitated. It was clear that they were intent on devouring both the men and their boat.

Máel Dúin and his men were alarmed; the ants were almost on them, and so they turned their vessel and with both oar and sail made as much speed as they could, away from the island.

For three more days and nights they did not cease rowing; and for all this time, there was no sight of land.





10. MANY BRIGHTLY COLORED BIRDS

IN THE EARLY HOURS OF THE FOURTH DAY after they had fled the island of the ants, they again heard the murmur of waves on a distant beach.

As the day dawned, they saw a large island, with high terraces all around it, rising one behind another. On the terraces grew rows of tall trees, on which were perched great numbers of large brightly-colored birds.

The crew were about to cast lots to decide who should visit the island and see whether the birds were dangerous, but Máel Dúin himself decided to go.

Taking a few companions, he went ashore, and they explored the island cautiously – all the time remembering the ants – but they found nothing to hurt or alarm them.

So they trapped some birds, and took them back to the ship as food.



11. THE BEAST THAT THREW STONES

FOR ANOTHER THREE DAYS they sailed without seeing land, and then on the fourth day, they came upon a huge island with wide and flat beaches.

As they approached it, they saw a huge creature standing on the beach, looking at them attentively. It was like a horse in shape; but its legs were like those of a dog, and it had great, sharp claws, on which it balanced precariously. It pranced and leaped around on the beach, as though it was overjoyed to see them.

Máel Dúin was unsure about this creature. Telling his companions to proceed with care, for the monster seemed to him to be intent on making mischief, he instructed the oarsmen to row slowly towards land.

Máel Dúin soon made his decision. "I do not like this beast. It is too pleased to see us. We should leave this island at once."

And he was right, for in its heart, the creature was intending to kill and eat the travelers as soon as they landed on its beach.

They turned away from island. When the monster realized that they were leaving, it began digging up large rocks, and hurling them at the vessel.

It was all the crew could do to get beyond its reach, and the boat almost capsized, but they persisted, and rowed with all their strength, and so eventually they escaped into the open sea.





12. THE DEMONIC HORSE RACE

AFTER SAILING FOR SEVERAL MORE DAYS, a broad, flat island came into view. The crew cast lots, and it fell to Germane to go and examine it, but he did not think the task a pleasant one, for thoughts of the gigantic ants and the great monster they had met on the other islands were still in his mind.

Then Diuran said to him:

“I will go with you this time, and the next time it falls to my lot to visit an island, you shall come with me.”

So both of them went together.

They found the island to be large. Some distance from the shore they came to a broad green racecourse, in which they saw immense hoof-marks, the size of a ship's sail, or a large table. There were nut shells as large as helmets scattered about, and the remains of the huge nuts that had been partially eaten.

Although they could see no one, they found many marks and signs that showed that people of huge size had been employed there, at all kinds of work. There were remains of all kinds, monstrous in size.

It seemed as though the giants had gone plundering, and left their scattered spoil lying about.

Seeing these strange things, they became alarmed, and so they returned to the shore, and called their companions to come ashore and view them as well.

The others, when they had seen the racecourse and

all the signs of the giants, were also struck with fear, and so they quickly returned to their currach, and set sail.

They had got only a little way from the island when they saw dimly, as if through a mist, a vast multitude of people on the sea, of gigantic size and demonic look, rushing along the crests of the waves towards the island, all with a great outcry of noise and shouting.

As soon as this shadowy host of giants had landed, they went to the green, where they began a horse race.

The monstrous horses were swifter than the wind; and as they pressed forward in the race, the demonic multitudes raised a mighty shout like thunder, which reached the crew as clearly as if they were in the boat with them.

Máel Dúin and his men, as they sat in their currach, heard the strokes of the whips and the cries of the riders; and though the race was far off, they could easily understand the eager words of the spectators.

“See the gray!”

“See that chestnut horse!”

“Watch the horse with the white spots!”

“My horse leaps better than yours!”

After seeing and hearing these things, the crew sailed away from the island as quickly as they were able, into the open ocean, for they knew that they had just witnessed a gathering of demons more powerful than anything they could imagine.







13. THE PALACE OF SOLITUDE

HAVING LEFT THE DEMONS to their horse racing, they sailed for a full week with no sign of land, and so they again began to suffer from lack of food and water.

Their hunger was great by the time they came upon a vast island which rose high out of the waves. On the shore, right on the water's edge, they found a large and splendid house. The house had two doors; one faced inland, opening onto a wide plain, and the other faced the sea.

The doorway that faced the sea was sealed with a great flat stone, and in this stone was an opening through which the waves, as they beat tirelessly every day, threw large numbers of salmon into the house.

The voyagers landed, and searched through the entire house without meeting any one.

They saw in one large room a rich and beautifully ornamented couch that seemed to be intended for the head of the house, and in each of the other rooms was a couch for three members of the family. There were three cups of crystal on a table beside each couch, and also food and drink.

Thankful, they ate and drank till they were satisfied, thanking God for having saved them from hunger and thirst, and then they rested on the comfortable couches.

The occupants of the house did not appear, and they decided to set sail again.



14. THE GREAT APPLE TREE

AND NOW THEY WERE MANY DAYS VOYAGING, and again they were soon without food and drink. So they suffered from hunger and thirst, until finally they came to an island with great cliffs all around it.

A single apple tree grew in the middle of the island. It was very tall, and its branches were exceedingly slender and of incredible length, so that they grew all over the hill, and covered the entire island, and hung over the cliffs and all the way down to the sea.

When they came near the island, Máel Dúin caught one of the branches in his hand and broke it off.

For three days and three nights the ship circled the island, but they could find no entrance, or any way through the cliffs, so they could not land.

During all this time Máel Dúin kept hold of the branch that he had broken off, and by the third day, a cluster of three apples had grown on it.

Each of the apples satisfied the hunger of the entire crew for forty days.





15. THE WONDROUS CREATURE

THEY HAD JUST FINISHED the last of the apples when they came to the next island. It had a stone wall all round it.

When they came near the shore, an monstrous creature of vast size, with a thick, rough skin, sprang up from inside the wall, and began to run around and around the island. The creature seemed to Máel Dúin to be swifter than the rush of the cold wind in March!

When it had ended its race, the beast went to the top of the hill in the center of the island, and standing on a large, flat stone, began to perform some kind of exercise, as if this was its daily custom. It put its head down, threw its legs up in the air, and turned itself completely around and around inside its skin, with the bones and flesh all moving, while the skin remained at rest.

When it was tired of this exercise, it rested a little; and then it began turning its skin continually around its body, down at one side and up at the other, like a mill wheel; but the bones and flesh inside did not move.

After spending some time at this strange work, it leaped up and ran around the island again, as fast as the wind, as if to refresh itself.

Then it went back to the same spot, and this time, while the skin that covered the lower part of its body remained still, it whirled the skin of the upper part around and around like a millstone, while the flesh and

bones inside remained unmoving.

It was in this manner that the creature spent all its time on the island.

When Máel Dúin and his crew saw the strange and horrible antics of the monster, they were seized with dread, and they fled as fast as they could, putting out to sea in great haste.

The monster, seeing them about to leave, ran down to the beach to seize the ship. It began to smite at them, and even when they were out of reach, sailing away, it cast and lashed after them with stones from the shore, flinging them with great force and excellent aim, accompanied by terrifying howls and unearthly screams.

One of the stones struck Máel Dúin's shield and went right through it, lodging in the keel of the currach.

After this, the voyagers got beyond the creature's range as quickly as they could, and they were happy to sail away and leave the island behind.







16. THE BLOODTHIRSTY HORSES

A WEEK LATER, a most beautiful island next came into view. On it they saw multitudes of large animals shaped like horses that were standing tightly packed together, one next to the other.

As they drew near, the voyagers watched as one of the creatures opened its mouth and tore a great piece out of the side of the animal that stood next it, bringing away skin and flesh, and causing blood to stream down its flanks and onto the ground.

Immediately after, another of the creatures did the same to the nearest of its fellows.

And then the voyagers saw that all the creatures on the island kept worrying and tearing at each other in this manner; so that the ground was covered far and wide with the blood that streamed from their sides. The entire island was soaked crimson with their blood.

So they left that island as quickly as they could, and were all in a state of desperation. They were all sad, and complaining of feeling feeble and weak; for they knew nothing about this strange world, or where they were going, or how they might find help, or a safe place to land.

They were lost, and utterly without hope.





17. THE FIERY SWINE

THEY SAILED FOR A LONG TIME, suffering again from hunger and thirst, and praying fervently for relief from their torment.

At last – when they were sunken into a state of despair, and were quite worn out with privation and hardship of every kind – they sighted land.

Before them was a large and beautiful island, covered with countless fruit trees bearing an abundance of gold-colored apples. Under the trees they saw herds of heavy, stout animals, of a bright red color, shaped somewhat like pigs – but as they came nearer, and could see more clearly, they realized with astonishment that the animals were all fiery, and that their bright color was caused by the red flames which penetrated and illuminated their bodies from the inside.

The voyagers observed several of the creatures approach one of the trees, and striking the trunk all together with their hind legs, they shook some of the apples loose, and proceeded to eat them.

In this manner the animals occupied themselves every day, from early morning until the setting of the sun. As dusk descended, they retired into deep caves, far below the ground, where they stayed until the next morning.



There were swarms of birds swimming on the sea, all around the island. From morning until noon, they swam away from the land, farther and farther out to sea; but at noon they turned round, and from then until sunset, they swam back towards the shore.

At sunset, when the fiery creatures had retired to their caves, the birds flocked onto the island, and had their own turn at eating the apples.

Máel Dúin proposed that they should land on the island, and gather some of the fruit, saying that it could not be any more difficult or dangerous for them than it was for the birds; so two of the crew were sent ashore to examine the island.

They found that the ground was hot beneath their feet, for the fiery animals, as they lay sleeping in their underground lairs, heated the earth; but the two scouts persevered, and returned to the boat with some fruit.

When morning came, the birds left the island and swam out to sea, and the fiery creatures, emerging from their caves, went among the trees and began to eat.

The crew remained in their currach all day; and as soon as the animals had gone into their caves for the night, and the birds had taken their place, Máel Dúin led his men ashore.

They plucked the apples till morning, and brought them on board, until they had gathered as much as they could stow on their vessel. And then, refreshed, they put to sea once more.





18. THE LITTLE CAT

AFTER SAILING FOR A LONG TIME, their store of apples failed them, and again they had nothing to eat or drink.

They baked under a hot and merciless sun, and the sea gave forth an evil stench which filled their mouths and noses, so that it was difficult to breathe.

They were mightily relieved when at last a small island with nothing but a large palace on it came into view. As they got closer, they could see that around the palace was a wall, entirely white, without any marks or flaws, as if it had been perfectly carved out of a single vast rock of pure chalk. Where it faced the sea, the wall was so high that it seemed almost to reach the clouds.

The gate in this outer wall was open. Máel Dúin and his men went ashore and entered the gate, and found that there were many fine houses, all also as white as snow, arranged around the ramparts of the wall. The houses were facing inwards, so that they enclosed a central court, onto which all the houses opened.

They entered the largest and finest of the houses, and searched through it without meeting anyone.

On reaching the largest room, a magnificent hall, they found a small cat playing among square marble pillars which stood arranged in a row. The cat was leaping from the top of one pillar to the top of another; it seemed to be an endless game.

When Máel Dúin and the others entered the room, the cat looked at them intently for a moment, and then returned to its play, and took no further notice of them.

Looking around the room, they saw three rows of precious jewels decorating the walls, reaching from one door to the other. The first was a row of brooches of gold and silver, with their pins fixed to the wall, and their faces outwards. The second was a row of torques of gold and silver, each as big as the hoop of a cask. The third was a row of great swords, with ornate hilts of gold and silver.

Around the room were placed couches, all pure white and richly ornamented. Abundant food of various kinds was spread on tables, among which was a boiled ox and a roasted hog; and there were many drinking-horns, all full of good strong ale.

“Is it for us that this food has been prepared?” Máel Dúin asked, the question directed at the cat.

The cat ceased its playing, and looked at him calmly for a moment; then it returned to its play. Since the cat did not object, Máel Dúin told his companions that the dinner was indeed meant for them, and they all sat down, and ate and drank until they were satisfied, after which they rested, and slept soundly on the couches.

When they awoke, they poured what was left of the ale into their wineskins, and they gathered the remnants of the food to take away with them.

As they were about to go, Máel Dúin’s eldest foster

brother said “I am going to bring one of those golden torques!”

“No, do not!” said Máel Dúin. “It is enough that we have been given food and rest. Bring nothing away, for it is certain that this house will have someone to guard it.”

The foster brother, however, ignored Máel Dúin’s words, and took down one of the torques and brought it away with him.

But the cat followed him, and overtook him in the middle of the court. It sprang on him like a blazing, fiery arrow, passed through his body, and in an instant burned him into a pile of ashes.

The cat then returned to the room, and, leaping up onto one of the pillars, sat quietly upon it, impassively, as if nothing had happened.

Máel Dúin turned back, bringing the torque with him, and, approaching the cat, he spoke some soothing words. Then he put the torque back in the place from which it had been taken.

Having done this, he collected the ashes of his foster brother, and, bringing them to the shore, sorrowfully cast them into the sea.

Then they all boarded the currach, and set sail.

They continued their voyage, grieving for their lost companion, but at the same time thanking God for His many mercies to them.





19. THE ISLAND OF SHEEP

ON THE MORNING OF THE THIRD DAY, they came to another island, which was divided into two halves by a wall of brass running clear across the middle. They saw two great flocks of sheep, one on each side of the wall; and all those on one side were black, while those on the other side were white.

A large man was dividing and arranging the sheep. He would pick up a sheep and throw it easily over the wall, from one side to the other. When he threw a white sheep among the black ones, it immediately became black, and when he threw a black sheep among the white ones, it was instantly changed to white.

The travelers were alarmed by what they saw.

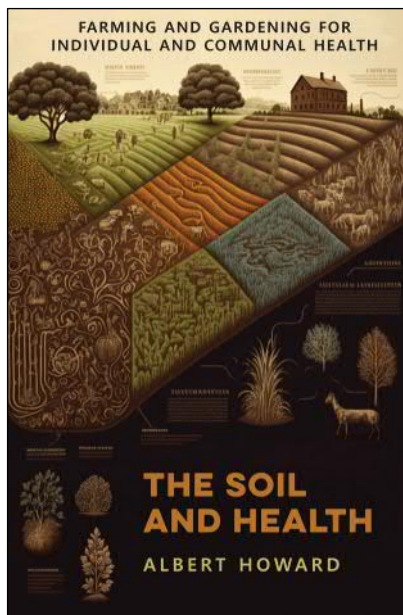
“It is good that we know this,” said Máel Dúin.

“Let us now throw something onto shore, to see whether it changes color. If it does, then we shall avoid this island altogether!”

So they took a branch with dark bark, and threw it among the white sheep. No sooner did it touch the ground than it became white. Then they threw a branch with white bark among the black sheep, and it turned black in an instant.

“It is lucky for us,” said Máel Dúin, “that we did not land on the island, for then our own color would have changed, just like the color of those branches!”

Relieved, they turned around and sailed away.



The Soil and Health

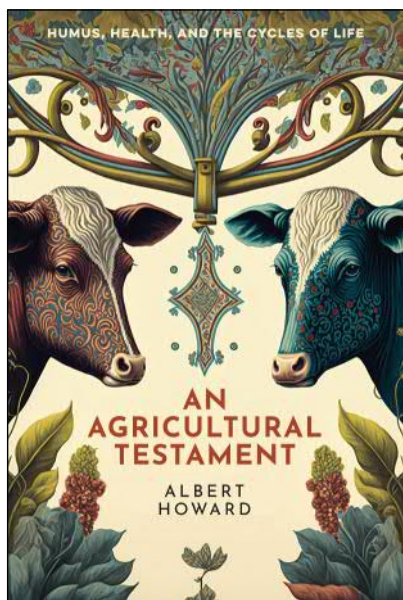
Albert Howard

This valuable book is a detailed analysis of the vital role of humus and compost in soil health – and the importance of soil health to the health of crops and the humans who eat them. The author is keenly aware of the dead end which awaits humanity if we insist on growing our food using artificial fertilisers and poisons.

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An Agricultural Testament

Albert Howard

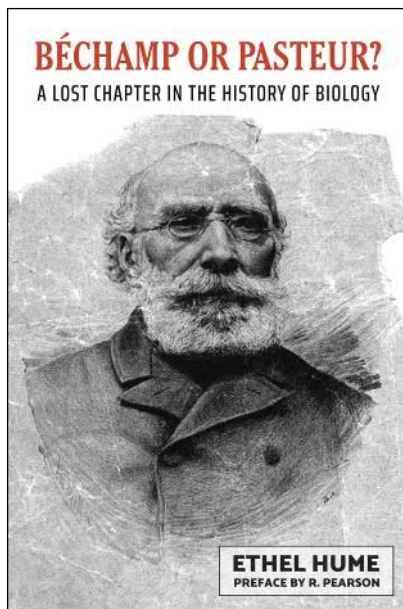
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Ethel Hume / Robert Pearson

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The Blood and its Third Element

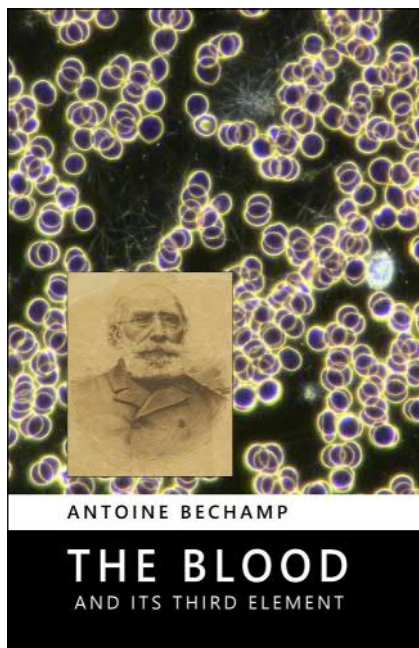
Antoine Béchamp

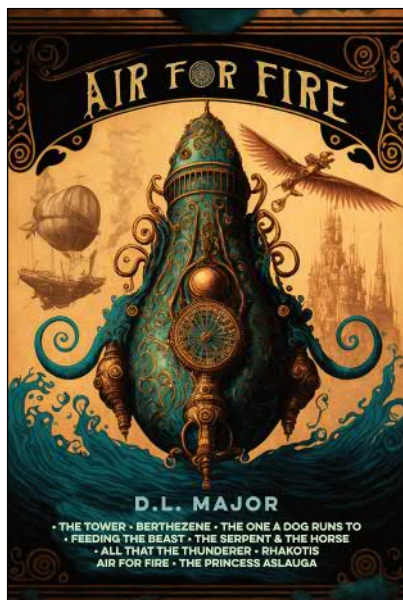
There is no single cause of disease. The ancients knew this. Béchamp proved it with meticulous research, and was written out of history for his trouble. The relevance of his work to the dilemmas that plague the modern medical world remains to this day unrealized by mainstream science and medicine.

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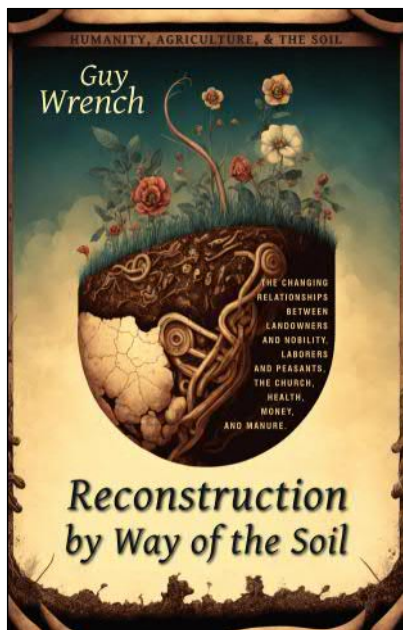
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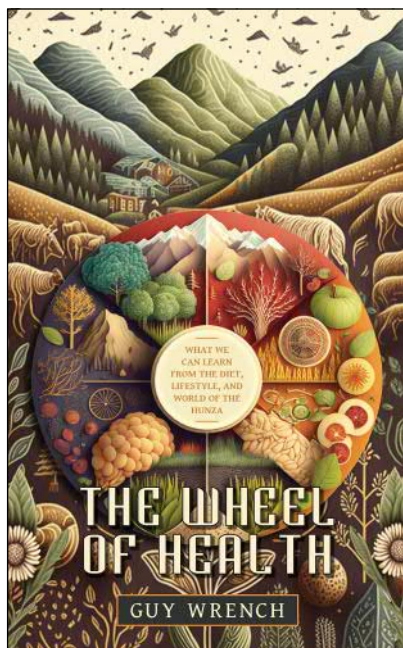
Dr Guy Wrench

Includes case studies from Ancient Rome, nomadic societies, medieval England, Africa and Egypt, the West Indies, Russia, Australia and the USA to show that nothing is more important than the relationship between civilization and the soil. The way that the soil is treated has brought about both the rise and fall of civilizations.

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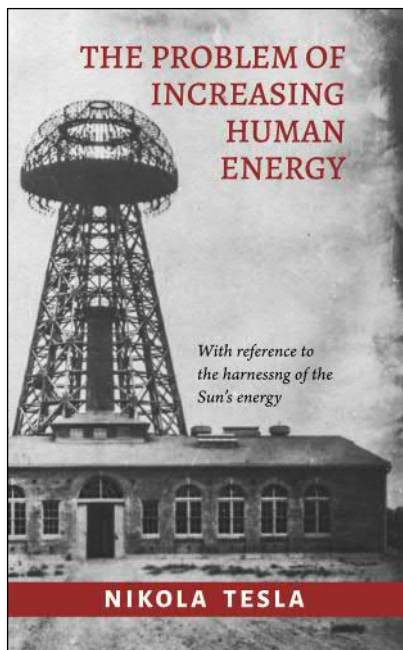
Dr Guy Wrench

The Hunza of northern Pakistan were famous for their extraordinary vitality and health. Dr Wrench argues that in part at least, this is because their food was not made 'sophisticated', by the artificial processes typically applied to modern processed food. How these processes affect our food is dealt with in great detail in this book. What Dr Wrench uncovered in his researches goes deeper than just food, though. It's about water.

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The Problem of Increasing Human Energy

Nikola Tesla

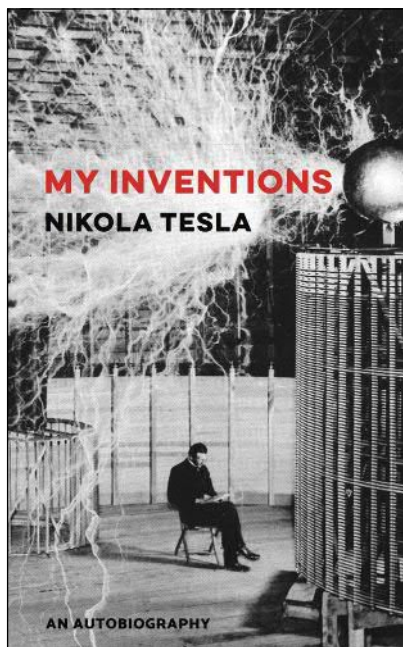
Contains Tesla's thoughts on humanity's relationship with the universe, and also his explanation of the technological wonders embodied in his work.

This text was first published in *Century Illustrated Magazine* in June 1900.

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My Inventions

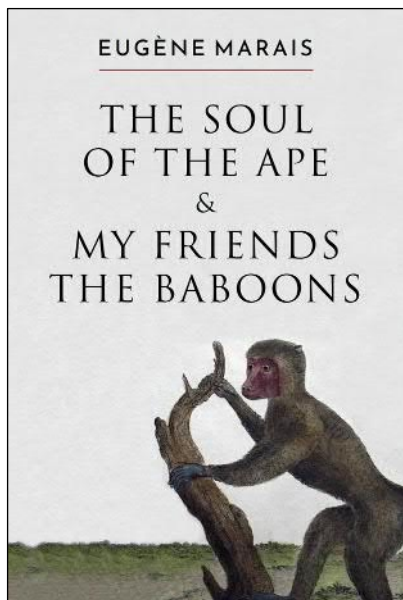
Nikola Tesla

Not only is this book an invitation to meet one of the greatest minds of the last century, and to hear him talk about his inventions; it is also a chance to get to know Tesla as a person, as the book is filled with anecdotes of his early life.

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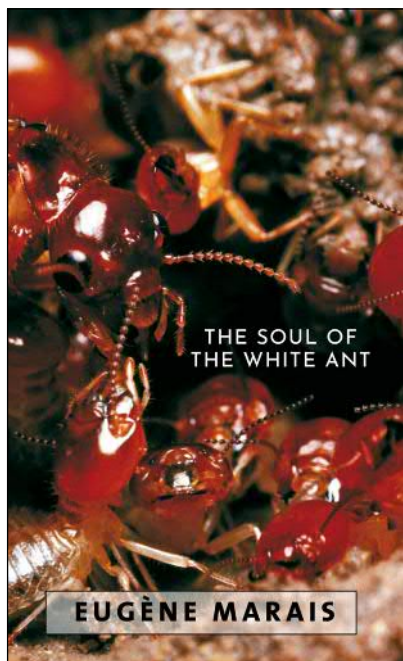
Eugène Marais

Includes two works by Marais written after his period spent living among a troop of baboons in the South African veldt. *My Friends* was written for a newspaper readership. *The Soul of the Ape* was the more serious scientific document. The excellent introduction by Robert Ardrey was part of the 1969 edition, and adds greatly to an appreciation of the importance of this text.

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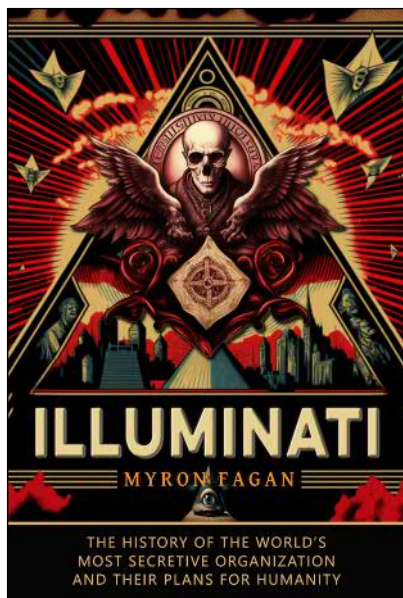
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The amazing results of a long, close study of the lives of termites. Eugène Marais compares the infrastructure of a termite colony to that of the human body. Writing from the heart, this scientific author who is also a poet instills a wonder in the reader, of the incredible intricacies of nature, in a light-hearted, easily readable manner.

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Illuminati

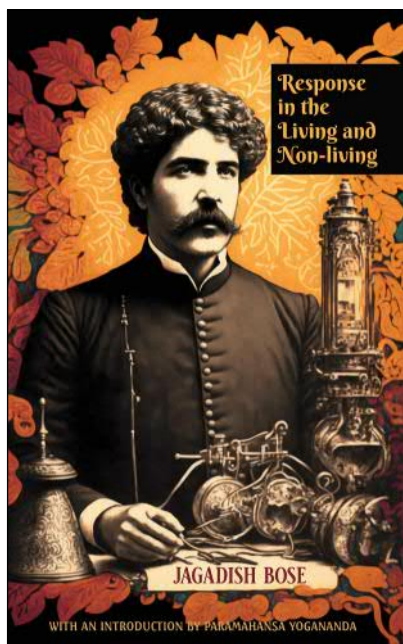
Myron Fagan

This book describes how the Illuminati became the instrument of the Rothschilds to achieve a One World Government, and how every war during the past two centuries has been instigated by this group. This is an historical text with names, dates, organizations and mode of operations, all exposing the octopus gripping the world today.

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Jagadish Bose

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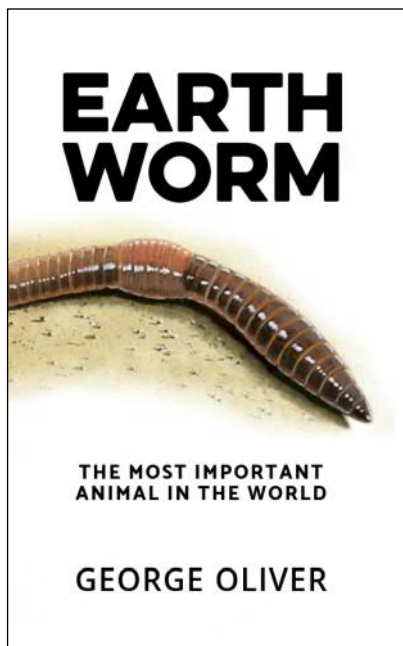
Edmund Morris

Recently we have seen a great back-to-the-land movement, with many young professional people returning to small scale farming; thus it is useful to read about someone who did exactly the same thing in 1864. In that year, Edmund Morris and his family gave up their business and city life for a farm of ten acres, where they made a go of mixed farming, and then wrote a book about it.

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Earthworm

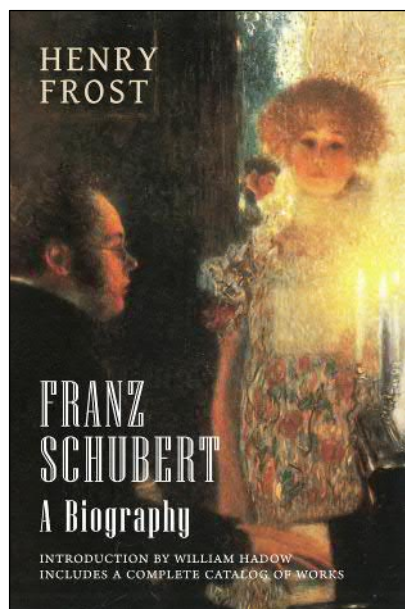
George Oliver

The author returns the reader to a time and methodology where people took responsibility for what they did and what they produced. In this world of spiraling food prices, huge landfills, diminishing food supplies, loss of topsoil, and water pollution, the reader is reminded that the world's most important animal could well be the humble earthworm.

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Franz Schubert – a Biography

Henry Frost

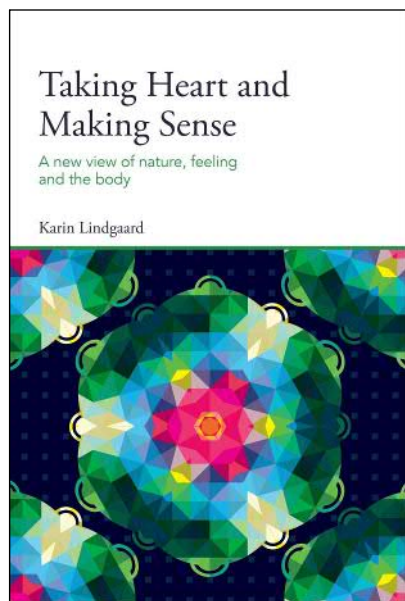
“With faith man steps forth into the world. Faith is far ahead of understanding and knowledge; for to understand anything, I must first of all believe something. Faith is the higher basis on which weak understanding rears its first columns of proof; reason is nothing but faith analysed.”

– *Franz Schubert*

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Taking Heart and Making Sense

Karin Lindgaard

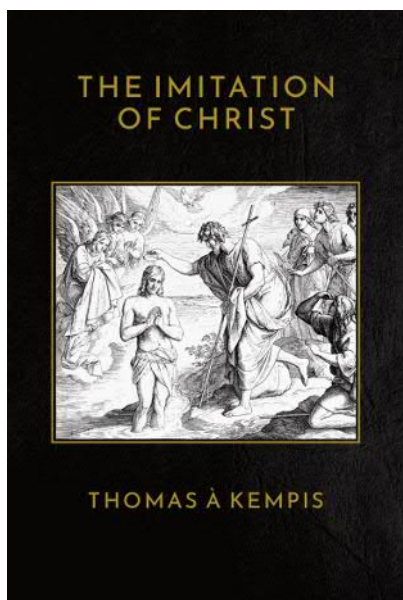
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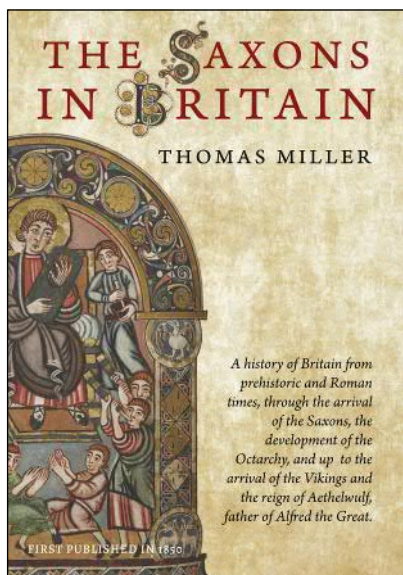
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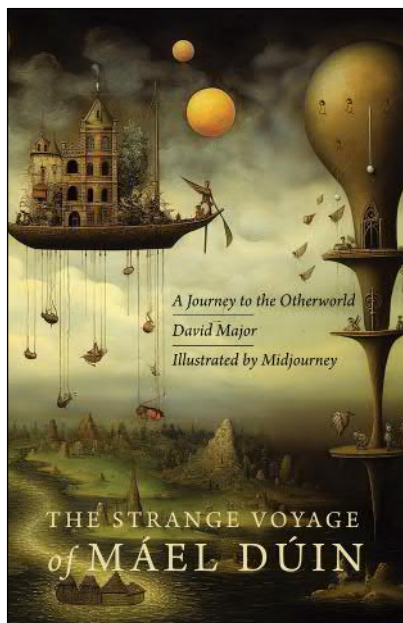
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