

# [PDF] The Island Of Lost Maps: A True Story Of Cartographic Crime

Miles Harvey - pdf download free book

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## Books Details:

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Author: Miles Harvey  
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## Description:

In 1995, a watchful patron alerted a librarian at Johns Hopkins University that another patron, a middle-aged and well-dressed man, was behaving suspiciously. The librarian called the police, who discovered that the man, a Floridian named Gilbert Bland, had cut four maps from a set of rare books. On investigation, the police were able to attribute dozens of similar thefts to Bland, thefts that had taken place at a score of the country's best-regarded--and, presumably, best-protected--scholarly institutions.

Like countless other readers, Miles Harvey, a writer for *Outside* magazine, encountered the news of Bland's arrest as a brief item in the back pages of the morning newspaper. The story stayed with Harvey, who wondered why otherwise law-abiding people behave so badly around antiquities. In *The*

*Island of Lost Maps*, a wonderfully rich excursion into the demimonde of what might be called cartographomania, Harvey follows Bland's tracks from library to library, reconstructing the crimes of the man he deems the Al Capone of map theft, following the contours of Bland's complex, sinister character. Along the way, Harvey examines the history of cartography generally, and the ravenous market for old maps--once the quiet province of a few knowing collectors, now invaded by speculators. These maps are just another corner of the overpriced status-symbol commodity market--and one that richly rewarded Bland's nefarious work.

Harvey's winding narrative, full of learned detours, adds up to a superbly rendered tale of true crime (and, many readers might object, of insufficient punishment), one that will appeal to book lovers and mystery buffs in equal measure. --*Gregory McNamee* --This text refers to the edition.

**From Publishers Weekly** Harvey himself sometimes seems obsessed as he explores the obsession of those who collect maps. Still, this is a challenging and erudite exploration of the explosion in "map culture" and the damage wrought by one determined con man with cartographic passions. Harvey's primary narrative (which originated as an article for *Outside* magazine) concerns the exploits of Gilbert Bland, a man who on the surface, according to Harvey, did indeed seem bland but who stole approximately \$500,000 in antique maps from poorly secured rare-book libraries. Bland was apprehended in 1995 at Baltimore's Peabody Library; he was ultimately charged in several jurisdictions after numerous universities discovered extensive losses, but he plea-bargained for a light sentence. Harvey painstakingly reconstructs the map thief's various identities. For Bland, a "chameleon," had abandoned a number of spouses and children and had engaged in questionable business ventures. Thus is Harvey launched into a larger meditation on the lure of "terra incognita," both literal and metaphoric, whether of Bland's enigmatic life or of undiscovered continents. Harvey uses the Bland case to explore both cartographic history and the dangers of obsession. One collector he examines is controversial map megadealer Graham Arader, considered responsible for cartography's newfound commercialism. Harvey's pursuit of all possible tangents (he even visits a map factory) causes his narrative to become unwieldy at times. But he offers dry wit and a fine sense of the dark places in our contemporary landscape, and he successfully captures both the story of Bland's bizarre "map crime spree" and the underexamined history and politics of contemporary cartography. Agent, Sloan Harris. 50,000 first printing; 8-city author tour. (Sept.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the edition.

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