

Staging American Rebellion  
Université Toulouse-Jean Jaurès  
17-18 March 2022

After organizing several *Staging America* conferences bearing exclusively on United States issues, we now favor a trans-American North/South perspective. We also intend to engage in interdisciplinary exchanges, welcoming specialists of history, anthropology, literature, image semiotics cinema, theater, among others. Indeed, the notion of “staging” at the origin of our discussions is not limited to drama studies and considers any mode of representation using dramatization methods in the broad sense of the word.

The next conference, which will be hosted at the Université Toulouse-Jean Jaurès, on March 17-18, 2022, will question the notion of “rebellion” and its polysemy in the American context involving notions of “insurrection”, “upheaval”, “dissidence”, “disobedience”, “insubordination”, and even “revolution”. We will define the forces involved, but also the forms taken by these struggles, crises, resistances, as well as their stakes, in the fields of history, societies, and fiction. It is also important, while considering the violence these movements generate, to take into account one of its main drives: desire (for freedom, for protest, for agency, for power, for justice).

Rebellion has been inherent in the history of the United States since the early age of colonization. Taken in the sense of revolt, indiscipline, insubordination to a regime or an institution, opposition to public authorities considered as abusive (be it the state, power, the established order), rebellion is even written in its declaration of independence which proclaims the institutional right to overthrow an abusive government. Early national history was marked by popular rebellions against the federal government everywhere in the new nation. As for slaves, they fought, through several rebellions, against the institution that had subjugated them, inscribing defiance against the established order in 19<sup>th</sup>-century US history.

The trajectory of the whole of the Americas follows the same logic of defiance: from the Haitian Revolution, which was the result of a massive slave rebellion, to the Indian rebellions that marked the first centuries of colonization, to the Latin-American independences, the whole continent was marked by popular movements of all kinds against what represented power.

The 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries are no exception to the rule. From the many movements against the federal government to civil rights movements, populist upheavals, and contemporary mobilizations (Tea Party, Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, etc.), the United States has kept its rebellious tradition. In Latin America and in the Caribbean, the word “revolution” was, at times, preferred to that of rebellion to characterize the popular movements that sometimes brought to power social groups defending the interests of the “proletariat” or of “peasantry” (farmers, Indigenous peoples, inhabitants of the *favelas*). Such was the case of the 1910 Mexican Revolution, of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, or the 1979 revolution in Nicaragua. From a more global perspective, these “rebellions” have highlighted the confrontation, on the whole continent, of ideological forces and corpuses, sometimes endogenous, often with an international scope, as was the case during the Cold War.

The narrative of these events has been, in many cases, the foundation of an imaginary that prevails on the continent. Prose, as well as verse, have taken over from testimonies and reports to represent the heroes whose invented or real biographies can feed the chronicles and utopias of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, across national borders.. This is the case, for instance, of iconic

figures like Emiliano Zapata, Evita Perón, Martin Luther King, Jr., Che Guevarra, or Rosie the Riveter, and their fictional avatars.

Special attention to original art forms (slogans, graffiti, political catchphrases, photographs, banners, posters, etc.) is encouraged, as well as an inventory of forms that are constantly being renewed. It will also be interesting to consider historical and historiographical ways of staging rebellions, as well as their representations in popular culture that often metaphorically scenarizes American rebellion (for instance in the Star Wars series, to cite only one example).

Although the list is far from exhaustive, the following themes can be considered:

- **Rebellion and power**
- **Rebellion and revolution**
- **Rebellion and memory**
- **Representations of rebellion**
- **Rebellion and aesthetic**

Short bibliography:

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Dunbar-Ortiz Roxanne, *Contre-histoire des États-Unis*, Paris, Ed. Wildproject, 2018.

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Young, Ralph, *Dissent: The History of an American Idea*, New York, New York University Press, 2015.

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**Conference paper proposals should be sent by November 15, 2021** at the latest, to Nathalie Dessens ([nathalie.dessens@univ-tlse2.fr](mailto:nathalie.dessens@univ-tlse2.fr)), Émeline Jouve ([emeline.jouve@univ-tlse2.fr](mailto:emeline.jouve@univ-tlse2.fr)), Modesta Suárez ([modesta.suarez@univ-tlse2.fr](mailto:modesta.suarez@univ-tlse2.fr)) and Anne Stefani ([anne.stefani@univ-tlse2.fr](mailto:anne.stefani@univ-tlse2.fr)).

They should include: a) **an abstract** (4,000 characters maximum); b) **short biographical sketch**

**Official languages:** French, English and Spanish.