

American Icons

As leaders in the political, intellectual or sports fields, as men or women, as historical or fictional characters, American emblematic figures can't be said to be rare. Because they were at the vanguard of major social upsettings, because they thrilled thousands of spectators in theatres and stadiums, because they fascinated some more thousands on television and in comic books, because their lives were exceptional or because they serve as collective embossing tools, because their trajectory or their tragic ending gave birth to a hero-worship, these figures are present in collective memories in such a way that they have reached the status of icons. As symbols of national histories and social struggles, these icons contribute to collective identification. In that sense, they gather individuals towards systems of values and shared representations.

For a long time, literature, comic books, paintings and also the press have been powerful means for those icons to arise. Fiction and reality have often crisscrossed, and some of their stories have been revisited in movies that gave rise to divergent analyses. For we shall not deceive ourselves: those icons rarely are consensual. The debates on their legitimacy, often violent, show us the divisions of American societies, which in turn can account for the complexity of holding a dialogue about them. Then, the acceptance or rejection of an icon becomes an issue of identity construction, and finds itself at the core of ideological quarrels. The word "icon" is, furthermore, a polysemous notion that can lead to a diversity of interpretations. This is the reason why these unique characters can be analyzed through a great diversity of scopes: from the transnational figure conveying universal values to the local hero whose fame is limited to the closed territory in which its singular history was built up.

For its 8th issue, RITA wishes to address these real or fictional American Icons, tackling them in their great diversity and, most of all, showing the appropriation and interpretation conflicts they provoke today or have provoked in the past. The point will be to decipher the mechanisms of their social and institutional construction and to analyze their modes of emergence and affirmation in the public space, as well as to identify the processes of differentiation and legitimation that conferred them a special position within collective imaginaries.

Hereafter comes some food for thought, which does obviously not exclude other perspectives. First of all, in which social and political contexts do icons arise? By the way: what icons are we talking about? Are we referring to a charismatic revolutionary, a controversial politician or a character that is so average he paradoxically becomes the best representative of popular masses? Additionally, what knowledge do those icons convey on the history of countries, regions and communities that take over them? Did their significations and impact evolve in the course of history? To which extent does the evolution of social and political contexts reassert the value or adulterate the principles highlighted by

those icons? In the case of fictional icons, what are their origins? Can we find some “failed” attempts to create an icon? And finally, once we question the process of personification of the Americas, what can we say about American icons outside the Americas?

Article submissions can deal with historic figures, with personalities from the associative, cultural, media, political, religious and sportive world, but also with fictional characters or even with anonymous individuals or groups that have become emblematic. Contributions on “anti-heroes” will be welcomed, as well as works on any other forms of contradictory or contending figures that challenge the discourses and representations highlighted by consensual ones. To follow that course, paper proposals can address the criticism about the “history of the great few”, and concentrate on the elaboration and diffusion of alternative narratives that rehabilitate the participation of the “people” or the contribution of a specific community to the history of a given space or group. Expected papers for this new RITA issue can come from all the fields of social sciences and take the shape of theoretical analyses, empirical studies and methodological reflections.

Free Field

We remind you that RITA welcomes off-topic articles for the Free Field part of the review, composed of the three following sections: **Sights on the Americas**, **Research Notes** and **Dissertation/PhD Summaries**. Research notes are papers presenting work in progress or completed research, whose focus does not match the issue topic. They must include a problematic question, entail a protocol research and be in the form of an academic reflection (cf. “Comment soumettre un article”). On the contrary, **Sights** is a section in which expression and form are free: field experiences accounts, journalistic or literary texts...

Please send your proposals (one page) until the 30th of June to revue.rita@gmail.com Selected authors will be informed at the beginning of August and will have to provide their article in the first days of October 2014. The Reading Committee will then evaluate the text: it might be accepted or refused, with or without modifications. The 8th issue will be released by spring 2015.

Proposals must be submitted in one page. The author(s) will clarify the problematic of their paper, their methodology and the arguments of their demonstration. We also expect the candidates to provide a short bibliography (except for Sights section) and five to six keywords. Finally, the author(s) will indicate clearly their names, affiliation, status and chosen section.

We recall that all papers must be original and not currently assessed by another journal.

