

What distinguishes the scholarship of both these works is the careful attention to contingency and a certain reluctance to accept the collective wisdom, narrative or 'system' of the historiography. For del Castillo, this means unravelling the 'colonial legacy' for what it was and perhaps still is: a powerful topos with a life of its own that in turn gave and gives rise to yet more inventions. For Achim, it means suspending the all-embracing teleology of Mexican nationalism embodied in today's National Museum of Anthropology, while at the same time resisting ungrounded claims about knowledge and power recently advanced by Cultural Studies scholars uninterested in the local contingencies of history. The payoff is a more nuanced, historical understanding of what was at stake in the nineteenth century both in intellectual and institutional terms and of what key actors thought and, under the circumstances, tried to do about it. This understanding is basic to any general advance in the history of knowledge.

doi:10.1017/S0022216X19000713

**Ori Preuss, *Transnational South America: Experiences, Ideas, and Identities, 1860s–1900s***

**(New York and London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 176, £90.00, hb.**

Nicola Miller

University College London

Ori Preuss's book is unusual in three respects. It explores transnationalism between countries in Latin America, rather than between Latin American countries and external powers. It brings together the history of foreign relations with history of culture and ideas. It offers evidence that the histories of Brazil and Spanish America were more entangled than is commonly claimed. Preuss builds on his earlier book, *Bridging the Island* (Iberoamericana, 2011), which analysed how Brazil's self-fashioning as a republic was affected by how it imagined Spanish America. Yet *Transnational South America* is a far more ambitious endeavour, going beyond the study of identity to tackle some difficult questions about how culture shapes the possibilities for socio-economic relations between countries. To approach the issue, he focuses on interactions between Brazil and Argentina, or more specifically the nexus of southern Brazil and the River Plate, which underwent rapid economic growth and social change during the late nineteenth century, at least in the cities, to become one of the most modernised areas in the Americas.

Preuss opens his book by making the case that a transnational perspective prompts revision of two traditional frameworks in Latin American history: the elites' cultural orientation towards the imperial powers of Britain, France and the United States; and the internal dynamics of nation-state building. He approaches his topic from four different angles, each covered in a chapter. The first – and

for me the best – discusses the fascinating and little-explored question of how much translation took place from Portuguese into Spanish and vice versa. Preuss identifies practices of both translation and what he calls non-translation, with bilingual individuals and publications circulating between Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo and Buenos Aires. He relates these histories of translation to the course and interpretation of major events, such as the War of the Triple Alliance (1864–70), in which Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay fought against Paraguay, and the abolition of slavery in Brazil (1888). Unlike many historians, Preuss is well versed in Translation Studies, which lends depth and subtlety to his analysis. Going against the grain of interpretations that emphasise the role of translation in differentiating national identities, he draws attention to evidence of wider *americanista* dreams that both complement and modify how nationalisms were imagined.

The second chapter uncovers an extensive travel literature written by Brazilians visiting Argentina and, to a lesser extent, Argentine journeys in Brazil. Traffic increased both ways in the late nineteenth century. As Preuss notes, most of the scholarship on travel writing in Latin America has concentrated either on the accounts of European or US visitors, or, more recently, on Latin American journeys to Europe or the United States. He draws out the theoretical point that such a focus has led to an emphasis on cultural difference, to the exclusion of the possibility that travel may result in a greater sense of common culture. The third chapter adopts a cultural approach to international diplomacy, analysing a series of official visits, scientific congresses and press coverage of foreign affairs, especially in South American periodicals with a specifically transnational remit, to argue for the importance of public opinion in shaping diplomatic possibilities. The fourth chapter explores the contribution of Brazilian intellectuals to ideas of Latinity that have been widely seen as a wholly Spanish American preoccupation. Brazil's transition to a republic in 1889 sharpened the relevance of comparisons with Spanish American nations, Brazilian intellectuals drew far more extensively than before on Spanish American writers, and ideas about Latinity were deployed in various ways by both advocates and opponents of erasing the Portuguese legacy to fashion a new identity for twentieth-century Brazil.

Overall the book presents a compelling case that Brazilian intellectuals and politicians were far more involved in connections and exchanges with their peers in Spanish America – especially Argentina – than has hitherto been recognised, particularly after Brazil became a republic. Through close and compelling analysis of an impressive range of primary sources, Preuss succeeds in showing that there was far more to transnationalism between countries in Latin America than can be captured by studying only those specific transnational organisations (mostly capitalist or criminal) that have been the focus to date. There are a few features of the book that I would question. Some of the concepts introduced struck me as in need of explanation as to their relevance, notably centre and periphery which, when presented uncritically, carry structuralist implications that seem to be in tension with the main arguments. Nor was I persuaded that the term 'creole consciousness' aids analysis of either the stimuli or the outcomes of transnationalism, because people from a range of ethnic and social backgrounds led transnational lives, through participation in popular or labour activism, or as musicians and actors. Arguably it was their transnational practices that mobilised

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.

doi:10.1017/S0022216X19000725

**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.**

Michael E. Donoghue

Marquette University

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