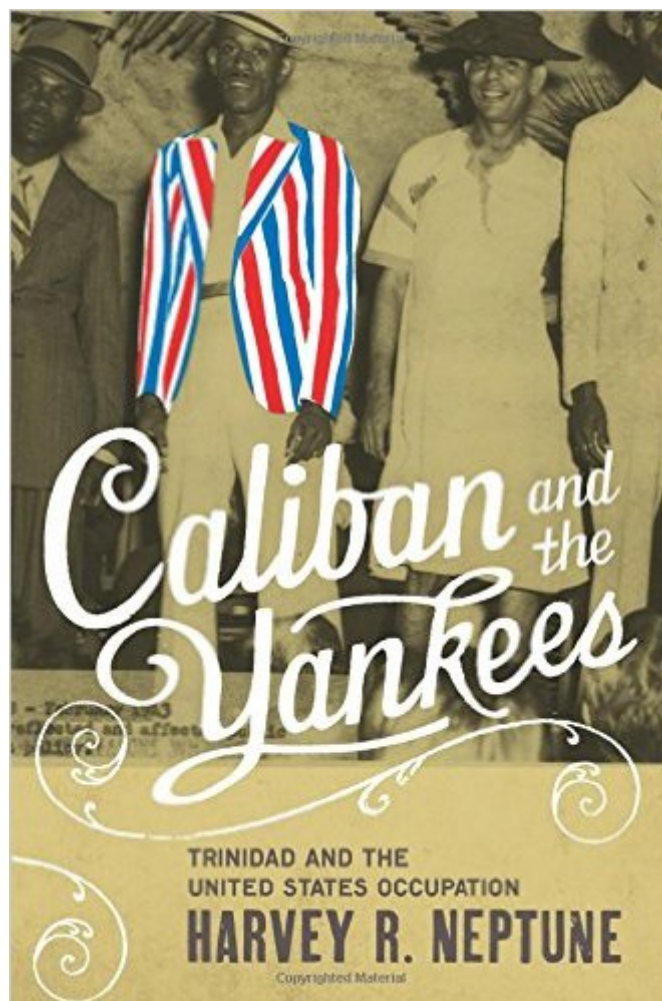


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Caliban And The Yankees: Trinidad And The United States Occupation



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

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.

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!

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.

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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