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Islands : A Select Bibliography

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Islands: A Select Bibliography

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Note: The following list of books offers a sample of the range of works on the subject of islands. We might designate them texts of island studies that reveal the boundedness and limitations of continental studies.

Baldacchino, G., (Ed.). (2007). *A world of islands: An island studies reader*. 640 pp. Charlottetown, P.E.I.: Institute of Island Studies.

A World of Islands is a collection of essays, composed by more than forty contributors of varied provenances and disciplinary backgrounds, offering ideas and expertise from and for the study of islands and island life. The editor acknowledges that island scholarship remains dominated by those observing from the “outside-in,” and makes an effort in this collection to provide platforms for other contributions. He discusses the continental obsession to claim—the subconscious desire to frame and map an island cognitively and to discern its finite geography, to “circum-navigate, circum-ambulate, or climb to [an island’s] highest point and ‘take it all in.’” In opposition to that tendency, this book extends an invitation to place islands “right in the centre of things.” The first collection of essays addresses “Island Spaces and Identities,” discussing issues of definition, typology, classification, and origins. Essays under the category of “Island Life” cover evolution on islands, flora and fauna, archaeology, and epidemiology. The section on “Island Development” considers war and security, political economy, governance, tourism, migration, gentrification, and sustainability. An extended listing of island studies resources provides the reader or researcher with diverse references for further study.

Baldaccino, G., & Milne, D. (Eds.). (2000). *Lessons from the political economy of small islands: The resourcefulness of jurisdiction*. 267 pp., maps and illus. New York: St. Martin’s Press.

The essays in this collection, rooted in the fields of economics, sociology, cultural studies, architecture, and government, all explore the opportunities and challenges of

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economic development for small islands. The authors criticize neoclassical assumptions about small-state economies, which, in a generalized prescription of deprecating smallness, take for granted insufficient populations and labor markets, diseconomies of scale, absent entrepreneurship and capital, and meager resources without considering important, state-specific factors such as culture, geography, cohesiveness, history, or will. Instead, the authors seek to rethink our sense of what makes a place strong or weak, or what makes for peripheral or central space. The essays emphasize the role of jurisdiction in political economy, asserting that it is an economic resource for small islands to have law-making authority or jurisdiction in their own right that they may exercise to advance their economies. Topics addressed specifically in essays include islands in comparative constitutional perspectives, federalism, culture and economic development, and tourism.

Briguglio, L., Cordina, G., Farrugia, N., & Vigilance, C. (Eds.). (2008). *Small states and the pillars of economic resilience*. 426 pp. Malta: Islands and Small States Institute of the University of Malta.

This compilation of essays on small state economies offers insights on policies and conditions determining vulnerability and resilience in places as varied as Jamaica, Malta, Fiji, and Samoa. Early debates on the economies of small states questioned their viability in terms of their political security and inherent economic disadvantages, but current frameworks synthesizing concepts of economic vulnerability and resilience hold that special inherent characteristics of small states expose them to shocks outside their control that may impinge negatively on economic growth. They also find that policy-induced economic resilience can help mitigate the effects of negative shocks and even allow small nations to benefit economically from positive ones. The essays in this collection employ those current frameworks and consider optimal policy stances for small state economies as well as the broad spectrum of policy elements needed to build economic resilience—macroeconomic stability, market efficiency, good governance, social development, environmental considerations, and international engagement, among possible others. Many of the authors argue that most developing states' policies may not often produce favorable economic outcomes for islands, and they offer cross-sectional data yielding fruitful comparisons between countries. However, the editors conclude, future studies should build on the concepts discussed and conclusions drawn in this book to analyze specific country vulnerabilities and to suggest tailor-made solutions based on both international best practices and indigenous issues.

Douglas, B. C., Kearney, M. S., & Leatherman, S. P. (Eds.). (2001). *Sea level rise: History and consequences*. 232 pp., maps and illus. San Diego: Academic.

The book begins with a call for heightened interest in its title topic, sea level rise, which is a consequence of climate change. That physical phenomenon coincides with rapid economic development and population expansion occurring in the world's coastal

regions, resulting in a harmful “collision course” of socioeconomic and sea level trends. In the book, special emphasis is given to earth, environmental, marine, and geological scientific evidence for historical sea level change, and case studies demonstrate the resulting consequences. Topics covered include the complexity of sea level variation (affected by local, regional, and global factors), sea level change over the past eight to ten millennia, sea level change after the creation of the recording sea level gauge in the mid-nineteenth century, the extended geophysical response of the earth to the melting of the great ice sheets that began about 21,000 years ago and continued modern sea level rise after the end of glacial melting about 4,000 years ago, corrections for glacial isostatic adjustment (GIA) that enable accurate estimates of twentieth-century sea level rise, the effects of impoundment of water in reservoirs and groundwater mining on sea level rise, an earth-orbiting satellite’s sea level detection capabilities, and the impact of sea level rise on coastal habitability. A section on small island vulnerability uses examples from the Maldives, the Marshall Islands, and Micronesia to illustrate how rising seas threaten population centers and infrastructure along their coastal fringe. Those dangers, the authors conclude, will lead to an increase in outmigration from these islands.

Edmond, R., & Smith, V. (Eds.). (2003). *Islands in history and representation*. 234 pp., maps and illus. London: Routledge.

This collection of essays aims to negotiate between the allusive multiplicity and historical fixity of islands. Here, the paradox of the island—its simultaneous boundedness and limitlessness—becomes re-described as a complex relationship between history and figuration. In Western representations of islands, the defining idea of an island is its boundedness, and, fitting “within the retina of the approaching eye,” islands appear as property and become tokens of desire. However, island inhabitants likely hold a different notion of the relation between island and sea, a culturally specific sense of the contiguity—à la Tongan writer Epeli Hau’ofa’s assertion that Pacific peoples inhabit a “sea of islands”— of islands and sea, a sense of blurred margins rather than the structured oppositions of continental provenance. Essays in the collection address the significance of islands in the Atlantic economy of the eighteenth century, the exploration of the Pacific, which presented Europe with new island-groups to imagine, explore, colonize, and exploit, the important role played by islands in the process of decolonization, and island-oriented developments in postcolonial writing.

Fernández-Armesto, F. (1995). *Millennium*. 830 pp., maps and illus. London: Bantam.

Fernández-Armesto’s survey of the past millennium traces the fate of civilizations defined, in prominent cases, by seas: the shifts of initiative from the China Seas and the Mediterranean, the hegemony of the Atlantic, and the cultural counter-invasion from the Pacific. Western world-dominance, the author holds, was weaker and briefer than is commonly supposed; accordingly, he devotes more space to the rest of the world in this study.

Noting that history is chaotic, and the causes of events often impossible to trace, and observing that historical truth appears in different shapes and guises according to the angle of approach, Fernández-Armesto writes history as a creative art whose mark of quality is that it is convincingly imagined and vividly evoked. *Millennium* examines the major early civilizations of China, Islam, Western Christendom, and Eastern Christendom; the “age of European expansion”; the spread of civilizations through conquest, colonization, evangelization, and trade; the creation and crisis of the Atlantic world; the weakening hold of the West in the twentieth century; decolonization and the resurgence of Islam; and the return of initiative in human affairs to the Pacific coasts, the challenge to Atlantic tradition’s domination, and Oriental influences on Western thought and science to the present.

Fowles, J., & Godwin, F. (1978). *Islands*. 108 pp., illus. Boston: Little, Brown.

Writer John Fowles and photographer Fay Godwin collaborated to produce this work on the Isles of Scilly, the archipelago off the southwestern tip of the Cornish Peninsula of Great Britain. The text’s subject matter is “the Scillies of a novelist’s mind; and beyond them . . . the mysteries, symbolic and real, of all similarly situated small islands; about their silences, their otherness, their magi and their mazes, their eternal waiting for a foot to land.” Vivid black and white photographs of landscapes and Scillian fauna intersperse Fowles’ historical and personal musings on the Isles and on islands in general. Fowles explores the Scillies’ etymological origins—Celtic, Norse, Germanic, French, Old English, as well as mythological ones—“Skylla’s father Typhon was . . . a huge fire-belching thug, with arms six hundred miles across . . . Typhon remains very much with us . . . There is an Urdu word *tufan*, even a Chinese *tai fung*.” More generally, Fowles ponders that “the sea and its islands [are] the domain of what cannot be controlled by wisdom; the laboratory where the guinea-pig Odysseus must run through mazes; where the great ally of reason, the conscious, gives way to the rule of the unconscious and the libido.” Concluding his text, rich in literary and historical references, Fowles criticizes the peremptory and destructive modern duty to enjoy (to discuss and decide at length where to go, what to enjoy, how to enjoy, when to enjoy), and names the Isles of Scilly, in their austere simplicity, “one huge Zen garden of the Atlantic.”

Gillis, J. R. (2004). *Islands of the mind: How the human imagination created the Atlantic world*. 240 pp., maps and illus. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

In this book, historian John R. Gillis finds that islands, as cultural constructions, hold a central place in the Western imaginary that can be traced back to Classical antiquity and endures today. The author argues that assigning meaning to discrete, neatly bounded things is a particularly Western way of navigating the world, and that in Western cosmogony, land stands for order while water represents chaos. The island, becoming an ambiguous place partaking of both significations, is assigned varied meanings in the

Western imagination throughout history—from a space of danger and isolation to one of adventure, reverence, and even perfection. The author acknowledges that the relationship between islands and continents has been asymmetrical, but recognizes it as dialectical nonetheless, and ventures to correct history's continental bias in this book.

Kincaid, J. (1988). *A small place*. 81 pp. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

This book is a vivid exposition of the effects of colonialism on the author's native Antigua, divided into four untitled sections. The first section addresses the reader as a hypothetical tourist. Kincaid's tourist-reader observes the natural beauty of the island and enjoys its luxuries, all while being sheltered from the harsh daily realities faced by its residents. The moral bankruptcy of the tourist lies in his unwillingness to recognize the struggles of the island's residents and her role in a world system that has produced such inequalities. In the second section, Kincaid relates her memories of Antigua while still a colonial British possession, deploring Antiguan's reverence for British culture in spite of racism, as well as the fact that Antiguan can only express themselves in the language of those who enslaved and oppressed them. In the third section, the author considers the disturbing question of whether Antigua enjoyed better conditions under colonial rule than it has since independence, and discusses Antigua's political history and corruption. The fourth and final section evokes the intense, "unreal" beauty of the island, including immense poverty as an element of Antiguan scenery. Kincaid ends by writing that Antiguan, the descendants of noble victims of slavery, are human beings with the problems and contradictions of human beings anywhere.

Lewis, D. (1994). *We, the navigators: The ancient art of landfinding in the Pacific* (2nd ed.). D. Oulton (Ed.). 442 pp., maps and illus. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

We, the Navigators presents David Lewis' influential work on Pacific navigation, exploring in great detail how Micronesians and Polynesians have been able, without instruments, to freely sail their small vessels across open ocean with confidence that they would safely reach their destinations. The author argues that an understanding of what was and was not within the scope of the prehistoric navigator is crucial to Pacific studies, and aims, through rigorous navigational research strengthened by actual experience in oceangoing small craft, to make a detailed examination of indigenous navigational concepts and methods, and to assess their efficacy and limitations. Lewis finds that navigational knowledge in many places was secret, and relates the vanishing of many skills under the impact of the technology of the Western world, but he locates skills that have survived, such as the indigenous sidereal compass of the Carolines, which had not been superseded by the magnetic compass. This second edition engages with theories about traditional methods of navigation that developed during the decades since the book's first publication in 1972, with the story of the renaissance of star navigation throughout the Pacific and with material about navigational systems in Indonesia, Siberia, and the Indian

Ocean.

Lewis, M. W., & Wigan, K. E. (1997). *The myth of continents: A critique of metageography*. 344 pp., maps and illus. Berkeley: University of California Press.

This book traces the emergence and development of conventional metageographies and explores their follies. The authors define metageography as the set of spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world, the often unconscious frameworks that organize studies of human and even natural history. They argue that a series of geographical myths based on unwarranted simplifications of global spatial patterns dominates thinking about the world, and they present four fundamental errors at the root of metageographical thinking in the English-speaking world—the myth of continents, the myth of the nation-state, the myth of East and West, and the myth of geographical concordance, or the idea that disparate phenomena exhibit the same variation in space. The authors focus on mostly Euro-American modes of geographical thought but establish the systematic critique of all geographical concepts and their hold on the imagination as a topic of intellectual discussion and debate. Insisting that metageographies constitute ideological structures, the authors argue that the concepts of global geography matter not merely for how they influence discourse about the world but for how they guide policy, as well.

Nunn, P. D. (1994). *Oceanic islands*. 413 pp., maps and illus. Cambridge: Blackwell.

Oceanic Islands is a biogeographical study aimed at filling a gap in descriptions of the world's natural environments by providing an account of oceanic islands, which are generally marginalized, or wholly excluded, in such works. The author provides an account of why and how oceanic islands originate and discusses what causes their environments to change—from responses to tectonic or climate changes, to denudation, sea-level changes, or biotic changes. Islands have assumed various roles in the European imagination—as the foci of utopian visions, the settings for romantic notions of human-environment relations, places to be colonized, developed, and exploited, and places of refuge for continental dwellers. However, many islanders regard islands differently. The author concludes that *Oceanic Islands*, as a work of environmental geography, contributes to a body of knowledge about islands that is necessary if the integrity of island cultures is to be maintained and if islands are to be regarded as anything more than mere cultural and physical appendages to continents.

O'Brien, P. (2006). *The Pacific muse: Exotic femininity and the colonial Pacific*. 347 pp., maps and illus. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

In this book, historian Patty O'Brien seeks ways of viewing the Pacific past that eschew mythmaking in order to establish a more nuanced and complicated history of

colonial relations in the region. She argues that clichés tied loosely to fragmentary knowledge of the Pacific islands, their peoples, and the history of Western colonization in the region often alone constitute the Pacific in popular culture. Disparate threads of Western conceptions of the Pacific region, the author finds, are persistently embodied in the emblem of exotic, feminine primitivism—the Pacific muse. The author contests the assumption that the benignly exotic and uncomplicated Pacific muse is a more or less accurate portrayal of Pacific women. By examining the connection between racial and sexual stereotypes and the economies of empire, O’Brien places the Pacific muse within the context of a broader history of exotic femininity forged in classical myth and shaped by the many histories of colonial contact.

Okihiro, G. Y. (2008). *Island world: A history of Hawai‘i and the United States*. 308 pp., maps and illus. Berkeley: University of California.

Island World is a rendering of Hawaiian and U.S. history that, instead of rehashing the customary narrative of the United States acting upon Hawai‘i, centers the islands of Oceania and the narratives of its people, both on and off the Islands. Doing so, this book refutes the conception of islands as “tiny spaces” absent significance and endows them with historical meaning, initiative, and intellect usually denied to islands as part and parcel of their representations as feminine spaces. The author acknowledges that his centering of Hawai‘i, and its animation of the United States, is a strategic position to counter the prevailing bias and offers his conception of “historical formations” as a useful alternative to disciplinary history’s assumptions of a linear progression of time, a discrete and managed space, and of humans as the sole subjects of volition—all of which contribute to harmful distinctions between islands and continents and limited understanding of the interrelations among history makers. *Island World* articulates the intersections of land and sea and their biotic communities, of the Atlantic and Pacific, of Hawaiians and Europeans, Africans, American Indians, and Latinas/os, and transgresses sites of nation, discipline, subject, and at times, even narrative form.

Pickles, J. (2004). *A history of spaces: Cartographic reason, mapping and the geo-coded world*. 233 pp., maps and illus. New York: Routledge.

A History of Spaces considers the way in which maps and map-making have shaped the spaces in which we live. Drawing on a wide range of social theorists and theorists of maps, the author puts into question all representational epistemologies and logics and offers examples of the use of maps from the sixteenth century to the present, including their role in projects of the national and colonial state, emergent capitalism, and the planetary consciousness of the natural sciences. *A History of Spaces* contributes to a sub-field of critical analysis within cultural studies that, arising out of post-structuralism’s crisis of representation, calls into question the mapping techniques in land surveys, the role of imperial projects of territorial expansion and control, the ordering and disciplining roles

of national topographic mapping agencies, and the rendering of nature and society as objects to be represented graphically as well as scientifically. The author concludes with a consideration of what he calls “the possibilities for post-representational cartographies.”

Royle, S. A. (2001). *A geography of islands: Small island insularity*. 237 pp., maps and illus. New York: Routledge.

This book broadly addresses many issues and themes in the study of islands, beginning with the premise that islands everywhere are subject to the impact of a common range of constraints—remoteness, absolute and/or relative smallness, isolation, peripherality—because of their very insularity, and that this impact is more significant on small islands. The author starts by briefly addressing physical geography and what counts as an island before moving on to consider the concept of islands in the popular and artistic imagination—the “island of dreams,” a concept powerful despite its incongruity with the realities of small island life. He explores the effects of out- and in-migration on social stability and later considers islands’ common political and economic characteristics, and especially, their evolution in contemporary times. The author concludes with a study of a near universal island development strategy—the adoption of tourism, part of which is predicated on the “island of dreams” idea—and to close, applies his exploration of “small island insularity” to one such small island, St. Helena in the South Atlantic Ocean.

Smith, B. (1960). *European vision and the South Pacific: 1768–1850: A study in the history of art and ideas*. 287 pp., maps and illus. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

This study finds that the first European artists to voyage among the lands and peoples of the Pacific, while trying to cast its unfamiliar world into the pictorial conventions of the time, also assisted in creating a different form of landscape art best described as typical landscape art. The emergence of the idea of the typical in landscape painting parallels the notion of organic evolution in science. Both ideas about art and science signal the abandonment of classical ideals of order based on a closer scrutiny of things in themselves. The author argues that the European experience of the Pacific during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries stimulated thought in the biological sciences along evolutionary lines, challenging the supremacy of neo-classical values in cosmological theory. At the same time, both classical antiquity and traditions of Christian thought provided a stock of attitudes and preconceptions, which Europeans continually brought to bear upon their experience of the Pacific. Weaving accounts from artists, scientists, voyagers, and government authorities, together with 171 illustrations of Pacific landscapes, *European Vision and the South Pacific* contributes to the long history of the relation between art and science.

Spate, O.H.K. (1988). *Paradise found and lost*. 410 pp., maps and illus. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

In this third and final volume in a series about and titled *The Pacific since Magellan*, the author offers a relatively austere chronology alongside more discursive discussions of general problems of the Pacific during the “contact” phase. This book tells of the political ambitions and economic activities of Europeans in the Pacific and their effects on island natives up to the mid-nineteenth century. Spate begins with a consideration of origins, looking at the archaeological records of Micronesia and West Polynesia, East Polynesia, New Zealand, Hawai‘i, and Easter Island in a chapter on the peopling of the Pacific. He continues with discussions of the Oceanic environment, the idea of a Utopian Pacific, a historical survey of British, French, and Spanish circumnavigators, considerations of the significance of scientific advancements on European engagements with islands, and a discussion on exclusionary Western ideas about the conditions of humanity. The author finds that, four hundred years after Magellan crossed it, the Pacific was becoming economically integrated into the world market but was still not integrated into the modern states system. The subsequent occupation of the Pacific islands by organized states saw the oppression of native cultural histories, forcible conquests of materialistic commerce and colonialism, imposed peripherality of islands in the world market, and the transformation of islands into theaters of oceanic war, even the testing grounds for atomic weaponry. Yet, Spate concludes, even under the heavy burdens of the modern world and its destructive activities, something of the ancient arts and graces survived, showing the islanders to be ever resilient.

Steinberg, P. E. (2001). *The social construction of the ocean*. 239 pp., maps and illus. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

In this book, geographer Philip E. Steinberg argues that different stages of capitalism, roughly beginning in 1450, have held conceptions of a particular spatiality on land and a complementary spatiality at sea, with specific interest groups during each period promoting specific constructions of ocean-space. The author outlines a territorial political economy perspective in which the spatial structures of the political-economic system prevalent during a given period and the institutional mechanisms implemented by individual actors to bound, govern, and communicate with distinct territories are examined. Focusing on the historical periods of merchant capitalism (*circa* 1450–1760), industrial capitalism (*circa* 1760–1970), and the transition to postmodern capitalism (*circa* 1970 to present), Steinberg draws attention to the tension between capital’s need for spatial fixity and its need for spatial mobility and analyzes how this tension is resolved in various ocean-space constructions. The author concludes with a discussion of future territorial constructions and domains of mobility, such as cyberspace and airspace, and argues that because the social constructions of these spaces are inherently unstable, they provide potential arenas for generating social change.

Whittaker, R. J., & Fernández-Palacios, J. M. (2007). *Island biogeography: Ecology,*

evolution, and conservation (2nd ed.). 416 pp., maps and illus. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The authors of this text on island biogeography identify the dual importance of their subject—on the one hand, islands, being discrete, internally quantifiable, numerous, and varied entities, can serve as “natural laboratories,” model systems that allow ecologists, evolutionary biologists, and biogeographers to isolate factors and processes and explore their general effects. On the other hand, the biogeography of islands encourages the protection of the unique biological (species) features of island ecosystems. Topics discussed in the text include modes of island origins, environmental changes over long timescales, islands as biodiversity hotspots, species endemism, the macroecology of island biotas, island assembly theory, the dynamic equilibrium model of island biogeography and its limitations, island evolution, speciation, island theory and conservation, anthropogenic losses and threats to island ecosystems, and the conservation of island ecosystems. The authors identify the primary cause for concern for oceanic island biotas as the breakdown of their insular habitats caused by exotic species introduction, habitat loss, the spread of disease, and, importantly, predation by humans. Attaining the twin goals of sustainable development and management for conservation, they conclude, will involve not only scientific innovation but also political, economic, sociological, and cultural change and will.