Music from behind the Bridge
Shannon Dudley

A symbol of Trinidian culture, the steelband has made an extraordinary transformation since its origins: from junk metal to steel orchestra, and from disparaged underclass pastime to Trinidad and Tobago’s national instrument. This book looks at the musical thinking that ignited this transformation, and the way it articulates Afro-Trinidadian tradition, carnival, colonial authority, and nationalist politics. The book tells the story of the steelband from the point of view of musicians who overcame the disadvantages of poverty and prejudice with their extraordinary ambition. Literally referring to the poor neighborhoods nestled in the hills bordering Port of Spain to the East, “Behind the Bridge,” used in the title of this book, is also a metaphor for the conditions of social disadvantage and cultural resistance that shaped the steelband movement in the various Afro-Trinidadian communities where it first took root. The book further explores the implications of the steelband’s “nationalization” in post-independence Trinidad and Tobago, and contemporary steelband musicians’ preoccupation with the formally adjudicated annual Panorama competition. In discussing the intersection of musical thinking, festivity, and politics, this book connects questions about the history of the steelband to general questions about the relation between popular culture and nationalism.

Evolutionary Ecology
Anne E. Magurran

This book explores the Trinidadian guppy's unique contributions to evolutionary ecology. Ever since Caryl Haskins — working in the 1940s
and 1950s — described guppy populations as a natural laboratory because of the way predation pressure varies over a small geographical area, generations of researchers have been drawn to Trinidad to investigate evolution in the wild. The species continues to provide classic examples of natural selection in action, and elegantly illustrates how ecology, evolution, and behaviour are interlinked. This account of the evolutionary ecology of the guppy integrates historical breakthroughs with new research in this fast-moving field. It reveals how guppies provided some of the first evidence of sperm competition and sexual selection, and how they continue to inform scientific thought on mating systems and cryptic choice. The consequences of variation in predation risk — as well as a host of other biotic and abiotic factors — are described and evaluated at all life stages from conception to death. The book discusses behavioural responses to ecological conditions and examines life history evolution. The potential for ecological speciation is considered alongside new insights into how reproductive isolation becomes established in promiscuous mating systems. Conservation issues are also highlighted, both in terms of protecting the irreplaceable Trinidadian guppy systems and in the context of invasion ecology.

The Athens of the Caribbean

Emily Greenwood

in Afro-Greeks: Dialogues between Anglophone Caribbean Literature and Classics in the Twentieth Century

Published in print: 2010 Published Online: May 2010
Item type: chapter

This chapter complicates the idea of any easy balance sheet of appropriation in which misappropriation always falls on the side of empire and colonialism and appropriation on the side of the anti- and postcolonial. The argument examines the different ways in which C. L. R. James and Eric Williams attempted to harness Athens as an empowering model for Trinidadian national identity. Although James and Williams approached Athens in different ways, they shared the determination to take back Classics from the colonial archive via which it had been transmitted. In the case of James, the discussion concentrates on his repeated analogies between the culture and society of Trinidad and the culture and society of classical Athens. In the case of Williams, the discussion focuses on his ability to make political capital out of his classical education in his early political career, focusing on his lectures and speeches for the PEM and PNM in the 1950s and 1960s.
Trinidad: Ethnic Religion
Paul Younger

in New Homelands: Hindu Communities in Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, South Africa, Fiji, and East Africa

Published in print: 2009 Published Online: February 2010
Item type: chapter

Trinidad had a long history of indigenous and European settlement even before African slaves were brought in. When the Indians joined this complex island culture, they were quickly given their own village areas to live in. In 1868, the Canadian Presbyterian mission started a school system dedicated exclusively to the Indian community and educated Indians were soon moving out into society. In 1952, Bhadase Maraj disrupted the rural base of the Indian community further when he started an Indian political party and the Sanatana Dharma Maha Sabha with its own set of Hindu schools. By 1995, a widespread revival of Hindu religious practice was underway, and a new version of the Indian political party, called the United National Congress (UNC), had come to power. In this context the various cultural rivalries in the society were sharp, and Hinduism functioned as an ethnic religion for the Indians.

Brother's Keeper
Jason C. Parker

Published in print: 2008 Published Online: May 2008
Item type: book

This book is an international history of the relations between the United States, Britain, and the West Indies during the long decolonization of the latter. It draws on archives in seven countries to recover the story of that process, which resulted in the first new nations in the hemisphere—Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago—since the turn of the century. The process had begun amid depression, riot, and World War II, and it concluded at the moment of highest tension in the Cold War Caribbean. Moreover, the islands were a historical fount of black radicalism, which coursed intermittently through the hemisphere as the civil rights movement made the issue of American race relations particularly acute. In addition, the structure built to bring the islands to independence—the West Indies Federation—unexpectedly collapsed at perhaps the worst possible moment. Yet despite these ominous circumstances, the West Indian transition to independence was ultimately among the smoothest
seen anywhere in the “Third World.” It avoided the bloodshed that accompanied the end of empire in many areas, and avoided the U.S. military intervention so historically promiscuous around the Caribbean littoral. This book argues that a unique “protean partnership” between the U.S. and the West Indies, one which complemented the Anglo-American relationship, explains the smooth transition. That partnership encompassed the U.S. pursuit of national-security assets such as military bases and strategic materials, the give-and-take of formal Anglo-American diplomacy, and the informal “diaspora diplomacy” of transnational race-activism that nurtured West Indian nationalism and the African American freedom struggle alike. This study contributes to the literatures on inter-American relations, race and foreign affairs, the Cold War, and decolonization.

“Mek Some Noise”
Timothy Rommen

This ethnographic study of Trinidadian gospel music engages the multiple musical styles circulating in the nation's Full Gospel community and illustrates the carefully negotiated and contested spaces that they occupy in relationship to questions of identity. By exploring gospelpso, jamoo (“Jehovah's music”), gospel dancehall, and North American gospel music, along with the discourses that surround performances in these styles, the book illustrates the extent to which value, meaning, and appropriateness are continually circumscribed and reinterpreted in the process of coming to terms with what it looks and sounds like to be a Full Gospel believer in Trinidad. The local, regional, and transnational implications of these musical styles, moreover, are read in relationship to their impact on belief (and vice versa), revealing the particularly nuanced poetics of conviction that drive both apologists and detractors of these styles. The book sets the investigation against a historical narrative and introduces a theoretical approach that the book calls the “ethics of style”—a model that privileges the convictions embedded in this context and which emphasizes their role in shaping the terms upon which identity is continually being constructed in Trinidad. The result is an extended meditation on the convictions that lie behind the creation and reception of style in Full Gospel Trinidad.
The West Indian Watershed
Janson C. Parker

in Brother's Keeper: The United States, Race, and Empire in the British Caribbean, 1937-1962

Published in print: 2008 Published Online: May 2008
Publisher: Oxford University Press
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195332025.003.0002
Item type: chapter

Describes the regional landscape prior to World War II. Outlines the factors that would launch the decolonization process and shape U.S. relations with the islands: the West Indian expatriate community in New York; the explosion of labor riots in the Caribbean, especially in Trinidad in 1937 and Jamaica in 1938, and the growth of West Indian nationalist sentiment that followed; the consequent reorientation of British policy, toward welfare and development and eventually federation and independence; the outbreak of World War II in Europe; the West Indian expatriate community forging ties with African Americans to take advantage of British weakness; and the U.S. reaction to the changed situation, leading to the 1940 Anglo-American Bases-for-Destroyers Deal and the construction of U.S. bases in the islands the following year.

The American Lake or the Castro Caribbean?
Jason C. Parker

in Brother's Keeper: The United States, Race, and Empire in the British Caribbean, 1937-1962

Published in print: 2008 Published Online: May 2008
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Item type: chapter

Describes the ill-starred career of the West Indies Federation, beginning its life crosscut with conflicts among its members and mired in the dispute with Washington over Chaguaramas. The chapter examines the change in policy on the American side, reflecting the late-Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations' fear that anti-Americanism and Castroite revolution might spread. Contextualizes the West Indies Federation in two important areas: first, as part of the U.S. response to “Castroism,” and second, as part of the “global race-revolution” manifest in the cresting wave of Third World decolonization and of First World minorities' struggle for equality. Follows the story to the eve of the Jamaican referendum on continued membership in the Federation, a union on which U.S., British, and West Indian policy was predicated.
Conclusion
Janson C. Parker

in Brother's Keeper: The United States, Race, and Empire in the British Caribbean, 1937-1962

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Analyzes the generally constructive course of Anglo-American-Caribbean relations during decolonization. Among the factors explaining this were the pattern of U.S. deferral to British and West Indian actors on virtually all issues save U.S. pursuit of national-security assets; the fact that with few exceptions, U.S., British, and West Indian interests overlapped; the role played by a gifted West Indian leadership that could tap the resources of black America. These also enabled relations to overcome the West Indies Federation's demise. That demise that showed the limits of transnational race-based solidarity, even as it suggested the importance of non-Spanish-speaking territories in inter-American Cold War diplomacy. It also suggests that although the Cold War could warp the local dynamics of decolonization, the latter were longer-standing and often more important in shaping the end of European empire in the Third World.

Epilogue
Timothy Rommen

in “Mek Some Noise”: Gospel Music and the Ethics of Style in Trinidad

Published in print: 2007 Published Online: May 2012
Publisher: University of California Press DOI: 10.1525/california/9780520250673.003.0009
Item type: chapter

This chapter sums up the key findings of this study about gospel music and the ethics of style in Trinidad. It highlights the nationalism of gospelpyso artists, the determination of gospel dancehall artists, the studied ambivalence of jamoo performers, and the global vision of musicians pursuing North America gospel. It suggests that each style offers a very different approach to the evangelical concerns of Trinidadian believers, and each promotes a unique sense of what can or should constitute worship.
What She Go Do
Hope Munro

In the 1990s, expressive culture in the Caribbean was becoming noticeably more feminine. At the annual Carnival of Trinidad and Tobago, thousands of female masqueraders dominated the street festival on Carnival Monday and Tuesday. Women had become significant contributors to the performance of calypso and soca, as well as the musical development of the steel pan art form. Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork conducted by the author in Trinidad and Tobago, this book demonstrates how the increased access and agency of women through folk and popular musical expressions has improved inter-gender relations and representation of gender in this nation. This is the first study to integrate all of the popular music expressions associated with Carnival—calypso, soca, and steelband music—within a single volume. The popular music of the Caribbean contains elaborate forms of social commentary that allows singers to address various sociopolitical problems, including those that directly affect the lives of women. In general, the cultural environment of Trinidad and Tobago has made women more visible and audible than any previous time in its history. This book examines how these circumstances came to be and what it means for the future development of music in the region.

The Legacy of Eric Williams
Tanya L. "Shields (ed.)

This book provides an indispensable and significant understanding of Eric Williams’ contributions to the now independent nation of Trinidad and Tobago and his impact on the broader international understanding of the Caribbean. This book stands out because of its simultaneous investigation into Eric Williams as a scholar/intellectual, a political leader, and, most importantly, a key postcolonial figure. The book confronts the relevance of postcolonialism in understanding Williams’ role both in post-independence Trinidad and Tobago and in newer understandings of Caribbean globalization. The book divides into three broad sections. "Becoming Eric Williams" provides background on Williams and the Caribbean’s ontological quest, addressing what it means to be West
Indian and Caribbean. “Political Williams” engages with his policies and their consequences, describing the impact of Williams’ political policies on several areas: integration, color stratification, and labor and public sector reform. Williams’ far-reaching political influence in these aspects cements his legacy as one of the main public intellectuals responsible for creating the modern Caribbean. “Textual Williams” examines his scholarly contributions from a more traditional academic perspective. These sections allow for a comprehensive understanding of Williams as a man, a scholar, and a politician.

Trance and Modernity in the Southern Caribbean
Keith E. McNeal
Published in print: 2011 Published Online: May 2012
Item type: book

This is a comparative historical ethnography of the convergent colonial globalization of African and Hindu traditions of trance performance and spirit mediumship in the southern Caribbean, as well as their divergent political fates in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago's era of postcolonial multiculturalism. The analysis utilizes the methodology of controlled comparison in order to investigate the history of capitalism and modernization of religious cultures more usually thought of as “primitive” and hardly “modern.” This study explicitly compares and contrasts Afro-Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean materials in a systematic, multi-dimensional manner; it therefore makes innovative contributions to Anthropology, Religious Studies, and the Historiography of Modernity. This book not only charts the subaltern cultural histories of originally West African and South Asian ritual traditions among proletarian and lower classes throughout the colonial period in the West Indies, but also shows how they have become modernized—privatized, individualized, psychologized—and progressively more similar to one another as a result of congruent experiences in the Caribbean. The author argues for the theoretical value of transculturation over “creolization” or “syncretism” as concepts for the analysis of hybrid sociocultural interaction specifically, and cultural history more generally.

Tradition Reaffirming Itself in New Forms
Hazel Franco (ed.)
in Making Caribbean Dance: Continuity and Creativity in Island Cultures
Published in print: 2010 Published Online: September 2012
DOI: 10.5744/florida/9780813034676.003.0020
Hazel Franco braids the many strands of the two islands’ (Trinidad and Tobago) folk dance cultures with their histories. She focuses on Afro-Trinidadian dances and their underlying African heritages and various infusions, on Carnival traditions from the balls of French plantation owners to the development of traditional Carnival characters to the mid-20th century bands of sailors and ship's firemen following steel bands. She notes the different history and dances of Tobago, government innovations like the Best Village competitions, and the black power movement of the 1970s. She charts an arc of choreographers adopting folklore for the stage, with new theatrical fusions from pioneer Beryl McBurnie to Cyril St. Lewis to Astor Johnson.

“Seminary of Discord”
Margaret Chowning

in Rebellious Nuns: The Troubled History of a Mexican Convent, 1752-1863

Published in print: 2005 Published Online: October 2011
Item type: chapter

The second phase of the convent crisis involves how Phelipa de San Antonio, one of the three founder nuns who were defended by Vicar Villegas when they requested to leave the convent, was reported as constantly having arguments with Vicar Villegas when she became the next abbess. Phelipa believed that she could impose several changes at astonishing speed within the convent that might even defy the bishop's authority. Manuela de la Santísima Trinidad, the nun who wrote the letter, further described the situation within the convent as something that caused distress among a number of nuns because of the way the principle of enclosure was desecrated, and the way Phelipa's allies purposely failed to acknowledge and discredit the vicar. This stage of the crisis involved both the failures of the first two abbesses and the lack of judgment of some of the other nuns within the convent.

La Purísima after Independence
Margaret Chowning

in Rebellious Nuns: The Troubled History of a Mexican Convent, 1752-1863

Published in print: 2005 Published Online: October 2011
Manuela de la Santísima Trinidad made tremendous efforts to allow the foundation of a new Conceptionist convent, an extension of La Purísima, that would be dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe; she had already arranged the would-be sponsors and supporters, the necessary documents, the fund pledges, and other significant elements in establishing a new convent. However, a string of mishaps started as the viceregal fiscal decided that such a convent should be founded not by the nuns from La Purísima but by those from the Company of Mary. Manuela then left La Purísima to join the Marian convent as she did not want to abandon her involvement in this new convent. However, church authorities during this period opposed the notion of the traditional convent and favored a new convent which would be a positive social good, instead of an institution exclusively for prayer and with limited accessibility to others.

The British West Indies
Charles O.H. Parkinson

in Bills of Rights and Decolonization: The Emergence of Domestic Human Rights Instruments in Britain's Overseas Territories
Published in print: 2007 Published Online: January 2009
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199231935.003.0007
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During independence negotiations in British Guiana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, the debate about bills of rights did not focus on the merits of bills of rights in protecting the rights of individuals but on their capacity to entrench in the constitution the basic democratic features of the Westminster system of government. There was great apprehension about independence from groups that had different views from the party likely to be in government during the transfer of power. One approach taken by such groups was to try to lock in the constitutional status quo and therefore minimize the political uncertainty after independence. The bill of rights was an important component of this entrenchment package. This reflected a major shift in thinking about the use of a bill of rights that did not occur to the same extent in either Asia or Africa.

The Desi Diaspora: Politics, Protest, and Nationalism
Vijay Prashad

in India and the British Empire
Published in print: 2012 Published Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199259885.003.0013
Over the course of the past two centuries, millions of people from the South Asian subcontinent moved to the continents of the world. Unlike earlier migrants, Indians who formed part of this more recent diaspora tended to retain links with their homeland, making their diaspora one which was more inflected by colonialism and nationalism. Consequently, the diaspora that has emerged in Britain and North America cannot be easily disentangled from the anti-colonial struggles of the last century and a half and as a result the emergence and manifestation of nationalism in modern South Asia has played an integral part in defining and structuring the desi diaspora.

Tales, Tunes, and Tassa Drums

Peter Manuel

Today's popular tassa drumming emerged from the fragments of transplanted Indian music traditions half-forgotten and creatively recombined, rearticulated, and elaborated into a dynamic musical genre. A uniquely Indo-Trinidadian form, tassa drumming invites exploration of how the distinctive nature of the Indian diaspora and its relationship to its ancestral homeland influenced Indo-Caribbean music culture. The book traces the roots of neotraditional music genres like tassa drumming to North India and reveals the ways these genres represent survivals, departures, or innovative elaborations of transplanted music forms. Drawing on ethnographic work and a rich archive of field recordings, the book contemplates the music carried to Trinidad by Bhojpuri-speaking and other immigrants, including forms that died out in India but continued to thrive in the Caribbean. It reassessment of ideas of creolization, retention, and cultural survival defies suggestions that the diaspora experience inevitably leads to the loss of the original culture, while also providing avenues to broader applications for work being done in other ethnic contexts.

C.L.R. James, George Padmore, and the Myth of the Revolutionary Caribbean

Anthony P. Maingot

in Race, Ideology, and the Decline of Caribbean Marxism
The widely held view that the Caribbean is an area characterized by continual, though repeatedly frustrated, revolutions owes much to the theorizing of two Trinidadians: the Trotskyite C.L.R. James and Marxist-Leninist George Padmore. Neither developed their ideological schemes in Trinidad but in the United States, England, and, in Padmore’s case, with the Soviet-run Comintern. Both ended up in Kwame Nkrumah’s independent Ghana. James left disillusioned; Padmore stayed until his premature death from cancer. James returned to Trinidad, worked unsuccessfully with the independent movement and even less successfully once he decided to enter electoral politics. Both men were prolific authors but mistaken in their interpretations of the supposed Marxist and revolutionary nature of the Caribbean and Africa.