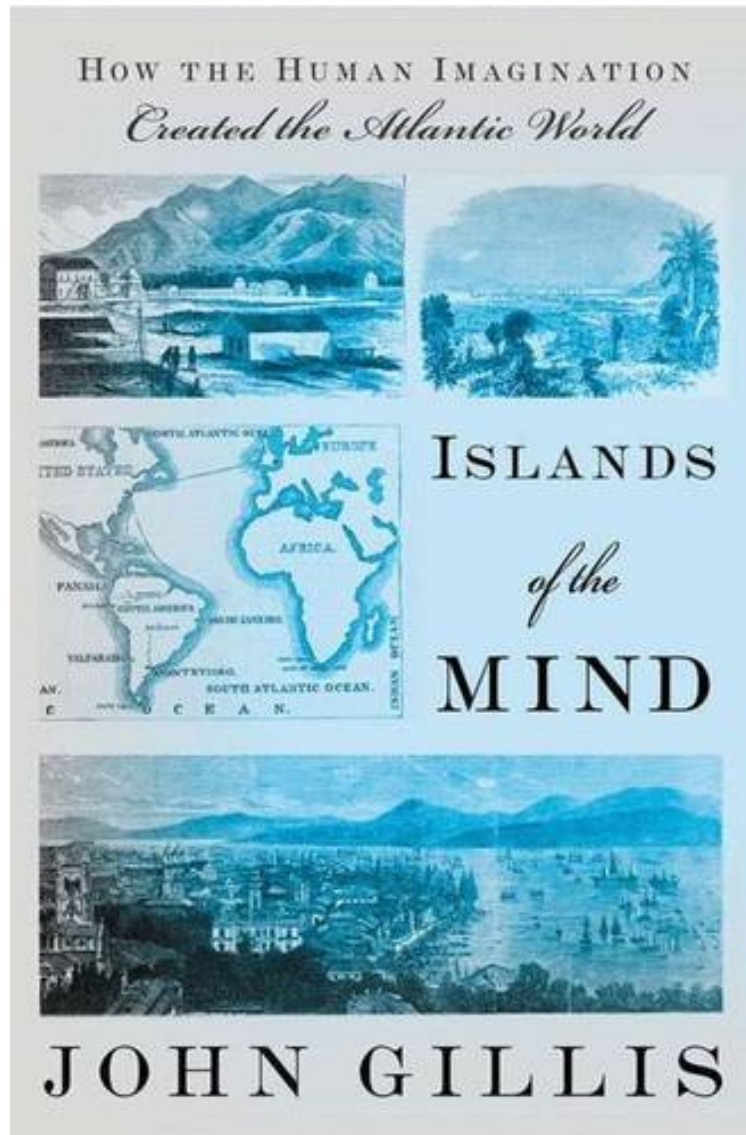


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Islands of the Mind: How the Human Imagination Created the Atlantic World

John R. Gillis

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John R. Gillis : Islands of the Mind: How the Human Imagination Created the Atlantic World before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Islands of the Mind: How the Human Imagination Created the Atlantic World:

1 of 10 people found the following review helpful. An Erudite And Beautifully Written Work By Aung Htun" AN ERUDITE AND BEAUTIFULLY WRITTEN WORK of cultural and intellectual history, bursting with evocative

ideas and connections."--Publishers Weekly[from the back of jacket]

In *Islands of the Mind*, John R. Gillis takes us on a rich and fascinating journey through the centuries and across the ocean in search of the meanings of islands in the collective imagination and history of the western world. Islands, he shows, have always sparked the imagination with notions of danger, adventure, isolation and even perfection. They have lured explorers and been the reason for battles between colonizing empires. Islands have given birth to unique cultures, they have prompted scientists and anthropologists with clues to human beginnings, and have been known to occasionally disappear without a trace. Gillis unravels both the actual and conceptual history of islands, beginning with the imagined lands of Homer's *Odyssey* and ending with a look at modern-day cruise destinations. This multifaceted survey shows how and why islands have occupied such a central place in the western imagination, and how they came to be master symbols and inexhaustible metaphors for so many different things.

From Publishers Weekly "Today our most significant places are not those we dwell in physically but those we dwell on mentally," contends this engaging meditation on the island in European consciousness. Ancient and medieval Europeans, says Gillis, saw islands as holy sites and conjured a geography of mythic isles just beyond the known world. Early moderns located paradise and utopia on islands that explorers were beginning to glimpse. Enlightenment thinkers and later anthropologists imagined islands as ideal laboratories where natural man could be studied in isolation from the corruptions of civilization. And in a contemporary world, we still think of islands as remote havens of rusticity and authenticity, with the iconic island summer cottage being a refuge from urban modernity and a place to recapture lost childhood. Cultural historian Gillis (*A World of Their Own Making*) covers religion, mapmaking, desert island cartoons and reminiscences about his own summer house on a Maine island in this thoughtful survey. He explores the mythology and the reality of islands, both celebrating the golden age of Atlantic civilization centered on wealthy, cosmopolitan Caribbean islands and exposing the current economic problems veiled by romanticized imagery projected by the tourist industry that many islands face. The result is an erudite and beautifully written work of cultural and intellectual history, bursting with evocative ideas and connections. Photos. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "An erudite and beautifully written work of cultural and intellectual history, bursting with evocative ideas and connections."--Publishers Weekly "A captivating synthesis of everything known and dreamed about islands. From the classical archipelagos of the Aegean, via the mythic marvels of Atlantis, to today's desert island hideaways, John Gillis brilliantly illumines our earthly stars and starlets--a ocean galaxy almost as manifold as and even more fabulous than the constellations in the skies above. This stunning story of humanity's love-and-hate affair with all these specks in the silver sea sums up the meanings and the motives that have impelled countless generations to discover, settle, reshape, and often invent islands. In delightful prose, John Gillis tells us why we love or loathe them, all the ways they spur our imagination, and how castaways and paradise seekers from Odysseus and Caliban to Robinson Crusoe and Peter Pan have been transformed by them. This book will be cherished by everyone who has ever been enchanted by islands."--David Lowenthal, author of *The Past Is a Foreign Country* "The less they are occupied, John Gillis concludes his dazzling survey of the meaning of the island in western civilization, the more they preoccupy us.' With characteristic precision and penetration, that says it all: the island has dominated the western imagination since the Bronze Age. Each island exists in the mind before it is known on the horizon. It is, more than any other form of land or landscape, the realm of possibility, the place in which the full, the rich, the holy, and the seductive can all be imagined as the ultimately real. With a comprehensiveness and an alluring lightness of touch, Professor Gillis has pinned this most slippery archipelago of the mind to its true place on the chart of cultural history."--Adam Nicolson, author of *Sea Room, Gods Secretaries, and Seamanship*