

the intellectuals into exploring what a collective identity beyond the nation-state might mean, rather than the other way around.

The argument would also have been strengthened had Preuss engaged more extensively with Leslie Bethell's article, 'Brazil and "Latin America"' (*Journal of Latin American Studies*, 42: 3, 2010, pp. 457–85), which is mentioned only briefly. Bethell argued that for most of Brazil's history the country's intellectuals and politicians compared themselves first with Europe and then, after becoming a republic in 1889, with the United States, so Preuss is right that the main thrust of Bethell's article was to reinforce the view of Brazil as isolated from its Spanish American neighbours (p. 127). But Bethell did note a strong interest in the Río de la Plata during the late nineteenth century, which is compatible with Preuss's evidence. I would have liked to hear Preuss's views on whether this period was unusual and if so, why. Although Preuss concludes, perhaps overstating the case, that there was a 'high level of transnational connectedness [...] in the southwestern Atlantic' by 1905 (p. 157), he acknowledged that the project cited to symbolise that connectedness was never completed. The reader is left wondering about chronological shifts in the significance of transnationalism in the dynamics of nation-making.

Although short, this book is bursting with ideas. It reads as a bigger book than it is, which is why more was needed at the end to pull it all together. The Conclusion, at just three pages, does not do full justice to the comparative possibilities raised earlier. A longer, stronger finale would have created scope for Preuss to draw out the ramifications of his approach for a wider rethinking of the histories of Latin America. I also felt the lack of an index, which would have helped readers to make their own connections and comparisons. Even so, Preuss's study offers plenty to inspire other historians to think about the relevance of his ideas to other contexts in the Americas and perhaps even beyond.

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Jacob Blanc and Frederico Freitas (eds.), *Big Water: The Making of the Borderlands between Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay*

(Tuscon, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2018), pp. xii + 329, \$55.00, hb.

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Scholars have long obsessed over the US–Mexican borderland, now the focus of even more controversy and repression since Donald Trump's election in 2016. But the western hemisphere has a number of important borderlands besides the

US–Mexican one. One of the most vital and underappreciated is the Triple Frontier of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, defined not just by land borders but also by rivers (notably the Paraná, Iguazu or Iguazú, Paraguay and Uruguay) as well as access to the Atlantic Ocean. *Big Water*, an edited collection of fascinating essays on a multitude of interactions along these borders – political, cultural, environmental and economic – is long overdue and a welcome addition to recent borderland studies.

Big Water, while mainly an analysis of very specific interactions along these three nations' frontiers, is also an overlapping history of the major developments encompassing all three nations during crucial periods of the last several centuries. The book is divided into four parts arranged to explore thematic rather than chronological encounters along these frontiers. The parts focus on indigenous groups, transnational environmental history, the concept of belonging and identity and, finally, large-scale developmental projects designed to spur trade and economic uplift. In Part 1, Shawn Austin establishes the necessary historical foundation to understanding the area through the violent and complex intersections of the indigenous Guaraní peoples under assault from Luso-Brazilian slave raiders and the 'protection' of Spanish Jesuits at the edge of two empires. As European settlers migrated to the region, Guaireños from the major Spanish towns, Paulistas from Portuguese São Paulo and Jesuit priests formed the three major colonial groupings in conflict. All tried to establish sovereignty 'not only through corridors but also through indigenous bodies' (p. 27). With no definitive geographical borders at this phase, 'colonial boundaries were literally mobile Native communities' (p. 45). Guillermo Wilde in the second chapter plumbs even deeper into the Jesuit 'reductions', which struggled to impose a uniform lifestyle and language on the Guaraní through urban colonial institutions with religious and socioeconomic components. Wilde places a key focus on the process of 'mission ethnogenesis', which sought both a cultural and territorial reconstruction of the regions while stressing that indigenous agency both complicated and subverted colonial goals.

Eunice Sueli Nodari's chapter, which opens Part 2, compares the landscape transformations in the Brazilian and Argentine regions in a key area of the borderland in the early twentieth century. In this period German immigrants to Brazil brought more advanced agricultural techniques to the area, avoiding the traditional slash-and-burn predatory cultivation. Colonising companies played a big role in bringing German immigrants to Brazil as part of the 'whitening project', whereby Brazil would supposedly benefit through the influx of European peoples and their modernising ethos. Frederico Freitas's chapter emphasises conservation in the construction of the Iguazú National Park at the intersection of Argentine and Brazilian sovereignty beside the famous falls. An initial stand-off in the early twentieth century precipitated a 'national parks arms race' (p. 105), with both sides vying to construct their park first and stake out key territory. The town of Puerto Iguazú emerged as a vital centre for the Argentine park and was heavily settled with Argentine colonists to nationalise this section of the borderland.

Michael Kenneth Huner's chapter opens Part 3 with a shift in the analytical lens to nineteenth-century Paraguay and local caudillo Casimiro Uriarte's tangled troubles imposing dominance against various rivals while holding a tentative alliance with the distant state in Asunción. This colourful chapter, full of *telenovela* intrigues, addresses a key dilemma: the fragmented sovereignty at the extremities of state authority, where local agency sometimes trumped national goals. Daryle

Williams's chapter next addresses the issue of cultural patrimony in the reconstruction for tourist and nationalist purposes of the old colonial Jesuit–Guaraní missions and their conflicts with the UNESCO's World Heritage Site supranational agency. Brazilian and Argentine ethnographers, historians and cultural officials strove to restore these missions as sites of national pride and state authority. Evaldo Mendes da Silva's chapter 'Walking on the Bad Land' presents one of the most powerful essays in the collection as he reconstructs the thinking and world-view of the Guaraní people, long-exploited migrants across all sectors of the Triple Frontier. In their interactions with European-descent and mixed-race peoples, the Guaraní see themselves as the *avaete* or 'true humans'. They view whites as *jurua*, distinctly non-human and animal-like. The Guaraní constantly walk through the 'cities of whites' on both sides of the border to sell handicrafts and look for work. They view cities as dangerous places with perilous attractions for their youth yet rejoice in walking through the cities of the white man as part of the destiny proclaimed by their unique faith.

Jacob Blanc's chapter opens the final part of the book, exploring the larger geopolitics of hydroelectric development and the political, environmental and social impact it wrought. The conception of the Itaipu dam started with an incongruous political initiative in the 1960s that finally reached fruition in the 1980s. The victims of flooding to create the dam were the *campesinos* who once worked this land and virulently fought for compensation in a giant encampment and protest movement. Bridget María Chesterton's chapter further studies the shift of Paraguay towards a Brazilian orientation after nearly a century of alliance with Argentina. She concentrates on the growing links between Paraguay and Brazil through water transportation and finally via the Bridge of Friendship between the two nations. The joint Itaipu dam project generated enormous energy and profits for both nations and further pulled Paraguay into Brazil's economic and even cultural orbit. In the final chapter, Christine Folch examines the formation of common markets in the region, one binational between Brazil and Paraguay centred at the bustling port and free-trade zone of Ciudad del Este, the other the supranational Mercosur for the entire Southern Cone. While these free-trade zones fostered integration and inclusion they also provoked contradictory competition that drew tens of thousands of migrants, foreign investors and businessmen to the region. The larger hopes for Mercosur meanwhile was that it would provide an instrument for regional elites to offset the power of 'transnational corporations and the Global North' (p. 278). But numerous turf, currency and custom battles continued among locals to seize the maximum advantage from the macroeconomic arrangements imposed on them.

Big Water is a very sweeping, multidisciplinary work that delivers more information and insights to the reviewer than any such collection he has ever read before. It has many maps and several photos but the reviewer would have liked even more. Some of the very specific regions and areas talked about require further illumination: more subaltern voices from and critiques of the grand movements and projects in the volume would have been useful. This of course is very difficult for the colonial and early national essays but would have been instructive for some of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century ones. With its varied methodologies and wide-ranging fields of study, this edition could have been quite confusing. But by dividing the essays into key themes, the skilled editors have produced a very enlightening volume. More

work needs to be done on this fascinating and complex borderland, but *Big Water* is certainly a great start for any scholar, student or general reader.

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Toni Pressley-Sanon, *Istwa across the Water: Haitian History, Memory, and the Cultural Imagination*

(Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2017), pp. xiv + 195, \$74.95, hb.

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Articulating the need to abandon the hegemonic Western epistemology – that is, the binary regime – is one thing. Actually abandoning it, and doing so within the academic constraints of a book project published by a US university press – an endeavour very deeply entangled with such epistemology – is quite another. Toni Pressley-Sanon, in her book *Istwa across the Water: Haitian History, Memory, and the Cultural Imagination*, offers us a luminous path for such achievement. The book is a bold statement and a robust demonstration of the extraordinary capacity of African and Caribbean peoples, who are always on the move, to produce forms of knowledge, art and bodily practices that absolutely refuse to settle, be it colonially, financially, corporally or territorially.

Precisely as the result of the constant, never-ending, shift of forces between subjugation and freedom, the Caribbean and, most especially Haiti – in light of its revolutionary *istwa* (see below) – endure. Pressley-Sanon unyieldingly insists on thinking and analysing Dahomean and Haitian cultures – both material and immaterial – within the framework, first, of Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite's concept of tidalectics: a constant between and betwixt, a refusal of the 'or', an affirmation of the 'and', the condition of being both and neither. In a word, this is a book at sea, which, rather than implying 'lost' or 'confused' as it does in the dominant Western epistemology, signifies becoming, feeling and thinking exactly as we should.

As a thinker interested in exploring Haitian tidalectical cultures, in both object and story forms, Pressley-Sanon rightfully recognises Vodou as an eminently tidalectical force and concept. 'More than a religion, Vodou has been central to Haitian history from the first moments of the nation's inception' (p. 5), and since it is characterised by its anti-hegemonic and syncretic origins, Vodou provides a second epistemological standpoint that is liberated from the binary regime. There are no stark divisions to be made in Vodou practice between thought and emotion, knowledge and belief, life and death, the seen and the unseen, the past and the present, the present and the future, water and land.