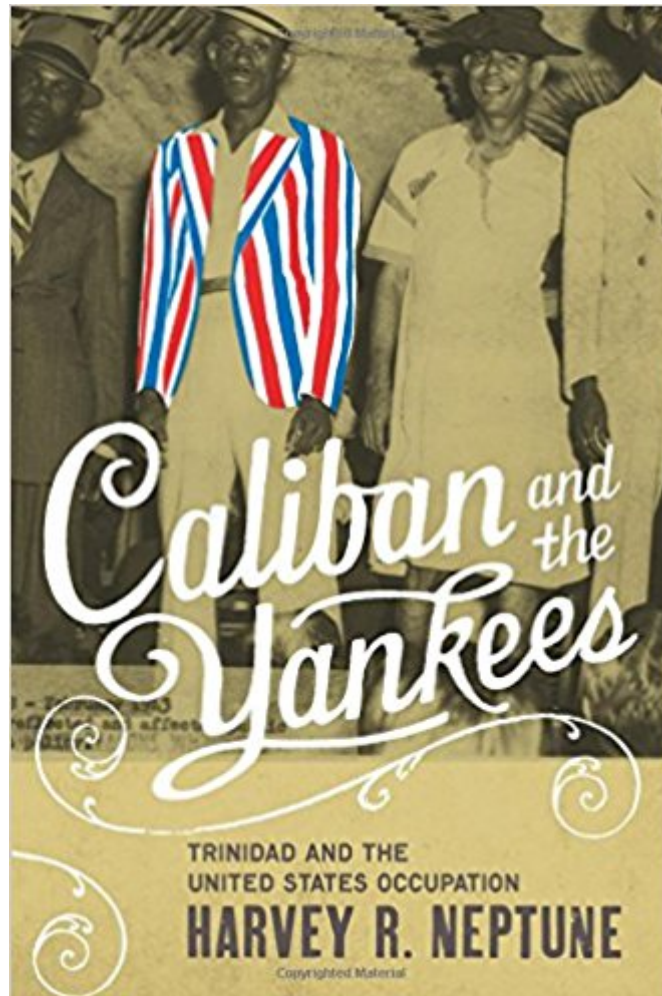




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# Caliban And The Yankees: Trinidad And The United States Occupation



## Synopsis

In a compelling story of the installation and operation of U.S. bases in the Caribbean colony of Trinidad during World War II, Harvey Neptune examines how the people of this British island contended with the colossal force of American empire-building at a critical time in the island's history. The U.S. military occupation between 1941 and 1947 came at the same time that Trinidadian nationalist politics sought to project an image of a distinct, independent, and particularly un-British cultural landscape. The American intervention, Neptune shows, contributed to a tempestuous scene as Trinidadians deliberately engaged Yankee personnel, paychecks, and practices flooding the island. He explores the military-based economy, relationships between U.S. servicemen and Trinidadian women, and the influence of American culture on local music (especially calypso), fashion, labor practices, and everyday racial politics. Tracing the debates about change among ordinary and privileged Trinidadians, he argues that it was the poor, the women, and the youth who found the most utility in and moved most avidly to make something new out of the American presence. Neptune also places this history of Trinidad's modern times into a wider Caribbean and Latin American perspective, highlighting how Caribbean peoples sometimes wield "America" and "American ways" as part of their localized struggles.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

[A] detailed and perceptive account of the important cultural and political awakenings that Trinidad experienced in the 1930s and 1940s.--Journal of Latin American StudiesAn important book in the

international history of the Caribbean.-- *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de America Latina y El Caribe* Energetically employs the new perspectives that have influenced international relations scholarship in recent years.-- *Latin American Research Review* Creatively researched, daringly interpreted, and beautifully written. . . . Offers an original, unexpected, and nuanced story. . . . Will be placed alongside important cultural histories of US imperialism and should be widely read both among and beyond its natural audience in Caribbean history.-- *Caribbean Studies* This book on Trinidad and Tobago's historical development fills the gaps and seeks to correct the narrative in Eric William's *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago*. . . . Perhaps the most significant contribution the book makes is that it puts William's epic battle for Chaguaramus into context, and it challenges his interpretation of that pivotal interlude in Trinidad's history.-- *New West Indian Guide* Engaging. . . . *Caliban and the Yankees* should be read by a wide audience for its erudition, lively prose, and deft unearthing of the cultural complexities that can develop when U.S. foreign troops step on friendly foreign ground.-- *Journal of American History* [A] delightful cultural history.-- *American Historical Review* A refreshing, original, and important work on a formative though largely forgotten episode in the history of two nations. . . . Enthusiastically recommended. . . . Essential.-- *Choice*

This is the only book-length published study of the social and cultural dimensions of the American Occupation of Trinidad during World War II, an event of fundamental importance to the history of that Caribbean island. It is a well-researched and original work which takes the cultural studies approach to its subject, and especially to the Trinidadians' 'perceptions and receptions,' elite and popular, of Americans stationed on the island, showing how their presence helped to develop a sense of nationalism among different groups of the local population.-- *Bridget Brereton, University of the West Indies* This richly textured study of the forgotten American occupation of Trinidad during World War II packs a powerful wallop. Neptune's on-the-ground account of the ambiguities, contradictions, and multiple consequences of U.S. imperialism and American culture poses significant challenges to prevailing paradigms of inter-American relations and the process of 'Americanization,' elaborated by diplomatic historians and cultural studies scholars alike. Reading the fragmented official archive against the grain in the best tradition of subaltern studies and patching in insights from Trinidadian popular fiction, music, and visual culture, *Caliban and the Yankees* brims with new ideas for studying the American Century as it was lived in the interstices of empire.-- *Gil Joseph, Yale University* Neptune provides an engaging analysis of the rise of nationalist sentiments in 1930s Trinidad. Rich in detail, persuasive in its arguments, and balanced in tone, this

is a major contribution to the historiography of Trinidad and Tobago.--Colin A. Palmer, Princeton University

Caliban and the Yankees is a fascinating look at the effect of dropping 100 thousand American GIs into a Caribbean island with only 200 thousand people and long-standing racial and class tensions. Few Americans are aware of the size and scale of the American presence in the Caribbean during World War II and for years afterwards. Songs like Rum and Coca Cola are the only cultural artifacts that remain in the collective consciousness. Harvey Neptune's account is very well developed avoiding the twin traps of condemning the American presence as imperialism or praising it for changing social attitudes. Instead he explores in depth how the two societies interacted pulling no punches about American racism and Trinidad's strict class structures. Extensively researched, drawing on contemporary newspapers, songs and letters Caliban and the Yankees sheds a lot of light on this fascinating meeting of two cultures.

read this before had to get it

I'm an American who grew up in Trinidad and even I could not get into this book. Thought it would be neat since this was around my parents' time and a cultural experience for me relating with both sides....but man. What a snooze! The language was so dense it took forever to get to the point. It's sectioned into categories of interest but to say simply - it was REALLY boring. At least for me. Just could not relate.

I confess I've never been one to pick up an 'academic' history book in hopes of getting a pleasurable read, however this book breaks the scholarly mold. Though I find Neptune to be heady and thoroughly introspective, his writing lacks, and thankfully so, the jargon and esotericism that can keep me from connecting with a book. 'Caliban and the Yankees' brings up some great and interesting points about revolution and forced me to revisit my image of the revolutionist--here, the disenfranchised people finally get recognition for an often overlooked branch of intelligence that can not be studied in the universities or acquired through a privileged upbringing. The US occupation in Trinidad, as told by Neptune, becomes a salacious tale of race and class relations, the construction of a national identity and the people who took it upon themselves to reshape and define the culture of its land for the history of its future. Not only a solid read, but a good one.

This text was very well written. To this reader who was also reared on Lamming and Naipaul and the rest, there is nothing more gratifying than a beautiful sentence, and Neptune gives us lots of those. Lovely. The spicy tale of the Yanks in the Windies is, as Neptune insists, sometimes glossed over as a Williams-inspired legacy floats on in our various discussions. But indeed, none of what happened during or after the Americans populated Chaguaramas en masse is as cut-and-dry as your average old-time calypso would have you believe. Neptune pieces together a refreshing new narrative that thrusts agency back into women's fingers, exposes the clandestine operations of white hegemony's champions and re-weaves the threads of Trinidadian nationalism. All the while, he delights us with clever, modern usage of the contemporary language rapport during the occupational shenanigans subtly and tastefully. It is a lovely read for anyone, and West Indians in particular will probably be quite tickled throughout. The "Coda" was quite a teaser, particularly the last couple of paragraphs. Neptune opens a world of conversational possibilities for his future books, which you'll be eagerly anticipating after putting this one down. Peace!

What more can I say? I did not order this book, it does not exist in my order history and has not been received by my Kindle. I have also not been billed for this purchase. Thanks

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