

that enslaved women and men were members of the body politic,” Hatfield highlights how English political concepts and law forged in the Atlantic crucible sanctioned the kidnapping and brutal enslavement of people of African and Indigenous descent, excluding them from subject status (80). English officials experimented with notions of political belonging rooted in language, shared economic interests, or emergent racial categories rather than religious conformity. In response, many enslaved and free people of color fled English colonies for territories held by the Spanish or Portuguese.

For example, Juan Catalan, a free soldier of mixed descent, testified in 1667 that he had been enslaved by English pirates and forced to build forts in Jamaica. He had escaped the island by canoe, paddling with eleven others to the southern coast of Cuba. Explaining his motives to the governor of Havana, Catalan observed that he “fled to the land of Christians and left the captivity of those pirates” (91). For Catalan and thousands like him, announcing one’s Catholic religious identity provided an unimpeachable rationale for seeking sanctuary in Spanish colonies. Meanwhile, many Jews “moved in the opposite direction,” pulling up stakes to seek opportunities in the English and Dutch Caribbean with promises of increased religious freedom (110) and expansive civil and political rights (122). In this process, Jews leveraged English discussions of whiteness to bolster claims to political inclusion.

As a scholar of colonial Virginia and the Atlantic world, Hatfield demonstrates mastery of the British archival materials that form the book’s evidentiary core. But she foregrounds the perspectives of colonial officials and residents of the Caribbean and incorporates Spanish records to illuminate key debates. As a result, this volume sets an ambitious standard for all scholars of the early modern Atlantic to move beyond national frames, and it demonstrates the value of such an approach.

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## PORTRAYALS OF THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION

*Slave Revolt on Screen: The Haitian Revolution in Film and Video Games.* By Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2021. Paper 323pp. Paper \$30.00.  
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In his movie *Top Five*, Chris Rock portrays a comedic actor hoping to demonstrate his dramatic abilities by starring in a drama about the Haitian Revolution entitled “Uprize.” The plot line developed by Rock uses a “double-voiced” joke to critique Hollywood’s unwillingness to tackle a formative event in Black history and white folks’ uneasiness with violence enacted by Black figures. The overt industry critique of *Top Five*

exemplifies the research question posed by Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall: Why have there been so few media portrayals of the Haitian Revolution? Her study goes further, comparing representations of the revolution by nation of origin and by including video games, shorts, and documentaries alongside feature films and television series. She argues that outside of Haiti few representations of the Haitian Revolution dare to portray the event as a justified, autochthonous, Black-led struggle to reject slavery and European colonialism. Instead, she shows that most non-Haitian portrayals struggle to overcome the “unthinkability” of the revolution’s origins and at best render the event banal and at worst perpetuate racist conceptions of Afro-descended people and Haitian culture. Her work does an excellent job going beyond a simple assessment of the media’s depiction of historical events. Rather, she works to unpack the context of production to illustrate the myriad contemporary forces that shaped representations of the revolution at any given time and place.

Sepinwall divides the book into three parts. The first examines film and television depictions of the revolution produced outside of Haiti across six chapters arranged chronologically and thematically. The first chapter draws on the work of Michel-Rolph Trouillot to highlight how the unthinkability of the revolution has led many films produced by foreigners to engage in either erasure or banalization of Haitians’ struggles. Frequently, films build upon stereotypes that mark Africans and their descendants as backward or primitive, they minimize the horrific context of slavery on Saint-Domingue as a justification for revolution, or worse feature a “white savior” character who provides the enslaved with an ideology for revolution.

Several chapters from part one offer deep dives into particular films. In chapter 3, Sepinwall explores the production and release of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox’s *Lydia Bailey*. Although the screenwriters tried to incorporate surprisingly strong critiques of racism and colonialism, the film still primarily featured a romance between two white characters. Sepinwall does an excellent job unpacking how the efforts of the House Un-American Activities Committee impacted the writing and production of the film. Chapter 5 similarly engages in a close reading of Chris Rock’s *Top Five*. In doing so, she reads the film and his own public comments about the Haitian Revolution through the lens of his double-voiced humor.

The two chapters of part two examine Haitian representations of the revolution and the struggles faced by Haitian filmmakers. Divided chronologically, the first chapter examines the industry through the 2004 bicentennial of the nation’s independence. The second chapter turns to a younger generation of filmmaker and their frequent use of shorts to understand the figure of Toussaint Louverture.

Part three, comprising the last two chapters, offers a particularly compelling example for how to integrate Game Studies into the more traditional practice of history. These chapters do an excellent job of engaging with a medium that has begun to reach larger audiences than most Hollywood blockbusters. Her findings offer a contrast to the earlier chapters

by illustrating how recent blockbuster games such as *Assassin's Creed: Freedom Cry* present a more nuanced depiction of the Haitian Revolution than most non-Haitian produced film and television series. She also helps to recover and analyze several unique games from the 1980s produced by the Martinicans Muriel Tramis and Patrick Chamoiseau.

Written in clear effective prose, this work is accessible by students and scholars alike. Her innovative methodology and willingness to tackle new media make this an excellent study for illustrating the relevance of history and historical analysis. As we live through a golden age of media production, this work offers an excellent argument for why some historical events do not make their way onto the screen.

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## INDIGENOUS MAYA AND BRITISH IN BELIZE OF THE CASTE WAR

*Maya-British Conflict at the Edge of the Yucatecan Caste War*. By Christine A. Kray. Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2023. Pp. xvi, 239. \$95.00 cloth; \$30.95 paper; \$25.95 e-book.  
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The Caste War of Yucatán was a long and complex social and political upheaval that involved Indigenous Maya people and mestizos rebelling against the oppressive economic and social system that favored the European-descendant elite that took place in the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico between 1847 and 1901. Historical accounts of the conflict are invariably messy and populated by numerous actors, marginalized Maya, a dying empire, fledgling governments, and shifting alliances. Highlighting issues of race, social inequality, and land rights, the events of the Caste War continue to have cultural and historical significance in the Yucatán Peninsula and remain an important topic of study in the region's history and anthropology.

Christine Kray's book reminds us that the Caste War, or the Social War as she calls it in the text but not in the title, engulfed the entire region, spilling beyond the borders of what is today Mexico. Kray's contribution to the literature on the subject is a detailed examination of the experience of people on the southern side of the Hondo River in what is today Belize during the first half of the war from about 1847 to 1872, the end date culminating with the last Maya attack on the British. Kray lays out her approach in the introduction, an unnumbered chapter that precedes the narrative of events. As an anthropologist, Kray employs "historical ethnography" (16) as her methodology, utilizing historical documents and interviews with elders who lived in the San Pedro