

ABSTRACT

American Filmic Influence in Trinidad, 1930-1975

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This thesis examines American film as a mechanism of cultural imperialism and assesses its influence in Trinidad within the period 1930-1975. Previous studies on the subject were not essentially historical but more so sociological in nature; they have largely focused on the glamourisation of western culture underscoring the “otherisation” of colonial and ex-colonial peoples. This thesis aims to expatiate on the Trinidad situation from a historical perspective. It further seeks to address the dearth of literature on the impact of American film in Trinidad during the period of study.

The study reveals how American film in Trinidad played a significant role in the declining colonial power of Great Britain and the concomitant emergence of United States hegemony. It also exposed how the attempt to ward off American filmic influence occasioned a split struggle between the Anglophile and Roman Catholic elites to determine the limits of that influence.

The findings also offer insight into how American films further reinforced many of the race, class and gender relations of the colonial era and undermined

notions of respectability and sexuality, domains of which were strongly policed by the Christian clergy. The thesis further demonstrates how the general population of Trinidad was, in most cases, unaffected by attempts to stymie American film's influence.

Data for this project was gathered using primary and secondary documents including newspaper articles and advertisements, television commercials, audio recordings and films. It also draws upon interviews of personnel involved in cinema and related cultural industries during the period of study as well as activists of the Black Power movement.

Keywords: Leslie-Ann Paul; American film; cinema; imperialism; World War II; Trinidad Carnival; Black Power.