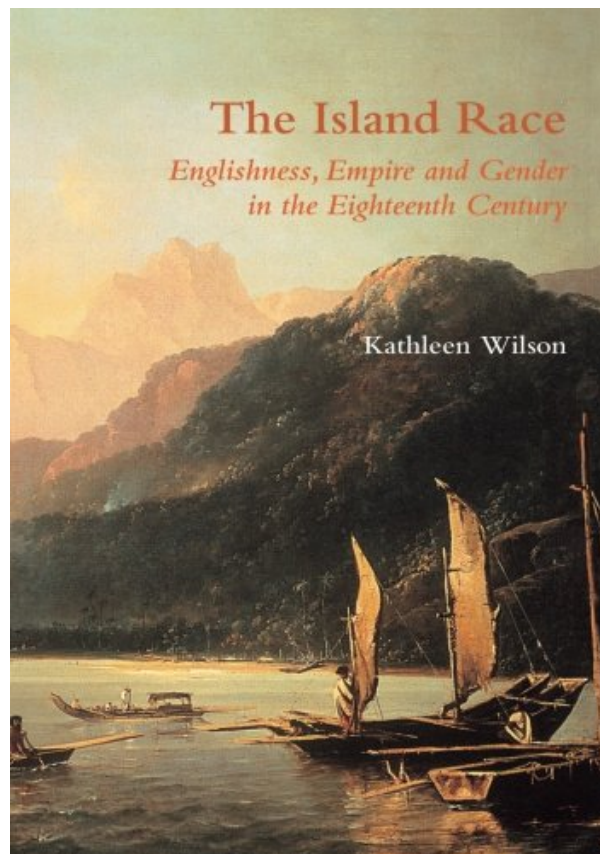
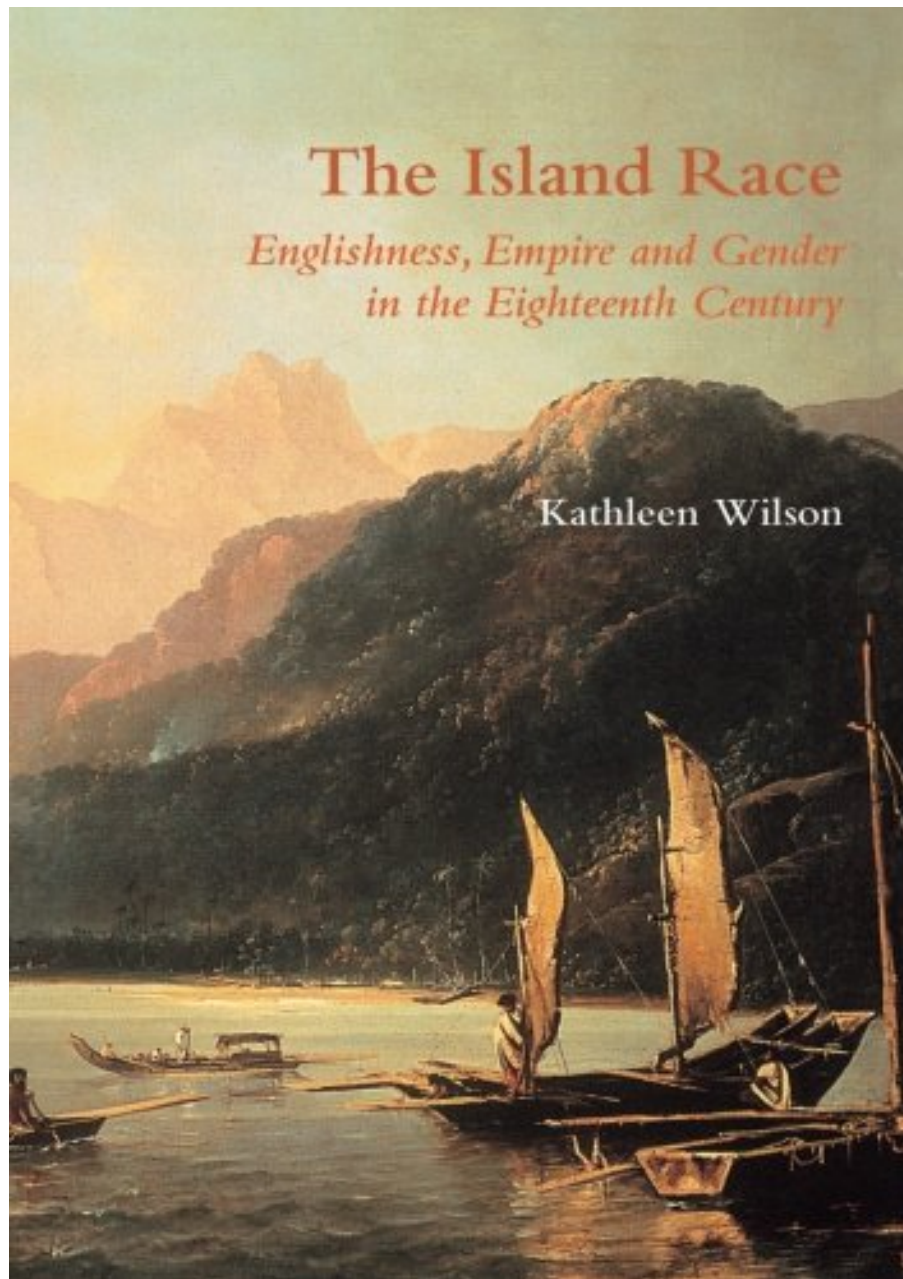


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## **Review**

'Elegantly written and handsomely produced ... this is an important book that specialists and nonspecialists alike will find rewarding.' - American Historical Review

'Kathleen Wilson's detailed and lively study is ... theoretically rigorous and exemplary in its interdisciplinary approach, encompassing appropriate analysis of drama and poetry as well as a range of extremely well-chosen and intriguing prints and paintings ... This is a book which will appeal to scholars in a wide range of disciplines ... her work fills the reader with renewed enthusiasm for her subject.' - European Journal of English Studies

## **About the Author**

Kathleen Wilson is Associate Professor of History at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. She has written widely on empire and the politics of culture in eighteenth century Britain. Her book, *The Sense of People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England 1715-1785* (1995), was the winner of the Jon Ben Snow Prize for British Studies.

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Rooted in a period of vigorous exploration and colonialism, *The Island Race: Englishness, empire and gender in the eighteenth century* is an innovative study of the issues of nation, gender and identity. Wilson bases her analysis on a wide range of case studies drawn both from Britain and across the Atlantic and Pacific worlds.

Creating a colourful and original colonial landscape, she considers topics such as:

- \* sodomy
- \* theatre
- \* masculinity
- \* the symbolism of Britannia
- \* the role of women in war.

Wilson shows the far-reaching implications that colonial power and expansion had upon the English people's sense of self, and argues that the vaunted singularity of English culture was in fact constituted by the bodies, practices and exchanges of peoples across the globe. Theoretically rigorous and highly readable, *The Island Race* will become a seminal text for understanding the pressing issues that it confronts.

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## Most helpful customer reviews

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

### Important Contribution

By A Customer

I must take issue with the reviewer from "Marseilles" regarding his or her accusation that the "Island Race" is more about twenty-first century political correctness than eighteenth-century history. Should the reviewer have actually read the book, or the sources the work consulted, or be at all well-versed in eighteenth-century history, he or she would know that one does not have to superimpose questions about gender, sexuality, or identity on eighteenth-century texts. In fact, as Wilson has masterfully demonstrated, these preoccupations were central to eighteenth-century thinkers. If you read extensively from period sources, you will see that citizens of Britain in the 18th century were quite worried about how their expanding Empire would impact British Identity and the ways in which race, gender, sexuality played a part in their self-definition as bastions of "civilization" and "order" over chaos and unrestrained sexuality. This isn't something Wilson invented to be "trendy". Rather, she's at the forefront of a revolution in history whereby these questions, so important to people of the time period she examined and yet dismissed as trivial by historians of the nineteenth and twentieth century, become crucial to our understanding of what national identity meant to ordinary people-then and now. I think it's important people who really want to understand history keep that in mind.

5 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

### Civilization in Scare Quotes

By A Customer

I have to respond to the poster who had a problem with my use of "scare quotes" around civilization and used me as evidence that eighteenth-century historical discussions were in a sorry state. I used quotes because the dictionary definition of "civilization" is "those who have reached a high level of social organization".

If the reader is familiar with eighteenth-century sources, he or she would know that I was putting it in quotes to make the point that I was not agreeing with the dominant eighteenth-century Western European view that their "civilization" was superior to the "savagery" of non-whites. I don't know why using quotes to distance myself from that view is controversial unless this reader is denying high levels of social advancement to the highly sophisticated social structures of non-Europeans of the eighteenth-century.

Anyone remotely familiar with the intellectual history of the past twenty years would know that there is agreement among historians that "civilization" is a subjected, loaded, and constructed term meaning different things to different people and usually employed in the service of imperialism e.g., the war w/ Iraq is a "a clash of civilizations": Some reviewers are clearly more interested in their own ideological agenda than making any real comments about Wilson's work, and although I've taken the time to engage with their dubious comments, I have to say that the real star remains the book, which was widely acclaimed as the most innovative work being done about the eighteenth-century at the present time, despite the reader's assertion that its importance has been exaggerated.

Furthermore, it IS a beautifully written book, which is a subjective opinion, despite what the reader authoritatively and patronizingly asserted about its "workmanlike" prose. I hardly think that anyone having actually read the book could possibly call this "workmanlike": (p. 168) The scandalous woman, rebel and outcast, had nevertheless achieved success by eighteenth-century standards, within the territorial and imaginative space of the British West Indies. Her mobility and survival depended upon the ebbs and flows of

the Atlantic intercultural, where reputation was a commodity, opportunism a virtue and self-fashioning a necessity, a transculture whose inventions, practices and identities did not begin and end at national borders." How does that measure up to the utilitarian, boring, prosaic implications of calling Wilson's writing "workmanlike" prose? I suggest further posts actually talk about the book's issues, and I apologize that I didn't, but I felt compelled to respond to some of the comments going around.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Brilliant History

By A Customer

I have to disagree with the author of the other review. Kathleen Wilson's book is a superb addition to the history of British imperialism, nationality, and gender. To call the historicity "trendy" is to overlook the massive archival research that Prof. Wilson did. It is a wonderful enquiry that shows the changes wrought by modernity and the eighteenth century. Further, the book is beautifully written with careful, non-jargony prose. Her work, along with Linda Colley, Colin Kidd, and others, has blown the lid off of old notions of nationhood and empire.

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