

From the “highway of the world”

El Nicaraguense, transnational newspapers and national historiographies in the Americas

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Introduction

The topic of my presentation is the transnational nature of a particular kind of newspaper – the so-called “filibuster newspapers” of the 19th century – and my paper will focus on a case study of one of those filibuster papers in particular. Yet, before starting with that, I would like to pause a second to briefly debate what exactly is meant in this specific context with the ambiguous term that figures so prominently in the title of this workshop – transnationality.¹ The invitation gave a few first hints. It stated that this event would aim at “looking past national affiliations” in the study of newspapers and “focusing instead on editors and readers” as “an alternative option to the conventional methodology.” This, at least in my view, put the focus on the readers and producers, the actor-side if you will, of the newspaper business, which all seemed very well, albeit a bit narrow; but then a few lines further down, the text spoke more broadly of “analysing transcultural [note the shift from transnational to transcultural] elements of newspaper-making” in general. The final programme, ultimately, categorised our presentations into four strands: language, style, reception and events, thus further broadening the first focus on actors. So, the transnational seems to occur (or can be analysed, at least) in different spheres² with regard to newspapers: 1) the people who produce them (editors, caricaturists, photographers, writers, reporters designers etc.); 2) the people who consume them (by reading them in-depth or just in passing, talking about them etc.); 3) the way they are produced may be designated as transnational (in language or style, for example, but also via their means of production and distribution); or 4) the events they report or portray may be transnational. All this might already show that “transnational” is a rather flexible concept indeed, and when it should mean more than simply

1 I will not dive into details concerning the long and arduous discussions and fissures between “transnational” and “transcultural”. Generally, I prefer the concept of transculturality; yet, am aware that especially in the long nineteenth century, the century of the nation state, it might be feasible to speak of the transnational, especially with regard to the self-identification of the actors.

2 I use the term spheres in loose connection with Arjun Appadurai's model of distinct, yet interconnected “scapes” in the (post/ late) modern, globalised world, a model that itself borrows heavily from Niklas Luhmann's and Manuel Castells' theories. A newspaper, I argue, also exists in different spheres or network(ed) areas, which are all interconnected, yet distinct, and – to a certain extent – even independent from each other.

“international,” “supranational” (a term that political scholars use for institutions like the European Union, and historians sometimes for the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation or the Austro-Hungarian Empire) or something along the lines of “crossing or zig-zagging rather freely between more than one nation state,” we should try to stick to case studies and investigate in which sentence “transnational” may denote something really “in-between,” a third category, something that – although relying on or playing with the national paradigm – genuinely transcends the national. Ann Stoler has urged us to “think [...] through connections and comparisons,” in order to “identify unexpected points of congruence and similarities of discourse in seemingly disparate sites” (Stoler 39–40). This means, in my interpretation, that we should approach a new perspective in our dealings with the national configuration, a perspective that actively searches for a situatedness in-between the national, not only as the description of a fleeting historical moment (as some *histoire croisée* or entangled history-approaches attempt), but rather as a starting point for a theoretical and/ or methodological re-configuration of the national.³ This is quite a challenge, but I will try my best to live up to it – however partially – in my presentation on transnational filibuster newspapers.

“Filibuster papers” as transnational artefacts?

To start out, a first quick overview to contextualize what I mean when I speak of “filibuster papers”: Contrary to today's English usage of the term, in the nineteenth century, filibusters were “persons who, lacking either the explicit or implicit consent of their own governments, planned, abetted or participated in private military invasions or intended invasions of foreign nations or dependencies with which their own countries were at peace” (May 148–149). Filibustering expeditions were repeatedly organised from the 1820s onwards, and their principal country of origin was the US, although not all participants were necessarily U.S.-citizens – Cubans, Spaniards, Venezuelans, Mexicans, Nicaraguans, Frenchmen, Hungarians or “Germans”⁴ also participated.⁵ Yet, they always originated in the US, and

3 This, obviously, always has to be grounded in sound historical and local contextualisation; as scholars of early modern history have pointed out, for example, it is futile to work with the concept of transnationality during a time at which the national simply has not held the importance it took on during the “long nineteenth century” (in the words of Hobsbawm). Our – or at least my – often eurocentric position should also not prevent us from at least acknowledging the “local histories” within the “global design” (Mignolo), which may subvert, contest or simply ignore the national in various ways.

4 I use the conventional term for German-speaking people from the different duchies and kingdoms that would in 1871 be united as the German Reich.

5 The importance of the conservative backlash against the European “Spring of Nations” of 1848 on filibustering so far has been thoroughly undertheorised, as most investigations on the 48ers only trace their exile in the US. For a first attempt of connecting the Republicanism of these exiled with the expansionist business of filibustering, see Luis-

were directed towards different targets: In the early 19th century towards Cuba and Canada, later on mostly to Northern Mexico and the Caribbean islands, with some expeditions directed towards Venezuela and the isthmus of the Americas. In all these cases, the filibusters or *filibusteros*⁶ (roughly between 30 and 300 men per expedition) aimed at “liberating” the countries from either the Spanish crown (in the case of Cuba) or from a fatal subjugation under a new conservative, oligarchical government (“fatal” at least in their modern, Republican view). The filibuster expeditions were composed of men⁷ from different social strata: some were lured into the “adventure” by the promise of land or fame, others fled the law or personal problems, again others attempted to escape the pressure of accelerating industrialisation, while still others – mostly from the US slave-holding South – wanted to establish the *peculiar institution* in countries further South.⁸

The higher “ranks,”⁹ on the other hand, often formed part of a social class connected to newspapers or magazines. The idea of being *hommes des lettres*, situated at the interstices between Enlightenment and imperialism, becomes quite visible in the careers of many of the filibuster “officers:” According to Brady Harrison, for them the “imperial self” they modelled their persona on included a combination of persuasion of the “uncivilized” masses via argument – best achieved via pamphlets or newspapers – and direct domination via conquest (Harrison, esp. 29). Thus, the filibusters often had a “civilizatory mission” intended for the countries they invaded, not only to better annex them to the US, but because of their own interest in “advancing civilization.” This missionary aspect included the establishment of newspapers whenever possible. When eventual founder of Corpus Christi (Texas) Henry Kinney filibustered at the Nicaraguan Atlantic coast in 1854, for example, he started one of the first English-language papers in this Central American country: *The Central-American*. When exiled Cubans in New

Brown.

6 For a genesis of the term in Spanish and its connection with the freebooters that roamed the Caribbean during the times of the Spanish empire, see González Díaz and Lázaro Escosura.

7 As far as I know, all initial filibustering expeditions were exclusively male. Only when the filibusters could manage to establish a certain beach head in the attacked country, some women arrived, often wives or sisters of filibusters serving as nurses and lending an air of domestic credibility to the “officers”.

8 As the filibusters' ultimate goal always was to incorporate the annexed territories into the US Union, slave-holders thus hoped to turn the anti-slavery tide; see May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861*). For the myriad reasons of common people to try their hands at filibustering, see May, “Manifest Destiny’s Filibusters” 6–8.

9 The filibusters revelled in military titles and decorum. While all filibusters participated in the expeditions as private persons, the majority had some kind of (para-)military background, either in European or the US army, or in border militias. Especially the 1850s saw a surge of young men who had participated in the US-Mexican War of 1846-48, had become accustomed to a military, macho way of life (May, *Manifest Destiny’s Underworld. Filibustering in Antebellum America* 159) and searched for a new perspective once the US army, inflated with volunteers during the war with Mexico, had discharged them.

York City (Narciso López may be the best-known name among them) attempted to motivate the Cuban and U.S. public to join in their attempts to wrestle the island from Spanish control, they published several, mostly Spanish-language, papers in the late 1840s and early 1850s: *La Verdad*, *El Mulato*, *El Eco de Cuba* or, mincing no words, *El Filibustero* (Lazo 2–3).

In these examples we can already perceive the double-faced direction many of these enterprises undertook. They were often moored in one society, but attempted to appeal to audiences in another: Kinney wrote in English to reach young men in the USA he hoped would swell his ranks and secure his short-lived colonisation enterprise; the Cuban filibusters wrote from their exile to stir a revolution on the Caribbean island. Often the filibusters did not know if their propaganda even reached its intended audience: Of Kinney's paper not many copies made it to the US, while the Cuban López undertook his final and fatal attempt of liberating Cuba in 1851 in part because he believed the filibuster newspapers had generated an independentist mood on the island; which was blatantly wrong and cost him his life. The Spanish authorities had managed to rake most of the periodicals from the US; the Cuban population could read very few of the inflammatory articles arguing for an overthrow of the Spanish crown. The “geographic disjunction between the production of texts and their readers” (Lazo 32) proved to be substantial for filibuster publications.

Can we call the newspapers mentioned so far really “transnational”? I would caution a warning here; in my opinion, they classify as international or, in the case of the Cuban example, as exile press products: Written in one location, but destined for another, neither their content nor their means of production would qualify as “transnational” if that term aims at either transcending the nation state, at exploring forces and movements – people, things, ideas, institutions, and regimes – that cut across nations, undermine their identity and establish circuits that lift the analysis of people's lives out of their national contexts . The following case, though, is arguably different.

Filibustering in Nicaragua

Nicaragua was not only the aim of Kinney's filibuster expedition, but generally in the focus of U.S. public and politics in the 1850s: With the gold rush still running wild in California and without an intercontinental railroad yet, eager gold diggers and petty merchants from the U.S. East coast often went to the Pacific side using steam ships, which passed via Nicaragua, landing at the Eastern coast of the country, where the passengers were transported via river barges and horseback to the country's

Western side, at which location another U.S.-owned steamship brought them to California.¹⁰ To economise this journey further, many U.S. companies were longing to build an interoceanic canal through Nicaragua, a plan long devised by the Spanish crown, but postponed first due to the immense costs, and after the country's independence due to ongoing civil wars.¹¹ The geopolitical stratagems and economic fantasies saw Nicaragua as a “highway of the world” (*London Daily News*, 7 July 1858, qtd. in Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* 54).¹² An annexation of this isthmian country was thus tacitly endorsed by U.S. business, and a myriad of filibusters hedged plans with regard to Nicaragua. The most “successful” – in filibuster terms – was William Walker, a lawyer, medical doctor and (not surprisingly) erstwhile newspaper editor from Tennessee.¹³ In 1855, during the ongoing Nicaraguan civil war, he and some 50 more adventurers were hired by one of the warring sides – the Democrats – to assist in the war, with the promise of land rights and citizenship in case of success. After some clever tactical manoeuvring, some more luck and a reckless game of power politics that profited from the Nicaraguan political in-fighting, Walker was first nominated Commander-in-Chief of the Nicaraguan forces under a Nicaraguan President, and eventually became President himself after rigged elections. After this surprising turn of events, other isthmian countries, especially Costa Rica, feared for their own national sovereignty and began to fight the filibusters.¹⁴ In 1857, the

10 Cornelius Vanderbilt, the famous railroad tycoon, was a major player in this scheme, too. He owned the Accessory Transit Company, which from 1851 onwards was the major firm to bring passengers from the U.S. East to its West coast, passing through Nicaragua. Vanderbilt had reached an agreement with Nicaraguan authorities for the use of the so-called transit route, the network of rivers and lakes making this journey possible, but had signed that he would eventually build an interoceanic canal. As his steamship business brought in enough money, Vanderbilt never fulfilled that part of the contract, and additionally misrepresented the profit of his company to not pay Nicaragua its share. See Dunkerley (579) for a short overview of the company and Herrera Cuarezma for the influence it had on the quotidian life of Nicaraguans living at and from the rivers and lakes used as passage ways.

11 On the canal plans, see Gobat (24–25); Gruesz (12), on Nicaraguan society in the 19th century: Kinloch Tijerino and Burns. On the cultural effects of the transit through Nicaragua, see Whisnant.

12 Well-known archaeologist Ephraim George Squier used the same metaphor of the “great highway of commerce” (Squier 12). He also noted that only by opening such a canal in Nicaragua, “the Republican world can ever hope to reclaim from tyranny and servitude the myriads of Asia” (8), prolonging the imperial U.S. vision into Asia.

13 On Walker, see Bolaños Geyer; Greenberg; Greene; Harrison; Montúfar Rivera; Rosengarten. Additionally, most accounts of 19th century U.S. involvement in Central America include a short vignette on Walker's life. For a fictional account that incorporates Walker into a wider panorama of imperial(ist) dreams on Latin America, see Deville. Finally, at least two feature films about Walker are available today : *Queimada* from 1969 (directed by Gilles Pontecorvo, featuring Marlon Brando) and *Walker* from 1987 (directed by Alex Cox, featuring Ed Harris).

14 Walker's motto “Five or none” left no room for ambiguities: His aim was to conquer and annex all five Central American republics to the US. His success in Nicaragua served as a wake-up-call for the other republics, who so far had regarded his enterprise as too far-flung to be important. This attitude was understandable when looking at Walker's epic failure in his first filibustering attempt in Mexico in 1853, when literally only a handful of the roughly fifty men that set out with him to conquer Sonora and Baja California came back alive. See *Bolaños Geyer, William Walker: El Predestinado De Los Ojos Grises. Tomo II: Las Californias* and on filibustering in Mexico in general González Reufels.

Democrats, so far allies of the filibusters, joined the Central American army, and Walker and his men were overthrown.¹⁵

In Transit, in limbo? El Nicaraguense as a transnational newspaper

During his time in Nicaragua, Walker started what he called an “Americanisation programme” (Whisnant 75–76), which included a land redistribution scheme, aimed at Anglo American settlers, the introduction of English as the second official language (thus further facilitating land redistribution) the re-introduction of slavery – and the establishment of *El Nicaraguense*, a bilingual weekly newspaper.¹⁶ Its first number was published on 20 October 1855, exactly one week after the filibusters had captured the town of Granada and encountered a printing press. The English part of *El Nicaraguense* was produced by various members of Walker's forces, all with a background in journalism. As the profession of filibuster tended to increase one's chances of an early death, there was quite a bit of fluctuation at the *Nicaraguense's* staff, but generally Walker – even when having trouble maintaining his forces' fighting ability – permanently had four to six people assigned to produce the paper's English section.¹⁷ The Spanish-language section commenced with issue number two and from number 4 onwards reached almost the same amount of pages as the English one – each one two pages. This section had a separate editor, the bilingual Cuban Francisco Agüero Estrada. If other Nicaraguan or foreign Spanish speakers collaborated is hard to corroborate, as the Spanish section (coming second in the paper) did not feature a masthead.

The two parts of the paper shared some similar content, but often different significantly. First for the similarities: Both sections reported on major (real or hyperbolic) advances of the filibusters in their war against the Central American army, and informed its readers on major policy decisions by Walker. These “official” news always originated in the English-language section and were then translated into Spanish and published – sometimes with a delay of one or two weeks – in the corresponding section.

15 For many of them (including Walker), the story did not end there: On four occasions, they tried to return to Nicaragua and re-establish their leader as its “legitimate” president. Only when Walker was caught and executed in Honduras in 1860 and the US entered its own Civil War shortly thereafter, these adventurers diverted their attention from the isthmian country.

16 In proper Spanish, the paper's name would read *El Nicaragüense*, but Walker's paper always omitted the diaeresis. This may be due to the lack of the ü-letter at the only printing press that Walker could encounter. Even after proper presses were imported from the US, though, the title stayed the same.

17 Apart from the editors, the paper could rely on soldiers who worked as 'compositors,' i.e. type-setters ((Bolaños Geyer, *El Nicaraguense, 1855-1856. Edición Facsimilar Bilingüe Con Su Guía = Bilingual Facsimile Edition with a Guide* 306).

Only marginally were originally Spanish news items translated into English. Obviously there existed a language barrier on the side of the Anglo-Saxons,¹⁸ and this meant that *El Nicaraguense* resembled two newspapers jumbled into one material entity. Agüero Estrada often included completely different news items in his Spanish section than the Anglo filibusters, obviously relying on a different set of sources than the English-speaking filibusters (like Central American newspapers, but also Nicaraguan townsfolk as interviewees for the important “gossip”-aspect that was so pervasive in 19th century newspapers). The Anglo editors exclusively used newspapers coming from the USA for their part. These were not only U.S. papers, but also European ones: British, French, Belgium, even the odd German newspaper can be found in the bylines that credit the translations that appeared in the *Nicaraguense*. The Anglo editors also interviewed incoming recruits or passengers passing through the warn-torn country on their way to the Californian gold fields for news from New York, San Francisco or New Orleans. The English part thus featured a hotchpotch of news from (almost) all over the world, with the typical nineteenth century nonchalance towards genre or categorisation; the Spanish part, on the other hand, was produced mimicking official government gazettes of Latin America, which relied on a single, often outspoken editor, who combined the reproduction of official correspondence with philosophical op-eds on issues ranging from citizenship, education or foreign policy to diatribes against political or personal foes.

Furthermore, the very country the newspaper was produced in, is portrayed quite differently in the two parts of the *El Nicaraguense*. The Spanish section opted for incorporating Walker's presidency in a longer historical trajectory of revolutionary turmoil in the country, putting Walker at the same level as other presidents who had come into office by violent uprisings since the country's independence in 1821. Thus, Nicaragua was portrayed as a somewhat troubled isthmian republic, on par with its neighbours Honduras or Costa Rica. The *Nicaraguense's* English part, on the other hand, depicted Nicaragua as a *terra incognita*, a country akin to the US Western Frontier and borderlands of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, complete with native American-like “savages.” One example in place for many more may suffice here: During the counter-attack on the city of Granada a U.S. American citizen (claimed to have been a non-participating merchant) was killed, an event reported in *El Nicaraguense* in the following terms:

18 Walker himself relied on Carlos Tomás, a Nicaraguan merchant, as his personal assistant and translator (Allen 81).

It is an action so far beyond the pale of all civilized customs as to render it impossible for justification. [...] As if to add to the atrocity, they [the Central American soldiers] were not content with taking his [the victim's] life. Being an American citizen, instead of protecting him while living, was the cause of a continuance of the outrage upon his remains after death! Seven bayonets were thrust through his body after he had been shot. The thought of how these fiends danced about their victim, and, in their hellish glee at having deprived an American citizen of life, becoming so intoxicated with fury as to continue to thrust their bayonets into him, is heart-sickening ("The Late Insult to the U.S. Flag. Murder of American citizens by the Allied army of Guatemala and San Salvador." 25 Oct. 1856).

The dance around the corpse, the "hellish glee" in the perpetrators' eyes linked the Central American soldiers to stereotypes of Native Americans rampant in U.S. literature. Furthermore, Nicaragua was positioned as a land of abundance akin to the mythical image of America that was created by the first Spanish and English-language reports by the explorers: Gold was everywhere, the pasture rich, the climate healthy, the scenery awe-inspiring and, in a typical link between expansionism and gender politics, the local women breathtaking and willing to be conquered in by virile young explorers, with the effete male population no match for their affections.¹⁹ These two mutually exclusive depictions of one and the same country rarely met on the pages of *El Nicaraguense*. The Spanish section, for example, never took up the long reports in the form of travelogues that appeared in the English section and often described an expedition into the allegedly "remote" interior of Nicaragua, and which – in the typical twist of what Amy Greenberg has called "boaster literature" – often terminated in the discovery of gold (see "Gold in Nicaragua!" *El Nicaraguense* 22 November 1855; "Diamonds in Nicaragua," *El Nicaraguense* 26 January 1856; "News from the Mines," *El Nicaraguense* 23 February 1856; "Topographical and Geographical Notices of the Department of Chontales," *El Nicaraguense* 03 May 1856 etc.). While most *Mestizo* elites radiated only between the bigger cities like León and Granada and their ranches,²⁰ they nevertheless would have recognised such descriptions as fakes.

The two parts of *El Nicaraguense* clearly had two different intended audiences: The Spanish one was geared towards the Nicaraguan and Central American population, explaining the actions of the filibusters to the critical – more often overtly hostile – *Mestizos*, who were the literate section of the population that could afford to buy a paper (Guerra and Lempérière 20).²¹ This meant that the attacks

19 On the typical, masculinity-centred discourse of nineteenth century U.S. expansionism, see Greenberg, Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire; Hoganson. Also see Nagel for a theoretical approximation that is not limited to the US.

20 For the social position of Nicaraguan elites in the 19th and 20th century, see Delgado Aburto.

21 As was customary at the time, the filibusters also offered a subscription service for *El Nicaraguense*; yet, although most middle-class readers in the US received their periodicals via subscription, it seems that Walker's paper could attract no such confidence.

launched by other Spanish-language papers (from Guatemala to Costa Rica) served as intertexts against which this part of *El Nicaraguense* was positioned; a context ignored almost completely in its English part. The English section was intended for a US audience, which was seen as a possible pool of new recruits, and for US politicians, who were lobbied to scrap laws making filibustering illegal, and who were urged to endorse the filibuster regime politically. To this end, the filibusters regularly sent copies of their newspaper to Washington, D.C.: The Costa Rican newspaper *Album Semanal* mentioned in 1857 that 413 issues of *El Nicaraguense* had been sent to the USA, “396 of those to newspaper editors, 12 to politicians and the rest to government ministers in Washington” (“Correspondencia interceptada” 16 January 1857, my translation).

In this particular context of Nicaragua, a nation with at one point three different governments²² and extremely differing perspectives for its national future, *El Nicaraguense* can be seen as a truly transnational paper: a material object floating between several Central American countries and the USA, and maybe most importantly, produced by a cast of transnational actors, who indeed imagined the Nicaraguan territory and their people as part of a nation state but with their actions helped to situate it in-between several national options. For some economic schemers and dreamers – as Joseph Stout has called filibusters in general – the physical reality of Nicaragua was secondary: The country only existed for its waterways and as a possible future site of an interoceanic canal, which led some to consider an arrangement that only brought the rivers and lakes dotting the isthmian country under U.S. control, while the soil would be up for grabs for whomever wanted it.

Such plans foreshadowed future U.S. involvements in Puerto Rico, Panama and Cuba, as well as the establishment of “unincorporated territories” like Guantánamo Bay, whose infrastructure (the actual naval base) legally falls under U.S. jurisdiction while the territory it was erected on – the Bahía de Guantánamo – forms part of Cuban national territory.²³ It has been pointed out that such lease-agreements – which legally left the sovereignty of the land in foreign hands – were a “key to U.S.

22 Apart from the filibuster government, the Democrats cut their ties with Walker in 1857 and constituted a government under the leadership of Patricio Rivas, while their Nicaraguan enemies, the Conservatives, had all the time maintained their “alternative” government in some parts of the country.

23 The territory was leased by the US in 1903 when it exercised complete control over the island. The leasing agreement formed part of the Cuban-American Treaty, and established that the US would be granted the right to construct and maintain coal stations on the island (Cuba being an important centre for the exercise of imperial control in the Caribbean waters at a time of coal-powered steamships), while eventually reducing its military involvement in internal Cuban politics. The Treaty stipulated that the US paid \$2,000 annually (\$4,085 in today's rates) for the 121 square kilometres the base in the Bahía de Guantánamo occupies. Since the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the Cuban government has refused the payment which the US still diligently sends to Cuba each year, thus breaking its own embargo policy.

imperial strategy,” as this “disavowal of sovereignty over a territory nonetheless controlled by the United States” allowed for great flexibility in the question which rights were applicable there (Dudziak and Volpp 242). The worrisome legal dimension of transnationality, i.e. the possibility that constitutional rights (the territorially-bound “rule of the law of the land”) are suspended, revoked or never implemented is a possible by-product of transnational sites if contextualised as “spaces of exception” (Dudziak and Volpp 10).

Transnational ruminations against national historiographies

Coming back to the transnational newspaper *El Nicaraguense*, its conspicuous state outlined above reflects the liminal state of Nicaragua at the time: It is obviously drenched in national configurations, yet by its very multi-dimensionality transcends them. And this is not only true in a historical perspective, but also for the national historiographies connected with it. Still today, the *Nicaraguense* defies clear national attributions: Some Nicaraguan historians have included it in the national realm as a foreign language Nicaraguan paper (together with Kinney's, for example),²⁴ while others argue that the situation it was produced in and the actors that produced it elicit an exclusion from Nicaraguan historiography. U.S. historians, on the other hand, are reluctant to include the filibuster newspaper into their national corpus, foregrounding qualms about its place of origin.²⁵ This obviously intersects with the problematic position the filibuster occupy in U.S. historiography. Save for a small flock of historians and some local history enthusiasts in Walker's home town of Nashville (Tennessee), the filibusters (the ones setting out to Nicaragua as well as those heading for Mexico, Cuba or other destinations) have largely been obliterated from the history of U.S. hemispheric expansion.²⁶ Many, including Latin American scholars, argue that this is the oblivion that befalls the losers in the game of

24 One of them is Jorge Arellano, who included *El Nicaraguense* in his *Catálogo de Periódicos y Revistas de Nicaragua*. In Nicaragua, a public sphere in the sense of Habermas and thus newspapers as an organ of bourgeois, Capitalist society only emerged in the “liberal period” of the 1870s, which makes this country quite a latecomer in a Latin American comparison; see Ayerdis.

25 In the past, some even took issue with its bilingualism, but at least for thirty years now, the tide has turned on this issue. On the inclusion of Spanish-language periodicals from the mid-nineteenth century into the U.S. corpus, see Griesz and Brickhouse. Gretchen Murphy, among others, follows a similar path (Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings. The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire*; Murphy, *Shadowing the White Man's Burden. U.S. Imperialism and the Problem of the Color Line*).

26 I argue that a possible re-incorporation into the academic field might come from the cultural studies, with scholars becoming interested in the films on Walker mentioned above, or one of the literary texts which have been written on Walker and the filibusters since the 1840s until today (a recent example is the novel *Pura Vida. Vie et mort de William Walker* by the already mentioned Patrick Deville. For a good first overview on Walker as a character in fictional literature, see Brady Harrison's *Agent of Empire*.

U.S. expansionism (after all, not even Walker and his men as the most successful filibusters were able to hold reign for longer than a period of roughly eleven months);²⁷ an expansionism which, at least in Central and South America, changed tactics in the twentieth century, shelving direct territorial control first for “gunboat politics”, then for “dollar diplomacy” and finally for indirect support à la Kennedy's *Alliance for Progress* and covert actions carried out by the CIA.²⁸ These geopolitical and historical explanations are obviously important, but I would add to them the very nature of the filibustering business, which was a hemispheric, transnational one. The complex positionality of the filibusters and their plans for Nicaragua (and other locales) situate them outside of easy national historiographical settings; and *El Nicaraguense* reproduces this ambiguity, thus making it a historical source that is not easy to deal with. Neither Nicaraguan nor US-American (nor Cuban, for that matter), *El Nicaraguense* might best be described as a hemispherically American periodical. And specifically investigations of such uneasy, transnational media allow us to move beyond national contexts. I would argue that the filibusters may count as transnational actors and the description of Nicaragua in their newspaper *El Nicaraguense* situates this country within different national realities; thus making the study of this paper a perfect entry path to move beyond national historiographical configurations. Such a take on historical events may further allow us to reconfigure our disciplinary blank spots, and may, for example, allow to understand while a rather unknown, amateurish newspaper from a tiny Central American country for two years might indeed be acknowledged as reporting from and about the “highway of the world.”

27 So far, the best works comparing the U.S. and Central American, i.e. Nicaraguan, Costa Rican and to a lesser extent Honduran, historiographies with regard to the filibusters were written or edited by the Costa Rican historian Víctor Acuña, see Acuña Ortega, *La Campaña Nacional: Memorias Comparadas*; Acuña Ortega, *Filibusterismo Y Destino Manifiesto En Las Américas*; Acuña Ortega, “Destino Manifiesto, Filibusterismo Y Representaciones de Desigualdad Etnico-Racial En Las Relaciones Entre Los Estados Unidos Y Centroamérica”.

28 See, from a myriad of books and articles on US-Latin American relations, Langley; Langley and Schoonover; Pike; Trivedi.

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When researchers first arrived at a cave high in the desert mountains of north-central Mexico, they hoped to learn what the environment was like there thousands of years ago. But the unexpected discovery of what they believe is an ancient projectile point led to a decade-long excavation that could rewrite the history of the Americas. According to a paper published today in the journal Nature, the site, known as Chiquihuite Cave, may contain evidence of human occupation that places people in North America around 30,000 years ago—roughly twice as early as most current estimates for when the first Transnational corporations exercise their influence in the international system through the movement of capital from states that curb their profits to states that do not. Accordingly, states tend to conceive of corporate interests as national interests and often implement business-friendly policies without being explicitly pressured (Korten, 1995, Ohmae, 1995, Willetts, 2001). The current reluctance of Europe and the US to regulate the financial sector stems partly from the fear that large investors will transfer their investments from countries that do regulate to countries that do not. The same

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