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Michel Gobat. *Empire by Invitation: William Walker and Manifest Destiny in Central America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018. ISBN: 9780674737495 (hardcover, $39.95 • £31.95 • €36.00).

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Introduction by Jay Sexton, University of Missouri

Michel Gobat's new study of one of the most curious episodes the nineteenth century, William Walker's filibustering expedition to Nicaragua in the 1850s, is one of those rare books that turns conventional wisdom on its head. *Empire by Invitation* might well lead to a surge in recycled lecture notes, Hector Lindo-Fuentes predicts in his review.

In the traditional telling, William Walker represents the high-tide of antebellum U.S. imperialism. He and his band of filibusters who briefly took control of Nicaragua are typically depicted as exponents of a chauvinistic Manifest Destiny ideology that (in many accounts) included a desire to expand American slavery into Central America.

Gobat paints a very different portrait. *Empire by Invitation* argues that the key to the story of filibustering in Nicaragua is to be found outside of the United States. Gobat argues that Nicaraguan liberals who sought to prime the pump of economic modernization and political liberalism invited Walker and his transnational band of followers into their country as a means of achieving their objectives. The subsequent filibuster state was a surprisingly diverse structure comprised of Nicaraguan liberals, Yankee colonizers, and European radicals, including those who had participated in the 1848 revolutions. The filibuster regime even brought some local Catholics into the fold, as well as indigenous peoples, Cuban revolutionaries, and local peasants.

The story Gobat tells is of the messy and haphazard construction of a transnational imperial formation. The filibuster state in Nicaragua was less the product of the outward projection of U.S. power than it was the creative attempt of an unexpected set of bedfellows to ignite liberal economic development. In Gobat's meticulous reconstruction of the filibuster regime, liberal ideology is given particular interpretive weight: "the Walker episode underscores the understanding that Manifest Destiny was driven not solely by the U.S. belief in its innate superiority but also a by a utopian impulse," Gobat writes (8).

All of the reviewers in this round-table commend *Empire by Invitation*, particularly for its rich empirical foundation and the textured accounts of a constellation of actors who have long been relegated to the margins of the story. "The truly exciting features of Gobat's study derive from its arresting biographical detail about Walker's soldiers, settlers, and Nicaraguan affiliates and its meticulous deconstruction of Walker's bureaucracy," Robert May writes in his review.

The reviewers raise some questions about particular aspects of Gobat's argument. Several wonder how Walker's eventual embrace of slavery in Nicaragua fits with an interpretation that emphasizes the liberal ideology of the filibuster regime. Upon revisiting Geir Lundestad's "empire by invitation" thesis on the Cold War, Tim Roberts wonders if Gobat "overstates how much Walker's decision to claim and remake Nicaragua depended on this odd Nicaraguan invitation for 'Americanization'." In a review that draws from his important research on Panama, Aims McGuinness points out that "the commercial empire forged by the [Wall-Street controlled] Panama Railroad Company and its allies in Panama in the early 1850s would be more indicative of the future of U.S. imperial projects in the region than Walker's filibustering expeditions."

These and other points raised by the reviewers are testament to the freshness and boldness of Gobat's study. *Empire by Invitation* is a book destined to ignite new interest in the imperialism of the mid-nineteenth century.

Participants:

Michel Gobat is Associate Professor of History at the University of Pittsburgh. He is the author of *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Duke University Press, 2005) and *Empire by Invitation: William Walker and Manifest Destiny in Central America* (Harvard University Press, 2018).

Jay Sexton is Kinder Institute Chair of Constitutional Democracy at the University of Missouri and Emeritus Fellow at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He researches the nineteenth century and is the author, most recently, of *A Nation Forged by Crisis: A New American History* (New York: Basic Books, 2018).

Héctor Lindo-Fuentes (Ph.D. Chicago 1985) has published books on the economic history of Central America, on education, and on the politics of memory in El Salvador. His most recent book, co-authored with Erik Ching, is *Modernizing Minds in El Salvador: Education Reform and the Cold War, 1960-1980* published in 2012 by the University of New Mexico Press. He is member and past director of Fordham University's interdisciplinary program in Latin American and Latino Studies. He has been member of the editorial board of Fordham University Press, is past president of the seven-member national commission for accreditation of higher education institutions of El Salvador and advises the *Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica*. He was also president of the Board of Trustees of the Center for Regional Research of Mesoamerica (1998-2002). He has just finished a manuscript on the popular reaction in El Salvador to American imperialism in Central America and the Caribbean in the first decades of the 20th century.

Robert E. May, Professor Emeritus of History at Purdue University, is the author of three books treating William Walker's career in Nicaragua: *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861* (Louisiana State University Press, 1973); *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2002); *Slavery, Race, and Conquest in the Tropics: Lincoln, Douglas, and the Future of Latin America* (Cambridge University Press, 2013). Several of his book chapters and articles also deal with Walker, including "Reconsidering Antebellum U.S. Women's History: Gender, Filibustering, and America's Quest for Empire," *American Quarterly* 57:4 (December 2005): 1155-1188. His most recent publication is "The Irony of Confederate Diplomacy: Visions of Empire, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Quest for Nationhood," *Journal of Southern History* 83:1 (February 2017): 69-106.

Aims McGuinness is Associate Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He earned his doctorate in history at the University of Michigan and is the author of *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush* (Cornell University Press, 2008). He is currently conducting research on the history of socialist politics in the early years of the Cold War.

Timothy Mason Roberts teaches at Western Illinois University and is the author of *Distant Revolutions: 1848 and the Challenge to American Exceptionalism* (University of Virginia, 2009), and co-editor, with Lindsey DiCuirci, of *American Exceptionalism*, 4 vols. (Pickering & Chatto, 2012). He is working on a study of American and French imperialism during the nineteenth century.

Review by Héctor Lindo-Fuentes, Fordham University

Michel Gobat has written a book that will make many historians of Central America quite uncomfortable. They will either reject the book or throw away their lecture notes and apologize to their students for decades of misleading lessons. If book reviews were given screaming headlines I would choose something like: "Populist Nicaraguan Sandino supports U.S. filibuster William Walker." Of course, the Sandino reference has to do with nineteenth century Granadan caudillo Gervacio Sandino (259) and not with César Augusto, the anti-imperialist leader who gave his name to Sandinismo. But the headline would accurately capture the striking revisions of the conventional wisdom proposed by this fascinating work.

The narrative of William Walker's takeover of Nicaragua, important to Central American history and politics since the middle of the nineteenth century, has solidified over the years into the simple story of the ruthless invader that took over a helpless country, imposed English as the official language, and legalized slavery. It has been constantly repeated in textbooks and standard histories across Central America. An example from a recent Nicaraguan textbook illustrates the thrust of the standard story: "On June 16, 1855 William Walker landed in El Realejo with his phalanx composed of 57 adventurers intoxicated with the slogan of Manifest Destiny: to extend the dominance of the Anglo-Saxon race throughout the continent." The American invaders believed that, "to guarantee the prosperity of Nicaragua, it was necessary to reestablish slavery, since workers of inferior races required a white master to direct their energies."[1] Elsewhere in Central America, standard narratives stress the potential threat to neighboring countries and the heroism of the allied army that expelled the filibusters from the isthmus. For Salvadoran writers the 'Guerra Nacional' (the name given to the allied effort) was a moment of unity between conservatives and liberals to defend the territory.[2] Such patriotic unity was necessary since Walker's project would ultimately have incorporated all of Central America. As an influential Guatemalan author put it, Walker wanted "to put the five [Central American countries] under the same slavery, under a foreign domination, military and despotic and serving a single cause: that of the slave and separatist states of the South."[3]

The tale of William Walker resurfaces in Central America during every episode of heightened distrust of the United States. In 1988, the Reagan administration had the peculiar idea of appointing a new ambassador to El Salvador whose name happened to be William Walker. By that time the contra war in Nicaragua and the civil war in El Salvador were raging. Few progressive commentators could refrain from commenting on the name of the diplomat and then jump to comparisons between Reagan's policies and the incident of the nineteenth-century filibuster. American imperialism never stops. Conjuring up the old story was not limited to Op-Ed writers eager to impress with their historical knowledge. For a long time, throughout Central America every social group has used the well-known Walker narrative as a resource to express resistance to U.S. influence. When Marines invaded Nicaragua in 1912, Costa Rican workers paid homage to pictures and monuments of Juan Santamaría, one of the heroes of the Guerra Nacional. Likewise, the same year,

[1] Frances Kinloch Tijerino, *Historia de Nicaragua* (Managua: IHNCA-UCA, 2005), 164.

[2] J. Richardo Dueñas Van Severen, *La invasión filibustera de Nicaragua y la guerra nacional* (San Salvador: Ministerio de Educación, Dirección Gerneral de Publicaciones, 1962).

[3] Virgilio Rodríguez Beteta, 1965. *Trascendencia nacional e internacional de la Guerra de Centro América contra Walker y sus filibusteros* (Guatemala: Editorial del Ejército, 1995), 60.

Salvadoran artisans and students hailed the figure of Juan José Cañas, a Salvadoran who had fought against Walker. Clearly the story has the added advantage of being a hero-manufacturing device.

That the invocation of this cautionary tale of the dangers of American imperialism has been necessary in many occasions is testimony to the importance of the geostrategic situation of the isthmus, the starting point of Gobat's account. Since the Spanish conquest, the narrowness of the isthmus has made it attractive as an easy route to connect the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and as a bridge between North and South America. Of course, in modern times the route has been as attractive to the U.S. as to its rivals of the moment. Central American historian Victor Hugo Acuña has pointed out that this geostrategic importance contrasts with the region's marginal condition, and therefore it is a place where "centrality and marginality coexist."[4]

Historical episodes that have captured world attention for brief periods are followed by long periods of neglect. Think about the construction of the Panama Canal, or moments of the Cold War like the toppling of Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz in 1954, and the Sandinista Revolution and contra wars of 1980s. During the last event, President Ronald Reagan summarized the strategic argument: "Using Nicaragua as a base, the Soviets and Cubans can become the dominant power in the crucial corridor between North and South America. Established there, they will be in a position to threaten the Panama Canal, interdict our vital Caribbean Sea lanes and, ultimately, move against Mexico."[5] The Cold War, a global process with multiple faces, was throwing Central America into turmoil. The actions of many in the region were conditioned by debates and political calculations originating many miles away, as had happened in the 1850s.

Gobat starts his story with the first event when Central America was plucked from its marginal condition and received intense U.S. attention. Nicaragua received thousands of Americans during the Gold Rush, when one of the shortcuts between the heavily populated east coast and the gold-rich west coast was through the San Juan River and Lake Nicaragua. The interactions between Americans and Nicaraguans that took place at this time paved the way for the receptiveness of American culture and eventually of Walker and his followers.

These interactions provided opportunity for multiple levels of engagement between Nicaraguan and American individuals and cultures. The presence of Gold Rush travelers, some of whom stayed in Nicaragua, begun shaping an idea of what Americans had to offer. The 'yanquis' were not only outsiders interested in power, they could also be entrepreneurs, providers of Yankee ingenuity and technology. They could develop the transit route and, who knows, maybe even build a canal. They could also be appealing incidental or long term romantic or business partners. As the number of Americans passing through and staying in Nicaragua increased, the presence of Americans subverted the social order. They provided a window to a different world and economic and political opportunities that short circuited the patron-client relationships that so served the interests of the landowning aristocracy.

This is the starting point of Gobat's argument. Their early experience with Americans gave Nicaraguans, many more than historians have been willing to accept, reasons to support Walker. The presence of Americans was

[4] Victor Hugo Acuña Ortega, "Centroamérica en las globalizaciones (siglos XVI-XXI)." *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos* 41 (2015): 13-27.

[5] Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation March 16, 1986." The speech was reproduced in the *New York Times*, "Transcript of the President's Speech", 17 March 1986, A 12.

an opportunity for personal advancement and political change. Gobat's radical proposition is that we pay attention to the Nicaraguans who supported Walker. In doing so we are asked to throw out the window the story of the poster boy of Manifest Destiny imposing a totally alien project and replace it with something far more complicated. He shows Nicaraguans as willing partners who attached their own political and economic projects to those of the newcomers.

The author accomplishes his goal by paying close attention to Nicaraguan actors and their motivations, and by understanding the complexity of the filibuster force. If historians are to be divided into lumpers and splitters, Gobat is definitely a splitter. Having already written an excellent book on Nicaragua, he has a subtle understanding of the nuances of Nicaraguan society. His argument depends on the fine distinctions between and within liberal León and conservative Granada (towns separated by less than 90 miles); between high clergy and low clergy; old money, new money, and no money; patrons and clients; and different shades of ethnic identity. The book makes these distinctions real with descriptions of a parade of fascinating characters who sided with Walker: "El Chelón" José María Valle, a radical liberal with long-term grudges against a local aristocracy that disdained him and his followers as contemptuous rabble; father Agustín Vijil, an elite liberal priest from conservative Granada who wanted Nicaragua to join the 'civilized world'; the Thomas brothers, Jamaican-born merchants of African descent shunned by the aristocracy despite their wealth. Paying attention to conflicts derived from class, ethnicity, ideology, and geography, the author helps us understand the reasons behind the significant local support enjoyed by Walker during most of his adventure. The book does not dismiss these Nicaraguans as immoral sellouts, puppets, or invisible recruits, but rather paints them as individuals who for one reason or another believed, at least for a while, that Walker was a vehicle to bring to reality their own visions and projects. This nuanced understanding of what moved different groups of Nicaraguans is crucial to understanding how they reacted to the presence of Walker and his motley crew of followers and the idea of what the U.S. represented.

Gobat is attentive to distinctions among the people who arrived with William Walker. An illuminating chapter on the colonists describes a remarkable group with a wide variety of backgrounds, life experiences, and motivations. This diversity is a far cry from the 'adventurers intoxicated with the slogan of Manifest Destiny.' It turns out that only a minority of Walker's party fit the textbook description. The analysis of the group sheds light on the presence of many people (mostly, but not only, men) with European and Latin American backgrounds and even African Americans.

Once again, the profiles of unique characters strengthen the argument. Besides pro-slavery southerners, and there were some of those, Walker's party included individuals like James P. Thomas, a former slave hoping for a better life in Nicaragua; Israel Moses, a Jewish New York doctor interested in medical reform; Sarah Pellet, the first woman to apply to Harvard University; Louis Schlesinger, a veteran of the 1848 Hungarian Revolution; and Karl Bürkli, a Swiss socialist. The vagueness of Walker's intentions allowed people like Bürkli to believe that Nicaragua could be a good place for a "socialist democratic state" (133). A Cuban follower, Francisco Agüero Estrada, was a radical anticolonial, distinguished for his antiracism through which he expected for Nicaragua what he could not accomplish in Cuba. The presence of these followers reflects the fact that during most of his tenure, Walker's project was very different from the cause 'of the slave and separatist states of the South'. This is not only a story of Manifest Destiny-Americans and liberal and conservative Nicaraguans, it also has the imprint of the dreams and projects of people who had participated in some of the key causes of the middle of the century. The colonists could be veterans of the 1848 revolutions, admirers of French utopian Charles Fourier, or Cubans that had rebelled against Spain. The unique position of Nicaragua as a geostrategically important place of transit between oceans and continents had turned it into

a locus of multiple interactions between peoples and political projects. One cannot understand the actions of the filibusters and their local allies without a thorough understanding of how Nicaragua was incorporated in larger global processes. Marginal it was, but its geography gave it exposure to world currents that shaped its destiny. The Americans' 'imagined empire' was really a set of imprecise competing projects. Walker's diverse companions and a spectrum of Nicaraguans could project into it their own desires. The 'empire' was to be independent of the United States and incorporate liberal institutions and principles. From the Nicaraguans' point of view, a promising feature was that whatever the project really was, it was more egalitarian and inclusive than what local conservative elites were defending.

With this understanding of the variety of actors and their ideological inspirations, Gobat sets out to explain the actions taken by the invaders to build a new state. This section completely upends the simplistic idea of a subsidiary of 'the slave and separatist states of the South.' He finds evidence of a small American-led central state apparatus that governed by respecting local autonomy and enjoying the assistance of a wide spectrum of the population. The analysis of state-building during the 14 months of Walker's presidency provides evidence of a system that empowered individuals at the local level and disrupted the traditional patron-client relationships, a welcome feature for many Nicaraguans.

Gobat's story is so well documented that it is worth exploring why the textbook version of the Walker incident took hold. One of the key elements in the standard story is the decree legalizing slavery. It was a momentous decision that caught everyone's attention: it shocked Nicaraguans, alarmed neighboring countries and helped to shape the international image of Walker. As with many of Walker's decisions, it was the product of political necessity when he was eager to consolidate his project and Central American troops were getting ready to challenge him. Gobat's discussion seeks to explain the contradiction between his argument that the filibuster's ideological roots were liberal and that he opposed slavery and the highly visible blot of the existence of the decree. He explains the decision as a calculated move. Walker thought that the U.S. would not want to annex another slave state. Moreover, southern states would be more inclined to buy bonds from a Nicaragua that accepted slavery. But in the end, the author emphasizes, Walker did not take any steps to revive the odious institution.

Walker's long-term reputation was not only damaged by the slavery decree but also by racial conflicts that were unleashed when his regime was in its last throes. If there is any truth to the idea that he felt that "it was necessary to reestablish slavery, since workers of inferior races required a white master to direct their energies," it belongs to the last few months of the invasion, particularly after the destruction of the city of Granada.

The discussion of the slavery decree and of its political implications in the context of pre-Civil War debates in the U.S. is particularly interesting, but I personally find it difficult to minimize the importance of the decree and what the project turned into during the last few months. Consider the chronology. The period of relatively benevolent state building lasted six months, from April to September 1856. After the battle of San Jacinto in September (the same month of the decree) a significant amount of filibuster energy was devoted to the war against the Central American allies. Walker did have liberal inclinations and followers, but he also was an unscrupulous politician willing to do anything to stay in power, be it making pacts with the Catholic Church or populist caudillos or legalizing slavery. If he did not take any steps to make the decree operational when he was fully immersed in the war, it is quite feasible that he would have done so had it been necessary to consolidate his power. We will never know.

There are many reasons why the memory of the filibuster expedition completely left out the widespread local support enjoyed by the invaders. As mentioned above, the Walker episode has been the ultimate cautionary tale to warn against American imperialism. Unfortunately, it has been necessary to enlist the service of the story on numerous occasions and, quite frankly, the more simplistic the story the better it fits in a bumper sticker. A second reason for the simplistic account is that standard histories are full of silences; the voices of the rank and file have not been heard, and many of the actors essential to understanding this drama have been kept invisible by generations of historians because of their gender, ethnicity or class.

There is another very important reason that, although conceptual, also has practical implications. The resources required to write this kind of history are seldom available to historians in Central America, the place where this event has received the most attention. It is abundantly clear that the subject matter requires scholars to go beyond the perspective of national history. It demands a thorough understanding of how political processes in the United States and Europe had an impact on Nicaragua. To put the story in the proper perspective requires a good knowledge of U.S. and European history, and the time and institutional support to visit multiple archives. Following the tradition of his mentor Friedrich Katz, the author was not satisfied until he visited archives across the continents. He did research in Central and North America and in Europe, using sources in English, Spanish, and German. It was worth the effort. Michel Gobat's book is an extraordinary achievement that forces us to revise not only one important episode but also how we frame the history of Central America in the context of global processes.

Review by Robert E. May, Purdue University, Professor Emeritus of History

Since the mid-twentieth century, historians and social scientists have debunked many myths of American exceptionalism, including stereotypes of U.S. innocence in foreign affairs. In this spirit, today's consensus argues the "inappropriateness" of distinguishing between European imperialism and American expansionism.[1] Few modern scholars would endorse Frederick Merk's categorical assessment that "imperialist doctrines were never true expressions of the [American] national spirit."[2]

Intriguingly, the book under review straddles the gap between old and new approaches to American expansionism. Michel Gobat's *Empire by Invitation: William Walker and Manifest Destiny in Central America* posits one of antebellum America's most notoriously sordid chapters—the U.S. 'filibuster' William Walker's conquest of Nicaragua and short-lived presidency there in the mid-1850s—within the contexts of *both* liberal imperialism and Jeffersonian mission, putting a more positive spin on it than readers familiar with the story would likely expect.

Though U.S. public memory is amnesiac regarding Walker despite his nearly worldwide fame in his own time, his Nicaraguan intervention resonates broadly in modern Latin America, where there are monuments, holidays, markers and other remembrances attesting to his impact. In underscoring his subject's significance, Gobat notes that Walker's filibusters were the first U.S. citizens to seize a state beyond their own continent in pursuit of empire overseas; that his war against hostile Central American states between the fall of 1856 and the following spring took the most U.S. lives of any international action involving American soldiers between 1846 and 1898; and that Walker's intervention wound up exacerbating the North-South tensions that were leading to the American Civil War. Still, Walker's ruthlessness in the late stages of his Nicaraguan presidency and his aspirations to convert Central America into a personal empire explain why the filibuster is best remembered there. Ultimately, his takeover of Nicaragua unleashed such a backlash in Central America and even South America as to inspire the very concept of *Latin* America as an oppositional, unifying anti-U.S. regional identity. By the time one puts down this analysis of one of the most enigmatic figures in American history, it is clear why Latin Americans cannot forget him and why *Norteamericanos* should not forget him.

Gobat's retelling of Walker's story is determinedly revisionist in many minor ways (e.g. by downplaying the usual emphasis on the American steamship magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt's role in Walker's downfall) and three major ones.

First, Gobat reimagines Walker's takeover as a progressive, liberal playing out of manifest destiny's utopian dimension, cousinly to British designs in India, Henry Clay's American system, and early twentieth-century

[1] Ernest N. Paolino, *The Foundations of the American Empire: William Henry Seward and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), xi.

[2] Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 261. See, for instance, Richard W. Van Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960); Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2006); Walter Nugent, *Habits of Empire: A History of American* Expansion (New York: Knopf, 2008). A highly provocative essay on U. S. imperialism and exceptionalism with exhaustive commentary on the related historiography is Paul A. Kramer, "Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World," *American Historical Review* 116:5 (December 2011): 1348-1391.

U.S. dollar diplomacy. Drawing on Norwegian scholar Geir Lundestad's concept of "empire by invitation," Gobat argues the breadth rather than the limits of Walker's native support (7), and notes that although he sought to rule all Central Americans eventually, he resisted genocidal models of warfare against natives being applied in the U.S. West.

Walker would never have gone to Nicaragua, Gobat reminds us, had that country not been embroiled in destructive civil strife, inducing Liberal elite leaders in the city of León—who already considered the United States a progressive, prospering nation—to seek his assistance in their ongoing war with Conservatives, offering land as an incentive and hoping that the intervention of Americans would not only win their war but also eventuate in their nation's modernization and possibly its annexation to the United States. Just as telling, to Gobat, is Walker's initial appeal to liberal elements throughout Central America and his achievement in conciliating other Nicaraguan elements, which he accomplished through pragmatic policies like requiring his filibuster followers to seek Nicaraguan citizenship, by denying intentions of extinguishing Nicaraguan nationality by annexation to the U.S. (though his signals were mixed), by repressing aggression, looting, and intolerance by his followers against local civilians, and by ending military conscription. Liberal rural *caudillos* rallied to Walker, thinking he would respect their grip on the peasantry; Conservative elites in Granada, the city he made his capital, supported him because of the business opportunities his occupation presented like rising rents for their properties. Walker wisely courted the Catholic establishment of an overwhelmingly Catholic country, achieving such success that some clerics served as intermediaries in Walker's initiatives to conciliate restive Nicaraguan peasants. Further, Walker drew fervent backing from the poor mulatto neighborhood of San Felipe in León; and one of the most intriguing figures facilitating his rise to power was José María Valle, a radical-minded mulatto rural caudillo who was possibly illiterate. Walker's men facilitated his outreach to underclasses by mixing with poorer Nicaraguans at holiday celebrations, attending cockfights together, and by sexual unions with Nicaraguan women.

Many Nicaraguans rallied to Walker's domestic agenda for its employment and investment opportunities. He established a sizable bureaucracy that mostly employed native Nicaraguans, and his programs included improving health and education, and ambitious though mostly unfulfilled public works projects like converting Granada into a kind of "Nicaraguan 'Venice'" (196) by incorporating islands off its lakefront. By recruiting U.S. and European scientists, and importing machinery like sawmills, rotary pumps, and corn mills, Walker presaged the intellectual foundations of a later European imperialism based on the idea that doctors and engineers would spearhead western civilization.

To be sure, Walker had powerful enemies from the start, and he faltered in keeping his supporters' loyalty. His temperance reforms offended much of the citizenry. Local elite men resented filibusters competing with them for the attention of women. But it was only after the other Central American states went to war with him in the spring and summer of 1856 and his prospects worsened that he adopted his most radical legislation to—so to speak—reset the clock, and resorted to the authoritarianism and ruthlessness that gained him a place in infamy. His flawed election coup as Nicaraguan president, his democratizing the suffrage to solidify mass support, his making English the official language in property litigations, his confiscations of oligarchs' estates, and other policy shifts amounted to "an assault on elite power" in Nicaragua "that would not be replicated until the Sandinista Revolution of 1979-1990" (232). It was Walker's last months in power, additionally, that fully exposed the heretofore mostly repressed racialist and imperialist underpinnings of his regime, and witnessed his regime's most destructive and resented act—its torching of Granada.

Secondly, Gobat refutes presumptions that Walker's invasion can be reduced—as many contemporaries throughout the Atlantic World believed then and modern historians sometimes characterize it—to a bid by U.S. southern elites (the so-called slave power) to spread the South's coercive labor system southward, an argument deriving mostly from Walker's presidential decree in September 1856 making slavery legal. Gobat's Walker, though, harbored attitudes opposing slavery's extension; and his Nicaraguan movement marks an experiment in freesoilism rather than a plot to annex Nicaragua to the Union as a slave state. Revealingly, Gobat finds the filibuster's army was two-thirds non-southern, that Walker drew much support in the urban North, and that even some prominent members of Lincoln's Republican party and antislavery figures authored publications in his support and attended his rallies. Significantly, Walker waited until his power was waning to promulgate his slavery decree at all, another of his last-ditch policy shifts to save his rule (in this case to capture support in U.S. slave states that had previously been lukewarm to his cause). To Gobat, in short, Walker carried southward the very antebellum northern free labor capitalist system that competed with slavery, not slavery itself, and his decree amounted to a never implemented afterthought. It was only after he returned to the United States in 1857 that Walker became an outspoken convert to proslavery advocacy, presenting himself to the public as a champion of the South who would fully establish slavery in Nicaragua after he returned there, and promoting coerced labor in speeches and his autobiographical *The War in Nicaragua* (1860).

Third, Gobat modifies negative stereotypes that Walker's men, and implicitly other U.S. filibusters of the day, were footloose Anglo male criminals and plundering desperadoes at worst; at best, youthful, adventurous, unmarried self-destructive white fools. Rather, Gobat demonstrates that not only did Walker identify with the ethics of self-restraint and self-improvement characteristic of antebellum U.S. northern reform movements and Whiggery (he was himself a teetotaler), but also that his realm attracted a sizable cohort of respectable and often ideologically driven U.S. citizens and immigrants, including temperance proponents, labor and land activists, Protestant missionaries, socialists, racially egalitarian Cuban exiles, entire families seeking new starts, and even some Native Americans, Mexican Americans, and free U.S. blacks. European Forty-Eighters favoring "the global struggle that democrats were waging against aristocrats" served in his army, a significant number of them in officer capacities (127). Surprisingly, the average age of his army's men, twenty-six, was high; at the time American life expectancy was but forty-seven. A full one-fifth of all the filibusters had previously followed white-collar pursuits, and some had graduated from elite collegiate institutions.

Gobat's three themes are not as revolutionary as they may appear on first reading, partly because the author previewed many of his findings in his prior *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua Under U.S. Imperial Rule.*[3] Certainly many scholarly studies acknowledge the United States as a progressive model for newly-independent former Spanish colonies in Latin America in the first half of the nineteenth century. Virtually all Walker biographies and many related works recognize that Nicaraguan and other Central American liberals welcomed him to the region. Innumerable scholars of U.S. cultural history illuminate the significant support for filibusters, including Walker's Nicaraguan intervention, in U.S. northern urban centers in the 1850s, and note that Walker's proslavery turn came late in the game.

Rather, the truly exciting features of Gobat's study derive from its arresting biographical detail about Walker's soldiers, settlers, and Nicaraguan affiliates and its meticulous deconstruction of Walker's bureaucracy. Gobat

[3] Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua Under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

has ferreted out an awesome amount of detail about Walker's following, partly the result of an ambitious hunt for material in a miscellany of sources such as U.S. immigrant newspapers and municipal records in Nicaragua, and because he subjects Walker's newspaper organ in Nicaragua—*El Nicaraguense*– to intense scrutiny. Some twelve thousand settlers from the United States gravitated to Walker's Nicaragua while he held power, "one of the largest-ever overseas exoduses of U.S. colonists" (8). In illuminating this emigration, Gobat, in some cases, introduces figures virtually unknown in the prior literature; in others, he enriches greatly what is already known. Here we familiarize ourselves, as a sampling, with Israel Moses, the Jewish graduate of an elite medical school known for pushing sanitary reforms during his U.S. army career before casting his fate with Walker's movement; Carlos Thomas, the wealthy Jamaican of African descent involved in Nicaragua's cacao and hide trade, who controlled state finances as Walker's treasurer general; Ida Altman, the immigrant wife of a Galveston butcher who emigrated with him to Nicaragua and had a baby a month before Walker's surrender; and the Methodist minister Israel Diehl, who founded a chapter of the Sons of Temperance while in Walker's Nicaragua.

Far from being the sham its detractors claimed, Walker's government had the trappings of a legitimate state (e.g. official stationary and flag), and its four ministries of Public Credit, Finance, Foreign Relations, and War operated independently of his military establishment. Not only did native officials dominate his ministries, but they also held many police and sheriff positions in rural areas. Walker enabled the hiring of bilingual officials and translators to bridge the culture gap between his U.S. recruits and settlers and Nicaragua's Spanish-speaking citizenry. Most important, until Walker's regime began unraveling, his government operated at high efficiency, though it sometimes relaxed tax collections to avoid alienating peasants. In impressive detail, Gobat shows how Walker's officials navigated courts and municipal councils throughout the country, and rebuts stereotypes that Walker's authority was confined to his capital. Especially original is chapter 7, which details how Walker's officials implemented his goals of improving coffee production and sales abroad, improving the interoceanic transit route, developing public infrastructure (e.g. aqueducts and public markets) and a national banking system, increasing domestic production of foodstuffs to minimize imports, and bettering public hygiene. A German engineer, one Maximilian von Sonnenstern, directed the most thorough surveys of western Nicaragua that had been made to that point to advance Walker's development and colonization projects, delineating geographic features, vegetation, population totals, and much more.

I have no significant reservations about this rich work, other than to suggest that the jury is still out on Walker's committed opposition to slavery's expansion prior to arriving in Central America. Walker rarely expressed his innermost thoughts in his scant surviving correspondence, and most of Gobat's case is based on circumstantial evidence, like the employment of paid free black servants rather than slaves in Walker's childhood home in Nashville, Tennessee; the fact that much of his young adulthood was spent in nonsouthern places like Philadelphia and Paris, France; and that the *New Orleans Crescent*, of which he became part owner in 1849, published editorials against agitation for slavery's spread. One could just as easily make a case that Walker *favored* the extension of slavery, given that during his prior invasion of Mexico in 1853-1854, he adopted Louisiana's Civil Code for the short-lived "Republic of Lower California" he initiated in Baja California, making slavery legal in that domain (Gobat dismisses this as immaterial). Worth mulling over is a letter in John Quitman's papers at Harvard University. Between 1853 and 1855, Quitman, a hero in the U.S.-Mexican War and former Mississippi governor, organized (but never initiated) what would have been the most blatantly proslavery filibuster to that time—an attempt to preempt Spain's rumored intention to abolish slavery in its Cuban colony, and subsequently to annex Cuba to the United States as one or more slave states. In the letter in question, William Walker's brother Norvell (who later served as an officer in

Walker's Nicaraguan army) wrote Quitman about recruitment in Nashville and announced that he was "ready to go at a moment's warning" on Quitman's expedition.[4] Guilt by association, in other words, works both ways.

Empire by Invitation deserves the widest readership. This is a penetrating, wonderfully written, extremely thorough and thoughtful, and logically organized transnational study of Walker's rise and fall, grounded in Gobat's firm grasp of prior historiography about both U.S. and Central American history in the mid-nineteenth century. Maps, thoughtfully selected images with superb captions, and an index that other scholars would be well advised to emulate, further enhance this important work. Our thinking on William Walker and his short-lived Central American empire will never be the same.

[4] Joseph A. Stout, Jr., *Schemers & Dreamers: Filibustering in Mexico, 1848-1921* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2002), 35; Robert E. May, *John A. Quitman: Old South Crusader* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 270-295; L. Norvell Walker to John A. Quitman, 20 March 1855, John Anthony Quitman Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Review by Aims McGuinness, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

This deeply researched book will transform historians' understanding of an important episode in the history not just of Central America or the United States but the larger history of empire in the modern world. The late 1840s and 1850s witnessed a complex struggle for control of overland communication routes across the Americas. The precipitants of this struggle included the U.S.-Mexico War and the California Gold Rush, which dramatically increased demand for fast, reliable communication to and from Alta California. The rush of different peoples toward the goldfields helped to reignite older dreams of emporia, canals, railroads, and other transit-related schemes in places as disparate as Bogotá, Panama City, San José (Costa Rica), Granada (Nicaragua), Mexico City, Washington, D.C., Paris, and London. Who would operate and profit from existing or potential arteries of interoceanic communication? Who would rule these routes of global importance, and how would they be governed?

These questions were debated with special intensity in Nicaragua and also in Panama, which in the mid-1800s formed an integral part of Nueva Granada (latter-day Colombia). In the early 1850s, the "Nicaragua Route" and the "Panama Route" functioned as competing transport systems, both of which offered the possibility of relatively fast communication between the eastern portion of the United States and California through a combination of steamship travel and an isthmian shortcut.[1] In January 1855, the completion of a railroad across Panama by the New York City-based Panama Railroad Company (PRC) gave the Panama Route a crucial edge over competitors in Nicaragua. Warfare in Nicaragua and Costa Rica in the mid-1850s would further contribute to the dominance of the Panama Route.

National histories of the United States long portrayed U.S. expansionist projects in the 1850s as a kind of quixotic anticlimax to Manifest Destiny or as a sideshow to the coming of the U.S. Civil War. Not surprisingly, struggles over filibustering have figured much more centrally in the historiographies of Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, and other nations in the region, where the events of the 1850s have been generally seen not as the tail end of Manifest Destiny but as early battles in a longer, ongoing struggle against U.S. imperialism.[2]

Historians of the United States now have a much fuller understanding of the significance of filibustering for the history of U.S. empire thanks to the work of Robert May and other scholars, including Amy Greenberg and Walter Johnson, who have explored the connections between Walker and other filibusters to the history of slavery, the U.S. South, and the broader politics of gender and race.[3] Historians of Central America have

[1] See John Haskell Kemble, *The Panama Route, 1848-1869* (1943; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993) and David I. Folkman, *The Nicaragua Route* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1972).

[2] I compare these different historiographic framings in Aims McGuinness, *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 4-15, 184-186.

[3] Robert May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973) and *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Amy Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

also greatly enriched our understanding of filibustering in recent years by showing us how the war against Walker fit into larger, regional debates over liberalism, the state, empire, and population.[4]

Empire by Invitation succeeds in bringing these different historiographies into fruitful conversation while at the same time challenging some of their most important assumptions. Michel Gobat's multilingual odyssey through archives located not just in Latin America and the United States but also Europe has given us a much more nuanced and accurate view of the heterogeneous group of people who were drawn to join Walker in Nicaragua. Although Gobat acknowledges that Walker enjoyed some support from pro-slavery forces in the United States, he finds that most of Walker's early followers were Northerners and proponents of free labor. Figures such as Sarah Pellet, a reformer from Massachusetts and a graduate of Oberlin College, imagined themselves to be engaged in a project of moral uplift that would ultimately liberate rather than enslave Nicaraguans. (125) His recovery of the liberal and fundamentally paternalistic impulses that also shaped filibustering is one of the book's most important contributions.

Gobat's scholarship also complicates received understandings of support for Walker among Nicaraguans and other Central Americans. The existence of local support for Walker is not, in itself, a revelation. But Gobat's expansive research in local archives and his innovative use of digitized newspapers have enabled him to provide a far fuller picture of the range and depth of Walker's support not just among elites but also popular groups. Particularly fascinating is Gobat's portrait of José María Valle, a key supporter of Walker's early campaigns in Nicaragua who was feared by local elites as a "communist" and looked for inspiration to the *sans-culottes* of the French Revolution. (63)

One beneficiary in the war against Walker was the Panama Route, which largely displaced the Nicaragua Route after 1856 and continued to function as a crucial commercial artery between California and the eastern seaboard of the United States until 1869. As I have argued elsewhere, the commercial empire forged by the PRC and its allies in Panama in the early 1850s would be more indicative of the future of U.S. imperial projects in the region than Walker's filibustering expeditions. Rather conquering territory or recruiting settlers from the United States or Europe, the officials of the PRC and their allies focused primarily on conquering flows of capital, people, and information.[5] The transformations wrought by the PRC in the 1850s created important elements of the physical, economic, and political infrastructure that enabled key events in a later era of U.S. empire, including the separation of Panama from Colombia in 1903 and the U.S. building of the Panama Canal (1904-1914).

Yet I also agree heartily with Gobat's argument that Walker should be seen as presaging later imperial projects, especially manifestations of liberal imperialism, with its promises of uplift and freedom. Walker's reign in Nicaragua was brief, but its consequences continue to reverberate in the present. As Gobat argued in

[4] See, for example, Victor H. Acuña Ortega, *Centroamérica: filibusteros, estados, imperios y memorias* (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 2014), Iván Molina Jiménez, *La cicatriz gloriosa: Estudios y debates sobre la Campaña Nacional: Costa Rica (1856-1857*) (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 2014), and the contributions to Victor H. Acuña Ortega, ed., *Simposio internacional filibusterismo y Destino Manifiesto en las Américas* (Liberia, Costa Rica: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2010).

[5] McGuinness, *Path of Empire*, 188.

an earlier article, and as he reminds us again in *Empire by Invitation,* the very geopolitical category of 'Latin America' is importantly rooted in contests in the mid-1850s over filibustering in Nicaragua and other aspects of U.S. imperial expansion.[6] Gobat's careful analysis of the tensions and contradictions among Walker's sources of support reminds us that we need to be wary about creating anachronistic distinctions among different forms or varieties of empire, liberal or otherwise. Certainly, Walker's own inconsistencies seem to have posed little or no obstacle to him as he set about sowing seeds of destruction. Gobat's book is not just a landmark in scholarship on William Walker or Manifest Destiny. It is also a powerful reminder to remain on guard for the perils of imperialism in any form, however erratic, opportunistic, or muddled they may seem.

[6] Michel Gobat, "The Invention of Latin America: A Transnational History of Anti-Imperialism, Democracy, and Race," *American Historical Review*, 118, no. 5 (2013): 1345-1357.

Review by Tim Roberts, Western Illinois University

Empire by Invitation is ironic in its gesture to the exceptional nature of American imperialism. The premise of the book's title was an invitation extended by the Liberal Party of Nicaragua to the filibuster William Walker to help them in a civil war against the country's conservative oligarchs. The scholar Geir Lundestad coined the phrase "empire by invitation" to describe the expansion of American influence after World War II. Focused on the American relationship with Western Europe from 1945 to 1952, Lundestad argued that American imperialism differed from its Soviet counterpart, because Americans had an "arsenal of diverse instruments."[1] Western Europeans invited Americans to develop the continent both militarily and economically, in accordance with the will of local populations. Lundestad's work affirmed the uniqueness of American power; it was different from Russia's, which relied merely on force. Because of its exercise through indirect means, American power, for Lundestad, also was different from the colonial rule of the Great Powers in European history.

Gobat's title's implication probably overstates how much Walker's decision to claim and remake Nicaragua depended on this odd Nicaraguan invitation for "Americanization," à la Lundestad's Cold War study (13). While the book is not a comparative study, it emphasizes that Walker's attempt to build a liberal state in Central America, committed to local government, free trade, and equality among settlers, probably resembled European settler colonial projects in Africa and India.[2] Some pro-expansion newspapers and policy-makers spoke of Nicaragua as America's "Indian empire," referring to British India, then under the authority of the East India Company (151, 284). Thus, *Empire by Invitation* seeks to overturn, not reassert, American exceptionalism during the 1850s, as well as illuminate the contributions of Americans to liberal empire-building in the world before 1898.

Gobat's exploration of the origins, entrenchment, and demise of Walker's Nicaragua also helps us think about his short-lived regime in the context of Americans' global engagements through the nineteenth century - although in the end his regime still seems to be an anomaly. The closest parallel was likely the Texas colony of Stephen Austin. Austin, like Walker, was a white racist and recruiter who was initially welcomed by Hispanic authorities who were enthusiastic about the prospect of American-style economic development and law and order. But of course Nicaragua was disconnected from North America, and was not annexed by military conquest, distinguishing it from Texas and the rest of Northern Mexico, as well as Spain's Caribbean and Asian colonies that became overseas U.S. possessions in 1898. Likewise, Walker's Nicaragua can only partly be understood in the context of other far-flung destinations of American emigrants and expatriates of the day, ranging from Mormon Utah, to the freed people's colony of Liberia, to Canton and other Chinese port cities. These expatriate communities, shaped by ambitious, imaginative leaders like Walker—architect of Mormon Utah Brigham Young, first president of the Liberian republic Joseph Jenkins Roberts, China trade pioneer Thomas Perkins—similarly attracted refugees, merchants, and missionaries by offering opportunities for liberty and the pursuit of happiness that was denied them, for various reasons, within settled American

[1] Geir Lundestad, "Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952," *Journal of Peace Research* 23 (Sep**tember** 1986), 263-**2**77, at 263.

[2] Jennifer Pitts, *Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Matthew Fitzpatrick, *Liberal Imperialism in Germany: Expansionism and Nationalism, 1848-1884* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008).

borders. But these groups established their respective sovereign spaces because there was no effective local political or military opposition to them, and indeed, in Liberia and China, the British Empire practically endorsed their presence. Walker's regime, contrarily, was quickly driven out by Nicaragua's neighbors who were fearful of his capacity to expand his rule and exterminate them. British imperialists, who considered Walker a competitor in Latin America, did not rescue him from execution in 1860.

Perhaps the most important argument of *Empire by Invitation* for scholars of the coming of the U.S. Civil War is that Walker's position on slavery in Nicaragua was inconsistent, and more calculated than ideological. Of course, in the 1850s, once favorable westward expansion was jeopardized, many proslavery leaders looked to the Caribbean to acquire new space for the institution. Several developments have persuaded scholars to consider Walker a tacit agent of the slave states' control of Central America, a sort of overseas border ruffian bent on offshore expansion.[3] Democratic newspapers and Walker's emissary Augustín Vijil, a liberal Catholic priest, persuaded President Franklin Pierce to grant U.S. recognition to Nicaragua in May 1856, an act that abolitionists feared would be followed by its annexation as a slave state. In Gold Rush California, where Walker apparently got the idea to build a new country in Nicaragua, he witnessed an explosion of settlers who were free to shape the new state largely without government direction; he thus embraced settler vigilantism. Under siege by Costa Rican, Guatemalan, Salvadoran, and Honduran forces in September 1856, Walker decreed the enslavement of native, but not Anglo, criminals and vagrants, and rescinded Nicaragua's earlier abolition law. Walker declared himself for slavery in an 1860 memoir.

Meanwhile, as a celebrity of the pro-expansionist Young American movement in the era of Manifest Destiny, literary scholars have portrayed Walker as a disciple of John O'Sullivan.[4] In 1845 O'Sullivan had famously argued that national expansion would drain the American slave population from the East towards the Southwest, where blacks could be assimilated among the "Spanish-Indian-American populations of Mexico, Central America and South America…[t]hemselves already of mixed and confused blood."[5] In this light, Walker could be considered like the Venezuelan filibuster Narciso López, who, as shown in a study by Tom Chaffin, enjoyed not only southern but also broad northern support for his attempts to liberate Cuba.[6]

Yet while López's support for American slavery's southward move was genuine, Walker's California experience, as Gobat reveals, had shown him the advantage in recruiting antislavery, free soil settlers to Nicaragua. This was a policy that attracted a diverse religious and ethnic population of over twelve thousand, including several hundred women. Settlers sought homesteads and many were committed to 'civilizing' native peoples through techniques learned in the antebellum North - the Second Great Awakening and the American System (9). Walker's government, staffed by Anglo, Nicaraguan, and European officials interested

[3] For example, Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016); Elizabeth Varon, *Disunion!: The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789-1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

[4] An example is Brady Harrison, *Agent of Empire: William Walker and the Imperial Self in American Literature* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004).

[5] John O'Sullivan, "Annexation," *United States Democratic Review* 17 (July 1845), 5-10, at 7.

[6] Tom Chaffin, *Fatal Glory: Narciso López and the First Clandestine U.S. War Against Cuba* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2003).

in state-building and reform, undertook land surveys and laid plans for infrastructure development that would have made the Old Whig Henry Clay proud. Gobat renders Walker more a progressive than a pirate.

Moreover, unlike the founders of both previous and future U.S. territories, Walker sought only U.S. recognition, not annexation. Gobat somewhat mysteriously asserts that Walker was skeptical of annexation because of the history of the federal government's "authoritarian" rule in territories (145). Surely, from the experimental organization of Louisiana through the conflicts of Kansas and Nebraska, Washington policy-makers generally had given territorial residents broad authority to create school systems, develop domestic laws and militias, and, in the Kansas-Nebraska Act, even to accept or reject slavery, according to local preferences. These were aspects of American governance that liberal Nicaraguans admired.

Gobat is on firmer ground in explaining Walker's opposition to annexation as a function of his ambition to take Central America as a whole, not merely Nicaragua. Such a scheme would have been less realistic if Nicaragua had become a U.S. territory with Walker as its governor, subject to the equivocations of more careful American policy-makers. A united Isthmian state from Guatemala to Panama was more feasible under independence and as more settlers arrived as a result of President Pierce's recognition. Likewise, Walker's authorization of slavery, which reversed his original antislavery position, was pragmatic rather than a revelation of his true intentions. His position on slavery had seemingly been determined by what he deemed likely to head off annexation talk, attract the most investment capital, and, once Nicaragua was invaded, most quickly recruit reliable soldiers.

In short, if William Walker was an agent of Manifest Destiny, *Empire by Invitation* will challenge scholars to revisit the meaning of that fundamental concept in early American foreign relations.

Author's Response by Michel Gobat, University of Pittsburgh

I would like to thank Tom Maddux for organizing this roundtable and the four reviewers for their very generous and thoughtful comments. As the respondents note, the book reframes the William Walker episode as an early moment of U.S. liberal imperialism and situates the episode in larger global processes while stressing the role played by Walker's multinational group of followers. The reviewers also point to important issues that I had not fully considered and I am grateful for this opportunity to further the conversation along those lines. Given H-Diplo's readership, I would like to use their comments to consider three clusters of questions concerning antebellum expansion by sea that scholars might want to address in future research.

The first set of questions involves the role of free soilism in the spread of Manifest Destiny abroad. Scholars generally associate this antislavery doctrine with land-bound, not maritime, expansion. Yet free soilism did undergird Walker's enterprise in Central America, thus suggesting that we might further consider its overseas dimensions. In questioning the depth of Walker's own free soilism, Robert May rightly notes that this issue is unlikely to be resolved. Still, his comment (and that of Tim Roberts) about Walker's prior experience in Gold Rush California made me wonder about an issue that remains little explored: the extent to which California's settler boom strengthened the link between free soilism and overseas expansion. Indeed, it is remarkable that many of Walker's free-soil followers had arrived from San Francisco, while countless other Gold Rushers who stayed put shared his vision of an independent free-soil empire that would stretch from California to Central America. Should we thus view the U.S. conquest of California not so much as the endpoint of settler colonialism made under a free-soil banner than as a stepping stone towards the southern hemisphere?

If so, to what extent was this new phase of free-soil expansion cut short by Walker's decree relegalizing slavery? In *Empire by Invitation*, I invoked the example of Republican Congressman Eli Thayer of Massachusetts and 'Bleeding Kansas' fame to argue that Walker's defeat hardly dissuaded free soilers from seeking to establish white-led settler colonies elsewhere in Latin America; my hunch was that the Civil War put an end to this maritime form of U.S. settler colonialism. Yet Héctor Lindo-Fuentes's commentary raises the question of whether Walker's proslavery decree curbed free soilism by sea to a greater extent than I had imagined. Unfortunately, scarce records make it difficult to assess how the free-soil views of Walker's colonists were affected by the fact that the group settled in a tropical region where they were vastly outnumbered by people of color. It is certainly possible, as Walker's 1860 book implies, that their encounter with the Central American masses turned them into pro-slavery advocates. But most available sources indicate that Walker's colonists tended to dismiss his decree as a desperate ploy to obtain aid from wealthy U.S. Southerners (regarding Lindo-Fuentes's question as to whether Walker would have implemented the decree had his regime survived the war, I suspect that this would not have happened, especially since his rule hinged on the support of anti-slavery Nicaraguans). Still, a more in-depth study of how free soilers in the United States responded to Walker's proslavery decree—and the violent demise of his regime—could help illuminate whether the disastrous outcome of Manifest Destiny in Central America had a greater impact on free soilism than has commonly been thought.

This brings me to a second cluster of questions that concerns a broader framing for the history of Manifest Destiny. As Tim Roberts notes, *Empire by Invitation* "seeks to overturn, rather than reassert, American exceptionalism during the 1850s" by stressing the similarities between Walker's enterprise and those of contemporary European settler colonial projects in Africa and Asia. Yet Roberts rightly states that Walker's polity can also be situated "in the context of other far-flung destinations of American emigrants and

expatriates of the day, ranging from Mormon Utah, to the freed people's colony of Liberia, to Canton and other Chinese port cities." While Walker's regime may indeed have engendered greater local and international opposition, all such settlements did attract U.S. emigrants by offering, as Roberts puts it, "opportunities for liberty and the pursuit of happiness that was denied them, for various reasons, within settled American borders." Since these ideals underpinned Manifest Destiny, there is something to be said for incorporating Walker's ephemeral polity, Roberts's "expatriate communities," and perhaps also the commercial empires mentioned by Aims McGuinness into a single analytical frame. Such a framework would undoubtedly help us better grasp Manifest Destiny's global dimensions.

But it would also illuminate the critical role of non-state actors in antebellum expansion. While this issue has been usually studied in the context of westward expansion, scholars such as May and McGuinness have shown how non-state actors helped take Manifest Destiny abroad. Among the few studies that have linked these disparate cases, perhaps the most notable are May's *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, which focuses on U.S. filibustering in Mexico and the Caribbean Basin, and Amy Greenberg's *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire*, which considers the same group of filibusters as well as travelers to Central America and missionaries in Hawaii.[1] Yet as Roberts and McGuinness stress, there were also other non-state actors who spread Manifest Destiny to all corners of the world. In fact, my sense is that antebellum expansion by sea seems to have been driven far more by such actors than the U.S. state itself. How, then, were these non-state enterprises related to each other? Did most of them promote liberal ideals that clashed with the proslavery bent of antebellum foreign policy?[2] If so, could these cases be examined within a framework of liberal imperialism? If nothing else, they open up new questions about the "myth of the 'weak' American State" and the emergence of the United States as a global power.[3]

The final cluster of questions relates to the impact of Manifest Destiny on foreign societies. Roberts is right to point out that, in the context of antebellum Americans' global engagements, the Walker regime was an anomaly. Still, the Nicaraguan embrace of his imperial designs was not necessarily odd. As I show elsewhere, liberals throughout Latin America had long maintained a favorable view of U.S. expansion, believing that it involved the spread of U.S. entrepreneurialism, technology, and democracy.[4] And as Lindo-Fuentes underscores, these pro-annexationist Latin Americans cannot be reduced to the oligarchic sellouts so loudly vilified by proponents of Dependency Theory. After all, the Liberal leaders of León who invited Walker were

[1] Robert May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Amy Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[2] On the latter, see Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

[3] "AHR Exchange: On the 'Myth' of the 'Weak' American State," *American Historical Review* 115:3 (2010): 766-800.

[4] Michel Gobat, "Invention of Latin America: A Transnational History of Anti-Imperialism, Democracy, and Race," *American Historical Review* 1189:5 (2013): 1352-1353.

mainly upwardly mobile mulattoes of humble origins battling entrenched oligarchs in order to forge a socially and racially more inclusive state.

A rosy view of Manifest Destiny certainly compelled radical mulattoes such as the 'communist' José Maria Valle to embrace Walker's imperial project. But as Lindo-Fuentes and May stress, this embrace was also rooted in Nicaraguans' previous encounters with U.S. agents of Manifest Destiny. And such agents came in the form of not only Gold Rushers but also African American followers of the era's leading black emigrationist Martin Delany who sought to forge their own 'empire of liberty' on Nicaragua's Caribbean coast in the early 1850s. These distinct encounters raise questions about how other foreign societies experienced antebellum expansion by sea. Various studies, including McGuinness's *Path of Empire*, have shown how such incursions engendered powerful anti-U.S. sentiments.[5] Yet the opposite was also true. Moreover, Americanization could coexist in a tense relationship with anti-Americanism, as when Nicaraguan elites of the post-Walker era adopted U.S. political, economic, and cultural forms to defend their country against future filibuster invasions. Clearly, we need more studies that illuminate the wide range of non-U.S. responses to Manifest Destiny.

And here, too, it would be helpful to situate these encounters in a global context. Such a framework would surely challenge longstanding views that the anti-Americanism of the era reflected little more than the opposition of conservative European elites to the liberal model represented by the United States. But it would also help us better understand how the overseas impact of antebellum expansion compared with that of European liberal imperialism. As Lindo-Fuentes notes, Americanization in Nicaragua subverted the social order even before Walker's arrival—a process that only deepened once Walker carried out his 'revolution' with the help of local radicals such as Valle. How typical, then, was this challenge to the old order? Are there enough examples to suggest that Manifest Destiny abroad proved more subversive than the 'civilizing mission' of European powers? To be sure, Odd Arne Westad has argued that antebellum society "formed its main images of the world beyond Europe" through the institution of slavery.[6] Yet this hardly means that the world viewed Manifest Destiny through the same lens. Why else, then, did so many Latin American officials of the era join their European counterparts in denouncing U.S. filibuster invasions made in the name of democracy?

In sum, a greater focus on antebellum expansion by sea seems to caution us against going too far in overturning the exceptional nature of Manifest Destiny. There may be thus some merit in trying to straddle, as May puts it, "the gap between old and new approaches to American expansionism." Taking Manifest Destiny's utopian impulse seriously does not necessarily turn us into imperial apologists. On the contrary, it might help us better grasp the perils marking past—and present—U.S. efforts to impose "its great experiment of liberty" on other peoples.[7]

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[5] Aims McGuinness, *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

[6] Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 21.

[7] The quotation is from the December 27, 1845 issue of John O'Sullivan's *New York Morning News*. While O'Sullivan is commonly viewed to have coined the term *Manifest Destiny*, Linda Hudson has argued that it was

conceived by his associate Jane Storm (aka Cora Montgomery), who later became an ardent supporter of Walker; see Linda Hudson, *Mistress of Manifest Destiny: A Biography of Jane McManus Storm Cazneau, 1807-1878* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2001).