

**AFEA 2018 Symposium**  
**22-25 May 2018**  
**Nice-Sophia Antipolis University**  
**« Magnifying America : the poetics and politics of details »**

**List of panels**

**CFP – Deadline**

Abstracts (around 250-300 words) in English AND in French and short biographies should be sent to workshop chairs by January 15, 2018

**Panel 1. Every detail matters: microhistory and historical practice, new paths in American Studies. Lawrence Aje (Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3), Claire Bourhis-Mariotti (Paris 8)**

By focusing on the components of a larger unit in order to (de) / (re) construct the whole, a microhistorical approach seems to be the only means for historians to restore the complexity of past historical realities and to achieve the writing of a more comprehensive and inclusive history. Focalizing on local, social, racial and gender specificities – which in the past had been neglected by traditional macrohistorical studies – now seems to be a prerequisite for writing any serious historical study. In the 1960s, the quantitative approach (cliometrics) adopted by “new social historians” aimed at establishing history as a scientific discipline based on data analysis – numerical details that were supposedly objective. It also endeavored to account for the historical experience of marginalized or « insignificant » populations hitherto neglected by a historiography that had mainly been concerned with political or economic issues or with great men. As a result of the “bottom-up” approach embraced by a number of social historians since the 1970s, we are now witnessing the return of narrative history and biography applied to the common folk – in other words, a social history of a qualitative type.

While the « linguistic turn » aims at questioning the discursive representation of historical reality, the « cultural turn » has encouraged researchers to consider marginalized cultural practices as reliable historical material. Studies that adopt an intersectional approach have highlighted how gender, race and class specificities are crucial in the historical experience, whilst simultaneously questioning the socially-constructed nature of reified socio-racial categories by showing their complexity and their historicity. Recent calls to change the terminological designation of social and historical actors who belong to subordinate groups – such as the progressive substitution of “slaves” by “the enslaved”, or “slave owners” by “the enslavers”, or even “sub-Saharan Africa” by “Africa south of the Sahara” – illustrate the growing need to take into account what was previously deemed trivial or insignificant. However, if a focus on the detail, or on the parts of the sum, may allow to analyze groups as being composed of discrete elements rather than as being monolithic, and to take into account socio-historical actors or events that had been long been considered to be minor or marginal within the larger historical narrative, this reduction of scale may paradoxically contribute to give a representative and exemplary value to individuals or atypical groups by magnifying them. This may especially hold true when microhistory is undertaken in the context of reparative history endeavors.

This workshop seeks to engage in a reflection on the question of sources and the writing of the history of groups that have been marginalized by historiography due to a scarcity of archival records. It seeks to analyze the extent to which new epistemological and methodological frameworks that focus on the detail have changed how these populations are studied. What qualitative value can be granted to the detail when it applies to historical actors that have been marginalized as a result of their relative absence in the archives? To what extent does an attention to detail enable a shift in perspective by allowing to uncover neglected historical realities? How can researchers benefit from the advent of accessible digitized primary sources that enable the compilation and computation of fragmentary information? Does the accumulation of details allow to build a coherent whole and also enable to breathe life into reified and disembodied social categories? Can it be argued that scale reduction necessarily contributes to the fragmentation of global history and partakes in hindering universal generalization, thus condemning the production of knowledge on the path of relativism? These are some of the questions we encourage panelists to address.

**Contact** : Lawrence Aje ([lawaje@gmail.com](mailto:lawaje@gmail.com)) and Claire Bourhis-Mariotti ([claire.bourhis-mariotti@orange.fr](mailto:claire.bourhis-mariotti@orange.fr)).

**Panel 2. To make a start, / out of particulars / and make them general » (W. C. Williams): The American Poem, Going into Detail or Going Global? H  l  ne Aji (Paris Nanterre), Xavier Kalck (Paris Sorbonne)**

Despite the decidedly trans-historic nature of the “method of the Luminous Detail” advertised by Ezra Pound during the winter of 1911-1912, speaking of poetic detail often calls to mind the role of the American idiom in the poetry of William Carlos Williams: culturally speaking, the idiomatic detail legitimizes the social value of the poem within the modern effort to democratize poetry. When applied to the poem’s composition, the word detail opens onto a variety of questions pertaining to poetic form. In Williams’ “The crowd at the ball game” (1921) however, written ten years exactly after Pound’s articles, the three occurrences of the word “detail” tell of a poet’s fascination for the real as the realm of non-linguistic, and possibly non-literary, concerns, to be integrated within the new American text. Still, the preoccupation for the detail of poetic form is synonymous with a focus on language as matter to be used in the production of texts. But because it both points both toward an object and describes a specific perspective, the singular detail is in a rare position to bridge the gap between the language within and the world without. This relationship between the poem and its context becomes explicitly productive when, ten years later again, Louis Zukofsky speaks of “the detail, not mirage, of seeing, of thinking with things as they exist, and of directing them along the line of melody” (1931) – this detail is now visual, historic and prosodic all at once. After World War II, the notion remains quite ambiguous: it seems distributed across a vast spectrum, from Frank O’Hara’s taste for a “personal” detail, for instance, all the way to Robert Creeley’s obsession with detail that ushers in decades of minimalism. Similarly, Charles Altieri’s aesthetic notion of a “numinous” detail, in reference to the work of Robert Duncan, among others, has been called into question in favour of a more global cultural critique by Michael Davidson, in the name of a more detailed account of the contexts that preside over each poet’s work.

This workshop aims to explore the evolutions and the contradictions that have accompanied the use of detail as a compositional method and as a critical concept, by making methodological choices explicit when dealing with matters of scale: close reading vs. contextual reading; rhythmic detail; the detail of an image; details in translation... The goal of this workshop will be to compare the benefits of a variety of methods of poetic composition as well as critical methods: propositions may therefore freely include poets who have not been mentioned above and who belong to other poetic traditions, just as they may follow different critical and theoretical approaches, from close reading to cultural studies.

**Contact** : H  l  ne Aji ([helene.aji@parisnanterre.fr](mailto:helene.aji@parisnanterre.fr)) and Xavier Kalck ([xkalck@gmail.com](mailto:xkalck@gmail.com)).

**Panel 3. Hideousness as a common ground: imagining the gargoyle in American literature. Marc Amfreville et Juliette Dorotte (Paris Sorbonne)**

Whether it juts out or clings to the flanks of Gothic monuments, the gargoyle, an unsightly figure of stone, never fails to draw attention and unsettle all who dare to look at it. This mysterious, captivating, and paradoxical creature was originally meant to fulfill a practical function in the Middle Ages, as it was placed on the fa  ades of churches and cathedrals to let rainwater drain down without impairing the walls. Yet before the Middle Ages were over, this odd architectural element had lost its practical function and became an ornament. The diversity of this new art was almost infinite, as no two gargoyles are identical, and each animal’s or devil’s head was the unique product of an artist’s feverish imagination. Still, the gargoyle was never a purely aesthetic object but functioned from the start as a potent symbol: the statue was similar to a sign or a message that anyone could immediately decipher, including those who could not read. Yet, if the gargoyle has always called for an interpretation, it systematically challenges the onlooker’s attempts: in medieval times, the same figure could hold multiple meanings for different viewers, a plurality which has only increased and turned more opaque to us century after century. The gargoyle is hence a hermeneutic riddle, a powerful, evocative metaphor that indicates unknown directions and points to inscrutable concepts and notions.

The gargoyle’s presence is unquestioned—it enjoys being seen, and draws our attention with its highly expressive faces of devils and animals that are distorted with provocative grins, grimaces, and lascivious smiles. Gargoyles make the onlooker uncomfortable; they can outrage, or induce a quieter kind of fear. To what end? In medieval times, the gargoyle was originally supposed to guard the monument it was appended to: it kept sinners as well as demons—who were repulsed at their own hideousness when they beheld their own reflection—from entering and contaminating the holy premises. If the gargoyle can cleanse and purge, and hence uphold religion and virtue, it remains a paradoxical figure. Perched high above the ground, often protruding into the open air, away from the portico and the walls, it does not really belong to the structure and stands out against the beauty, symmetry and harmony of the whole. While it impairs the religious and aesthetic orthodoxy of the place, it reinforces it through its contrasting hideousness. Always liminal, displaced and different, the gargoyle stands as a negative “other” whose vertiginous position and repulsive appearance complete a whole of which it can never

really be part. This isolated architectural detail encourages the viewer to see things differently and vertically, and to start a difficult psychological and moral introspective process. Central in spite and because of its marginal position, the gargoyle is the anti-idol that simultaneously prevents and enables the coherence of the whole, and questions the possibility of beauty and meaning.

This workshop proposes to study the literary avatars of the gargoyle in American literature. One might consider representations of monsters and more generally of figures that embody marginality, protest, pain and/or “bad taste”. From the birth of the Gothic to postmodern works, including Southern Gothic stories, novels and plays, one will try to highlight the aesthetic and structuring function of these literal or metaphorical gargoyles which both disfigure and complement the edifice of American literature.

**Contact** : Marc Amfreville ([marc.amfreville@free.fr](mailto:marc.amfreville@free.fr)) and Juliette Dorotte ([juliette.dorotte@yahoo.fr](mailto:juliette.dorotte@yahoo.fr)).

#### **Panel 4. Popular cultures between artifice and trompe-l’oeil. Danièle André, Elodie Chazalon (La Rochelle – CRHIA)**

Popular culture has often been equated with stereotypes, shallowness and superfluousness. It is generally believed to be solely “mass culture” (C. Lasch) whose serialized productions are incompatible with the accuracy and craft of fine arts. Meticulousness is usually considered the prerogative of an elite and of « high » culture, a prejudice dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century which has led to the qualitative and quantitative polarizations between “mass civilization” and “minority culture” (M. Arnold; F. R. Leavis) and between the Old Continent and North America.

At first glance, it may be thought that audio, visual, and literary works (movies, photographs, paintings, but also street art, video games, musical pieces...) undergo multiple changes through borrowings, adaptations, and more or less obvious alterations that can only be apprehended through flat screens (whether they be cinema, TV or digital/touch). In the same manner, repetitions and adaptations instill a sense of indifference as cultural works and produce seem to lose their substance, their capacity to move audiences and their *punctum* (what makes them stand apart), their eye-catcher (Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire. Note sur la photographie*). The question to be raised is how to find the least significant difference (Baudrillard, *La Société de consommation*) that satisfies our need to differentiate from one another.

Yet, as Angela McRobbie argues in *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, there lies the trick of “postmodern” popular culture, which “refuse[s] to take itself seriously” and privileges “the surface” with “meaning being paraded as an intentionally superficial phenomenon.” But the superficial “does not necessarily represent a decline into meaninglessness or valuelessness in culture” and is rather a “political strategy.” Popular culture challenges us to question the purpose of detail in our postindustrial societies where modes of productions and of being seem to be homogenized, normative, and repetitive.

Furthermore, in the vastness and seeming vacuity of popular culture, there remain spaces and “points of intersection” between the different forms of culture (S. Hall, « Notes on Deconstructing the Popular »), which represent as many challenges for minority and “alternative” groups. Popular culture, indeed, cultivates detail, the infinitesimal, specificity as well as unevenness. Therefore, it is necessary to look into the matter more closely and to rethink detail as an intrinsic part of popular culture.

Thus, thinking about detail in popular culture also means thinking about the moving and not in the least antinomic links between stereotype and detail, margin and norm, essential and inessential, individuality and collectivity, metonymy and metaphor. Therefore, among others, the following questions can be raised:

- The place and use of detail and of the infinitesimal in the writings, narratives, scenarios, video editing, visual and material representations, iconography, and game design of popular culture works (science fiction and other imaginary worlds, role-playing games, collectibles, vidding, TV shows, etc.),
- The link between detail, cultural industries and serialized production, or the ambivalent link between stereotype and detail,
- Mass consumption and its practices (*junk food, binge watching*, etc.), practices that are supposed to be anti-consumerist and entail more rigorous selection (*slow food, recycling, DIY*, etc.), all referring to the dichotomy between the “strategies” of the strong versus the “tactics” of the weak (De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*),
- The invisible and the less visible, cultural forms that claim to be non-commercial, or the way in which marginal, atypical and less commercial practices and movements participate in developing, strengthening or, on the contrary, criticizing and rejecting the economic, cultural and political mechanisms of contemporary societies,
- The different perceptions and representations of what is fact/detail according to the different audiences, forms and cultural practices taken into account,

- Gender and the annihilation of differences: sex equality, reclaiming sexual difference, the “differential valence” of the sexes, (F. Héritier), etc.,
- What is still “detail” in our academic practices: disciplines divided into autonomous sub-disciplines vs. interdisciplinarity, etc.
- Popular culture theory: popular culture as a “superficial phenomenon”, as apparent contempt for detail.

Proposals (from 300 to 500 words approximately) may put forward different fields of study and theoretical frameworks and approaches.

**Contact:** Danièle André ([daniele.andre@univ-lr.fr](mailto:daniele.andre@univ-lr.fr)) and Elodie Chazalon ([elodie.chazalon@univ-lr.fr](mailto:elodie.chazalon@univ-lr.fr))

**Panel 5. The Left at the Source: is working on the margins bound to be marginal ? Alice Béja (Sciences Po Lille/CERAPS), Ambre Ivoll (Nantes/CRINI)**

In the 1960s and 1970s, the left made history, and also transformed the way history was made. Marxist and neo-Marxist perspectives, African-American and gender studies, history from below and transnational history changed the American grand narrative, which until then had portrayed radicals as marginals or extremists, incapable of translating their struggle into political gains. Some historians, most notably Howard Zinn, sought to explore the history of the beaten, the forgotten, for itself, in its capacity to question the vision of America as the land of promise. Others like Michael Kazin wished to reintegrate this « alternative history » into the fabric of national narrative, turning radicals into « American dreamers » (Kazin 2011).

In the history of the American left, studies and analyses of the relationship between the margin and the mainstream abound, whether they center on the issue of American exceptionalism (Lipset 1974, 1977, Karabel 1979, Foner 1984, Halpern & Morris, 1997) or on the history and sociology of social movements (Kazin 2011, Young 2015, Brick & Phelps 2015, Ivoll & Le Dantec Lowry 2015); but it is seldom one sees scholars focusing on sources and archives. Research on leftist social movements, the role of actors, the mapping of struggles, can be hindered by several factors : many activists and workers in the 19th century anarchist and socialist movements, for instance, had limited access to the English language, many sources were destroyed during periods of repression such as the first Red Scare in 1919-1920, archives of internationalist organizations are by definition scattered over various countries, and in different languages, and those mediators making texts available, for instance marxist or anarchist websites, also pursue their own goals in doing so.

This panel aims at reflecting on these difficulties, on the status of the sources we use (oral history, archives of « major figures », literary texts, images and films), on process of *making* the history of the American lefts, and on what theoretical perspectives this contributes to the wider field of American Studies/civilization. It is a way to distance ourselves from our own research practice in a field that is well represented in academic circles but sometimes finds it difficult to translate its findings and approaches into mainstream discourse, or else refuses such a translation, wearing instead its marginal status as a badge of honor.

**Contact:** Alice Béja ([alice.beja@sciencespo-lille.eu](mailto:alice.beja@sciencespo-lille.eu)) and Ambre Ivoll ([ambre.ivoll@univ-nantes.fr](mailto:ambre.ivoll@univ-nantes.fr)).

**Panel 6. Discourse and knowledge on/from the minority : instituting, resisting or classifying insignificance ? Robin Benzrihem (Montpellier III Paul Valéry), Carline Blanc and Yohann Lucas (Université Paris-Est – Marne la Vallée)**

On the eve of the 2016 presidential election, Toni Morrison penned a New York Times article calling readers to shed light on the true meaning behind candidate Trump’s Reaganesque slogan, with his encouragement of racial hatred and violence. Entitled “Make America White Again”, the piece condemned the Trump’s promise as a scheme to reinstate a majority identity based on the exclusion of anyone who could jeopardize that fantasy. The agency conveyed by « make » signals the ideological and social construct needed in such an endeavor in the American context. Far from being a given, marginalization is a more or less voluntary operation. As such, it is crucial to consider these notions in terms of power relations and processes. Thus, this workshop seeks to analyze minorization processes at play in the areas of identity and epistemology in the United States in relation to questions of hierarchy and scale.

If minorizations can suggest insignificance, they raise the questions of interpretation, reception and evaluation of the marginalized subject’s experience. If some forms of knowledge become universal and have their relevance established beyond a strict identity, while others get their scope restricted to an ever narrower particularism, how is the scale established? Linguists, anthropologists, writers, sociologists and semiologists have all pointed out how deceptive neutrality is, only concealing hegemonies. What role do institutions—be they political, religious, academic, or other—play in this logic? The term “popular”, for instance, may describe in turn

mainstream cultural products when backed by commercial institutions—as with “pop music”— or negligible objects, which are discredited for being anecdotal, just as “popular beliefs” are dismissed as superstitions.

We also encourage presenters to consider the tensions between singularity and plurality: if any margin presupposes a center from which it is excluded, does it consist in a single coherent body or can it also be plural? From the perspectives of intersectionality, specification and the convergence of social struggles, how do the various minorization processes interact with one another? One of the strategies to resist domination is to assemble into a group and put up a united front. Yet, are mechanisms of rejection and hierarchy avoided or reproduced when a multiplicity unites? Is the U.S. home to a radical or militant minorization that defines its own aesthetic by setting up an alternate strategy?

In a transdisciplinary perspective, the workshop is open to all approaches which may further the understanding of these questions.

**Contact:** Robin Benzrihem ([robin.benzrihem@gmail.com](mailto:robin.benzrihem@gmail.com)), Carline Blanc ([blanc.carline@gmail.com](mailto:blanc.carline@gmail.com)) and Yohann Lucas ([yohlucas@gmail.com](mailto:yohlucas@gmail.com)).

**Panel 7. “The texture of *et cetera*”: Taking details to the extreme in contemporary American fiction (1990-2018) Sophie Bernard-Léger (Paris-Sorbonne), Yannicke Chupin (Université de Cergy-Pontoise)**

“In art and science there is no delight without the detail,” Vladimir Nabokov wrote in a very detailed study of Puchkin’s *Eugene Onegin*. Usually associated with the superfluous, the unnecessary or the circumstantial, details are here linked with the artist and the scholar’s pleasure. In literature, details enable authors to reveal the uniqueness of a character, of an object or a phenomenon, and therefore provide a richer reading experience. By definition, details take up little space in the economy of the novel and are not intended to disrupt its meaning. Yet, what happens when the flow of details, originating in a desire for extreme accuracy or exhaustivity, is inflated to the point of reversing the quantitative and qualitative relationship between what is essential and what is superfluous?

Trying to account for the increasing complexity of the world, writers in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century have often magnified details and expanded on minute descriptions. In *Leaving the Atocha Station*, Ben Lerner’s narrator is looking for a way to capture in writing the “texture of *et cetera*,” the uneventful and tiny moments of existence that are never accounted for in fiction. Steven Millhauser’s fascination for the infinitely small or the swarming meticulousness of Nicholson Baker’s prose betray some desire to grasp the infinitesimal specificities of the sensitive world, even if it means that the codes of novelistic writing will have to be disrupted. D. F Wallace’s omnivorous and powerfully detailed prose seems to derive from some analytical frenzy that threatens the work’s cohesion in some places. Details are sometimes exhibited in their excessive monstrosity. What happens then to the novelistic thread when it is swollen with details? What springs to mind is the character of Funes in Borges’ short story, who is gifted with the ability to perceive the infinitely small details that compose reality but is incapable of thinking for, as the narrator says, “To think is to forget differences, it’s to generalize, to abstract.” Is excess of detail fatal to reason? Whatever happens when details become essential and come to occupy the novel’s center? How can the novel survive such a paradox?

This workshop welcomes any communication focusing on the writing of details and the space devoted to them in contemporary fiction. Our particular interest lies with how authors negotiate the tension between traditional narrative economy and some immoderate attraction for detail.

**Contact:** Sophie Bernard ([bernard.sophie1@gmail.com](mailto:bernard.sophie1@gmail.com)) and Yannicke Chupin ([yannicke.chupin@u-cergy.fr](mailto:yannicke.chupin@u-cergy.fr)).

**Panel 8. Nabokov’s practice of detail and its reverberations through American fiction: the aesthetics of detail in the literature of the United States. Marie Bouchet (Toulouse 2 Jean-Jaurès), Suzanne Fraysse (Aix-Marseille)**

As a writer, a literature professor, a translator or an entomologist, Vladimir Nabokov gave preeminent importance to details: for his Cornell students, he would draw a map of Stephen Dedalus’s rambling through Dublin in *Ulysses*, or sketch the tennis apparel sported by Tolstoy’s characters, and would instruct them that “in reading, one should notice and fondle details” (*Lectures on Literature*, 11). Nabokov had an acute sense of observation, sharpened by his entomological practice and his *émigré* status which cast him in the role of an outside observer; this is maybe why in his American works he developed specific aesthetics based on details—works that profoundly reflect the paradoxes of detail as revealed by art historian Daniel Arasse in his study of detail in the history of painting. In Nabokov’s texts just as in other American writers’ fiction, one can observe the tension Arasse underscored between the mimetic verisimilitude of detail and the meticulous work on language

that self-reflexively indicates the literary process at play. Details are not only the ideal tools to produce referential illusions (Hamon) or “reality effects” (Barthes), but also potent metafictional emblems, as exemplified by Steven Millhauser’s extraordinary miniatures. Details can also be points of stasis in the story, but such descriptive pauses can paradoxically spur narrative digressions (Louvel), as if details were some sort of narrative push-button—like the “question mark of a hair” that Humbert notices in the bathroom during his survey of the Haze house.

Is Nabokov’s status as an exile the only reason why he pays such close attention to the details of the world around him, or could it be the conjunction of such a situation with his own appropriation of the English language, which he considered superior to Russian for its precision (“our wise, precise, plastic, beautiful English language”, he wrote to Edmund Wilson in 1943)? Nabokov’s prose is probably the furthest removed from Hemingway’s, in its abundance of details, multicolored images, sounds and sensations, and it therefore offers an alternative to the iceberg theory and to the aesthetics of concision often set up as a model in the United States. May literary detail work differently in exuberant prose than in drier prose?

This workshop invites papers reflecting on how detail may be the paradoxical center of Nabokov’s aesthetics, and on what use American writers make of this complex literary object. To what extent have American writers followed, or rejected, the Nabokovian art of detail?

**Contact:** [marie.bouchet@univ-tlse2.fr](mailto:marie.bouchet@univ-tlse2.fr)/[suzanne.fraysse@univ-amu.fr](mailto:suzanne.fraysse@univ-amu.fr)

### **Panel 9. Strategic uses of details in American visual arts and photography since the Second World War Clara Bouveresse (Paris 1) Nina Léger (Paris 8)**

This panel addresses strategic uses of details in American visual arts and photography since the Second World War, drawing on recent research in the fields of art history, visual and cultural studies.

Details can only be defined in relation to a whole, which they enlighten, characterize, interpret or contradict and debunk. Details entail pre-existing hierarchies, if only to challenge them. When concealed, they can be playful; when obvious, they help denouncing and highlighting what is usually hidden, forgotten, despised or denied. Avant-garde or subversive practices thus often resort to details. A strategic use of details can also be diagnosed in the reinstatement of minor techniques, materials and forms, usually downgraded from the realm of art to craftsmanship.

We seek proposals investigating the reasons and effects of a resolute use of details. To name just a few examples illustrating such practices:

- Magnifying or isolation effects: focus on the part rather than the whole, as seen in the close-ups of Georgia O’Keeffe; enlarging or monumentalizing of details as seen in the sculptures of Claes Oldenburg; in-depth search for the unique or particular...
- Inventories: filing, sequencing, listing, collections and series (from the modular and repetitive practices of Sol LeWitt in his *Incomplete Open Cubes* to the photographic projects of Taryn Simon, *An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar*)
- The “quest of the ordinary” (Stanley Cavell) based on the observation of details, and in particular the artistic appeal of the vernacular (for instance in the photographs of Walker Evans)
- The choice of details as opposed to monuments, for example in the *Buried Poems* of Nancy Holt or the predilection of Dennis Oppenheim for a discreet approach departing from the gigantic temptation of American land art
- Details hidden inside the work as a visual resource transforming its interpretation, as seen in the play on proportions of Chuck Close’s mosaic-portraits.

**Contact:** Clara Bouveresse ([cl.bouveresse@gmail.com](mailto:cl.bouveresse@gmail.com)) and Nina Léger ([nina.lgr@gmail.com](mailto:nina.lgr@gmail.com)), plus [visuelafea2018@gmail.com](mailto:visuelafea2018@gmail.com).

### **Panel 10. *The Devil is in the details*: the perpetual quest for LGBTQ+ equality. Anthony Castet (Tours) et Georges-Claude Guilbert (Le Havre Normandie)**

Since the Stonewall riots (1969), the visibility of LGBTQ+ issues and the recognition of LGBTQ+ rights have steadily increased in the United States, to the point that some claim equality is now a reality, particularly since the legalization of same-sex marriage (*Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2015).



Donald Trump's "tolerant" revolution during the presidential campaign proved to be an effective smokescreen to let "the Devil" work on the backsliding of progress acquired by the LGBTQ+ minority. "Making America great again" involves barely concealed strategies of erasure and renewed invisibility, of defense of religious freedom, and deference to state sovereignty in matters of sexual orientation and same-sex parenting. This institutional push toward morals and religious freedom is part of a movement of "flux of the spirit of religion" (Froidevaux-Metterie), legitimizing a patchwork of laws across the country to undermine *Obergefell v. Hodges* in particular. The observation of the living conditions of LGBTQ+ populations and their cultures quickly reveals that a variety of details continue to favor unequal treatment or even "legalize" discrimination, to varying degrees, depending on states and domains, to reinforce their inferiorization and marginalization. LGBTQ+ America is not as mainstream as some cultural products suggest, assimilation remains relative (and not universally desired), and the margin persists. Indeed, the most conservative Americans claim the right not to recognize LGBTQ+ Americans, based on conscientious objection as well as religious exemption, thus imposing their own moral code. While justice remains a tremendous bulwark against structural inequality with respect to sexual minorities, the (forthcoming) appointments made by the President, such as that of Neil Gorsuch, could weaken the current ideological balance to impose a status quo.

Nevertheless, this workshop will aim to go beyond this binary approach by focusing on the way in which "detail politics" sometimes lead to consensus, through bipartisan dynamics around the issue of equal rights for the LGBTQ+ community. See, for example, the campaign to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (2010), but also the victories for the fundamental freedom to marry won by Marc Solomon and his allies in several states by adopting a pragmatic logic that consisted in convincing and collaborating with the conservative "enemy." Progress can also be noted in the religious sphere where inclusive churches celebrate homosexual unions and welcome LGBTQ+ people. DignityUSA is intent on changing the traditional teachings of the Catholic Church and doing away with any form of normative assignments. Finally, all this is obviously reflected in culture—television, for example. We will welcome and consider with interest proposals for papers that address the most significant details of the disparities between the dominant culture and LGBTQ+ minorities, whether in the fields of queer studies, cultural studies or American studies.

**Contact:** Anthony Castet ([anthony.castet@univ-tours.fr](mailto:anthony.castet@univ-tours.fr)) and Georges-Claude Guilbert ([guilbertgc@yahoo.com](mailto:guilbertgc@yahoo.com)).

**Panel 11. The Poetics of the Detail in American Music and Dance. Adeline Chevrier-Bosseau (Paris-Est-Créteil Val-de-Marne) et Mathieu Duplay (Paris Diderot).**

In "Sounds," the chapter of *Walden* devoted to the experience of listening, Thoreau's attention focuses on audible singularities, on the individual phenomena which together combine to form a rich and constantly changing soundscape. As a result, he frequently resorts to the rhetoric of enumeration: the text successively evokes the "rattle of railroad cars," the "distant lowing of some cow," and various types of birdsong, all of them representative samples of the sensible world's endless complexity. However, Thoreau also insists that he wishes to grasp the totality of nature, and that his true center of interest is the unifying principle that underlies all phenomena: "The rays which stream through the shutter will no longer be remembered when the shutter is wholly removed." Throughout the text, this gives rise to a tension between the extreme importance granted to the specifics of each individual sound event, and the quest for an overarching force capable of accounting for them all, while also addressing itself to the other senses. On the one hand, Thoreau seems to practice a form of phenomenological reduction, "the discipline of looking always at what is to be seen"—and, one may add, of listening always to what is to be heard; on the other hand, he does his best to identify the common origin of all sound.

It is tempting to formulate the hypothesis that, since 1854, this hesitation has characterized much American music.

- On the one hand, so-called American "art music" owes much to composers whose discourse and practices seek to "let sounds be themselves," as John Cage puts it. According to him, the role of music is not to arrange individual sounds into intelligible structures, but to draw attention to the sensory appeal of the sound world. Minimalist composers follow in Cage's footsteps when they use repetition to discourage listeners from trying to interpret what they hear; thus, in *It's Gonna Rain* (1965), Steve Reich uses a recording of a simple English sentence, repeated so often that it loses all meaning as its phonic features take precedence over its linguistic properties. The appeal of this and comparable procedures is evident in numerous other musical styles where endlessly repeated audio samples are common; others rely on the reappearance of short melodic and/or harmonic units, a frequent feature of Stephen Sondheim's musicals, to take only one example. In a similar vein, musical styles based on

improvisation—such as jazz and rock music—liberate sounds by unleashing a Dionysian energy that imperils all formal structures. In his autobiography, John Adams writes that he considered Jimi Hendrix’s “lawless” guitar as the perfect antidote to the formalism of serial music then in vogue at Harvard; and it is worth noting that American popular music often makes use of “hooks”, brief melodic motifs designed to capture the listener’s attention and usually repeated without change.

- On the other hand, American music often privileges a sense of totality and tries to suggest unity in the midst of diversity, as evidenced by the interest many musicians take in large-scale compositions. In *Essays Before a Sonata* (1920), Charles Ives writes that music is the prefiguration of a universal language capable of exceeding all individual differences, “a language so transcendent that its heights and depths will be common to all mankind.” More recently, John Luther Adams has created major compositions (*The Place Where You Go To Listen*, 2004-06; *Become Ocean*, 2013) which, in an environmentalist vein, seek to illuminate the relationship between the listener and the cosmos. Meanwhile, the rise of American opera has demonstrated the willingness of American composers such as John Adams (*Nixon in China*, 1987) and Philip Glass (*Einstein on the Beach*, 1976) to reflect on defining events in world history while acknowledging the legacy of Minimalism.

On all levels, the coexistence of these seemingly contradictory tendencies gives rise to considerable tension, notably as regards the complex relationship between the written score and the performances it inspires. In this regard, John Cage’s compositions are particularly problematic. What is the performer to make of the details of a score which ostensibly does not conform to any of the established codes—especially when the score in question owes much to the attention lavished by the composer on the tiniest details of the paper on which it is inscribed (*Atlas Eclipticalis*, 1962)? And what about the details of the sound performances based on these non-notational scores—a question raised by Nelson Goodman in *Languages of Art* (1968)?

Paper proposals may deal with any aspect of these issues and address a wide range of objects including musical compositions, scores, recordings, filmed musical performances (concerts, operas, musicals); theoretical essays by musicians (in this regard, it is worth pointing out that many American composers are also writers: Charles Ives, Aaron Copland, Ned Rorem, and Philip Glass are just a few of the names that spring to mind); literary works that reflect on the relationship between literature and music; as well as non-literary modes of artistic expression where music occasionally or usually plays a significant role (including, but not limited to, dance, cinema, television, the performing arts, photography, the visual arts, new media art, and sound art).

In his manifesto for modern American dance, *The American Ballet*, Ted Shawn delineates what modern American dance should be – vast, dynamic and profoundly democratic: “the dance of America will be as seemingly formless as the poetry of Walt Whitman, and yet like *Leaves of Grass* it will be so big that it will encompass all forms. Its organization will be democratic, its fundamental principles, freedom and progress; its manifestation an institution of art expression through rhythmic, beautiful body movement, broader and more elastic than has ever yet been known”. Like Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, American dance is therefore meant to constantly shift from a broad spectrum – paying tribute to the immensity of the country, dancing an American epic – to a smaller scale, magnifying each little detail of this great American *opus*.

Dance is all about details; the body is seldom considered as a whole without the attention of the spectator, dancer or choreographer turning to a hand, a *port-de-bras*, a foot’s turnout, or the tilting of the head. When learning classical or contemporary techniques, a dancer has to detail each movement, to articulate it in order to enrich it and explore its every subtlety. Differences of interpretation from one dancer to another are often a matter of detail as well, just like two versions of a same ballet by two different choreographers, which raises the question of the reinterpretation and the Americanization of ballets belonging to the classical repertory in American ballet companies: one could think for example of Jerome Robbins’ 1953 version of Nijinsky’s *Afternoon of a Faun*, which is now part of the New York City Ballet and the American Ballet Theatre’s repertoire, or the many versions of *Sleeping Beauty* or the *Nutcracker* danced by these two companies.

If the devil is in the details, some “details” in the various American dance techniques (Graham, Horton, Cunningham, or Balanchine’s and Forsythe’s neo-classical styles) are highly symbolical: the Grahamian contraction and the focus on the pelvis as a point of origin for the movement is deeply connected to the choreographer’s feminism (and, amusingly, prompted Graham’s students to call her school “the House of the pelvic truth”). Similarly, it is through a sum of details and many little “tweaks” in the approach to movement, that an African-American style of movement, combining Americanisms and Africanisms, emerged in the Alvin Ailey company, or that the Complexions company deals with the question of race and the racialization of dance.

Among the topics which may be addressed in this panel, one could interrogate the way “details” are markers of Americanness, but also, on a broader scale, how legible all these details really are for the spectator: can the audience really perceive the amount of details that are involved in the dancer’s technique, or the many details



present in one ballet? During a performance, when the corps and the soloists are present on stage, how does the spectator articulate a global vision of the stage and attention to details? How do choreographers deal with the individual/group dynamics within a ballet?

Another possible approach could be the question of the dialogue between dance and other artistic forms: dance often appears as a mere metaphorical detail in the general economy of a literary work, be it poetry or prose, and we could wonder if it is really so. Similarly, one could question the place of dance in the theatre or the cinema, or the way dance is represented in visual arts, whether it is a representation of the dancing body, or the representation of the dancer as icon, in Joseph Cornell's works for example. In visual arts as in literature, the dancing body is often fragmented into a myriad details, which raises the question of the very representability of the dancing body, of a dynamic movement which only appears to be representable through fragmentation, in a whirl of details, and never in its entirety. In another perspective, one could also interrogate the meaning of some dance moves like the arabesque for example: in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the arabesque is one of the key adagio movements in the great Romantic ballets, and one could question its echo in the works of writers like E. A. Poe, for whom the arabesque becomes a narrative form, an extended line which triggers digression, leading the imagination to an infinite realm of possibilities.

**Contact:** Adeline Chevrier-Bosseau ([achevrier.bosseau@gmail.com](mailto:achevrier.bosseau@gmail.com)) and/or Mathieu Duplay ([mduplay@club-internet.fr](mailto:mduplay@club-internet.fr))

### **Panel 12. "In defense of close reading or, reading the minuscule". Claudia Desblaches (Rennes 2) et Marie Olivier (Paris-Est Créteil)**

This panel proposes to read texts to the letter, to risk close reading as a challenging methodology. In *le Risque de la lettre*, Isabelle Alfandary explains that "the negativity of writing depends on the otherness that is always already introduced at the heart of an impure and heterogeneous system, one it contributes to shaping—language. Writing does not go without a risk, the risk literature and language run through writing lies at the heart of language itself, and constitutes language as risk. From this point of view the literature of the letter carries the trace of the risk inherent to any act of speech" (Alfandary 2012, 27). Besides, reading a text to the letter, whatever its nature, means having it run the risk of writing. In paying close attention to the letter of the texts, to their typographical details, punctuation signs, we invite the contributors of this panel to show the invisible parts of a text, its hidden meanings, what goes on between the words, in the boustrophedonic turns of the poems' lines.

From the dashes in Emily Dickinson's poetry to the "lyrical minuscule" of E.E. Cummings—as Isabelle Alfandary calls the first-person in Cummings's poetics—these signs are characteristic of poetics that value the miniature and the minuscule. However, even with poets such as Walt Whitman, the so-called "cosmic poet," what is said in the smallest interstices of the American language reveals poetry as a space of and for writing, and as a threat to jeopardize language: in the poem "Out of The Cradle Endlessly Rocking," the line "from the memories of the bird that chanted me" the verb "chant" oscillates between transitivity and intransitivity, thus turning the minuscule space between verb and complement into a grammatical instability and a semantic void. In her poetry collection *Singularities* American poet Susan Howe appropriates the literary canon by "incorporating the letters of her own name into those of the Founding Father of the American letters. In metamorphosing the name Thoreau into 'Thorow,' Susan Howe americanizes the European —if not Francophone— "eau" into an American diphthong: 'ow'" (Olivier 2017, 120). In *Dictée*, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha disfigures the American language through collages of poems, autobiographical texts, photographs, etc. in order to challenge the *status quo*, thus demanding the reader to reconstruct an identity out of fragments, to compose with the silence saturating fragments or isolated letters.

In his holopoems that play with light and the instability of letters, Eduardo Kac transforms the linguistic sign within 3 D space, urging readers to multiple deciphering gestures. In « Perhaps » (1998), a digital poem, Kac offers twenty-four linguistic avatars to be chosen by readers. Thus, readers are able to create a unique and flexible poem: the semantic experience focused on particular details is renewed each time with a click of the mouse. In cyber poetry, a fragmented poetics based on numerous sources of inspiration (graphic arts, drawings, architecture, documentaries, natural phenomena...) is offered to readers or « vusers » (Bill Seaman). By striving to handle and cope with all these details, readers become actors or co-creators of the poem. « Seattle Drift » by Jim Andrews (1997) is a case in point as the observer is invited to click up left to 'do' the mobile poem that lets letters and original stanzas drift at random. The reader tries to visualize and read at running speed all the details that escape his vision/understanding before clicking again in the hope of stopping the poem on the page.

Reading poetry closely, on the page or on screen means considering it as writerly and visible. Behind that attention to details, viewers are thus invited to challenge the text's authority, create their own assemblage of

words or letters. They should read the poem for what it is, accept the infinity value or the mystery it might suggest at the expense of its historical and biographical context.

Papers will focus on the multifaceted forms that American poems have taken since the 18th century: prose poems, long narrative poems, concrete poems, calligrams, kinetic poems, cyber poems, video poems, hyper poems, holopoems, computer-generated poems....

It is this particular focus on detail that allows poems to be recognized as a fascinating form of writing. Readers encounter unprecedented texts, hoping for an intriguing and playful exploration of miniature worlds, books are read/seen with magnifying effects.

Each textual dimension encourages a specific research method, a different aesthetic analysis. This workshop invites to decipher texts that disturb reading habits and linguistic authority/austerity. From Walt Whitman's verse to Cummings's typographical tricks added to the coded language of digital poetry, the relevance of poetry is rooted in little things or nothings, trifles or little extras like « a chain of miniature birds » (Barbara Guest) offered to our view. These apparently insignificant punctuation marks, little puns and trivial alphabetical tricks are part of a miniaturization process that invites scrupulous and attentive readers to scrutinize this small world of details where the meaning of the text is at stake.

**Contact:** Marie Olivier ([marie.olivier@u-pec.fr](mailto:marie.olivier@u-pec.fr)) et Claudia Desblaches ([clad95@wanadoo.fr](mailto:clad95@wanadoo.fr)).

### **Panel 13. Detailing the History of Capitalism from the Grassroots. Andrew Diamond (Paris-Sorbonne) et Thomas Sugrue (New York University)**

Over the last decade, the history of capitalism has risen as one of the most vital subfields in American history. In a series of pathbreaking books, historians of capitalism have explored subjects such as the international cotton trade, the rise of risk management, the politics of debt, the role of bonds in state building, the transformation of the banking system, and the growing influence of neoliberal ideas and practices. The vast majority of these books and articles are macroeconomic in scale, attentive to international trade networks or federal policy or economic institutions, but usually with little attention to the impact of capitalism on everyday life. Building from the insights of social and cultural historians who have rewritten political history from the "bottom up," this workshop will seek to examine the interactions between the micro and the macro, with special attention to the ways that national and international economic forces and circumstances reconfigured communities, while shaping and constraining grassroots politics. Panelists in this workshop will be especially interested in the connections between capitalism and place—with attention to property, the built environment, the natural environment, and spaces of cultural and artistic expression. No less important to the discussion will be fresh approaches to understanding on the ground level how political and social life has been reshaped by the penetration of economizing logics. Panelists will pay special attention to the phenomenon of neoliberalism, bringing historical texture to the work of theorists like David Harvey, Wendy Brown, and S.M. Amadae through an exploration of the ways that neoliberal frames—the market, choice, privatization, competition, and austerity—played out in metropolitan places in the mid and late twentieth centuries.

**Contact:** Andrew Diamond ([andrew.j.diamond@gmail.com](mailto:andrew.j.diamond@gmail.com)) and Thomas Sugrue ([thomas.sugrue@gmail.com](mailto:thomas.sugrue@gmail.com)).

### **Panel 14. The *lyrical* detail in contemporary writing. Claire Fabre (Paris-Est Créteil)**

In the preface to his essay entitled *Le Lyrisme* (Lyricism) (2000), Jean-Michel Maulpoix analyses the return to this elusive notion in the following terms : "What is the significance of this "return"? Some see it as nothing more than a regression. A complete lapse into subjective effusion amid our theroretically disoriented "post-modern" period...However, this tends to forget an essential fact: there is a renewal of "voice poetry" which is less fascinated by its own writing process than by the desire to make an address and by a new articulation to any form of otherness. This new form of lyricism takes place in the interval between self and other (including when "other" means "similar to"), and is closely linked to the contemporary approach of identity." Even though Maulpoix remarks apply principally to poetry, this notion can no doubt enlighten numerous fictional texts which tend to blur generic frontiers. The focus will be placed on contemporary fictional texts whose "voices" are wrought with "lyrical" details only perceptible through close-reading. We would like to consider the notion of "lyricism" in an acceptation which encompasses all forms of literary language, much in the way Pierre Gault does in his essays collected by Sophie Vallas (*Le Lyrisme de l'homme ordinaire*, 2009).

Our hypothesis is that lyricism can be traced even in works which are not openly « lyrical » at first sight, that is, in which the expression of subjectivity is not foregrounded but rather emerges thanks to unexpected irregularities or asperities. Such details enable the singularity of speech (to be understood in the sense given by Laurent Jenny in

*La Parole Singulière* (1990). It will be possible to approach works of poetry or fiction which rely on the interplay between collective and individual voices, or “formalist” texts which re-introduce lyricism surreptitiously.

**Contact:** Claire Fabre ([claire.fabre-clark@u-pec.fr](mailto:claire.fabre-clark@u-pec.fr)).

**Panel 15. *Grand strategy from the bottom up* ? Examining Us Foreign Policy from Up Close. Frédéric Heurtebize (Paris Nanterre), Maud Quessard (IRSEM)**

For a long time, the study of international relations was limited to intergovernmental relationships. States, it was held, were monolithic structures acting as one in defense of a national interest rationally defined at the top. While the “realist” paradigm of IR theory—which posits the primacy of states as the main agents of international relations—remains dominant in academia (Mearsheimer, Mandelbaum, Walt, Wohlforth, Gilpin, Art, Jervis...), both the unitary nature of the state and the rational dimension of foreign policy-making have been seriously challenged. Some have put forward the concept of the network-state, insisting upon the crucial role of paragonmental agents in making policy (Slaughter). In the United States, with the vibrant and pluralistic civil society that fascinated Tocqueville as early as the 1830s, the actors involved in shaping foreign policy are many—a situation reinforced by the nation’s decentralized institutional framework. As a result, some lament, Congress and the White House are overly influenced by special interests to the detriment of the general or national interest.

This multidisciplinary workshop is open to historians, political scientists or American studies specialists. It proposes to examine those different agents and determinants from up close in order to better analyze the intricacies of policy making—in short, it intends to look at the micro level to better grasp the macro level.

Papers may discuss the role of organizations (think tanks, lobbies, NGOs, advocacy groups, churches...), single actors (companies, individuals), government bureaucracy (focus on a specific department, a specific public servant, bureaucratic infightings...), Congress (ethnic caucuses, committees...), public opinion, attitudes towards the “imperial presidency” and the chief executive’s war powers, or on specific events that influenced either policy-making or the execution of US foreign policy.

**Contact:** Frédéric Heurtebize ([fheurtebize@u-paris10.fr](mailto:fheurtebize@u-paris10.fr)) and Maud Quessard ([maudquessard@yahoo.fr](mailto:maudquessard@yahoo.fr)).

**Panel 16. Emotions in Detail. Minor Feeling and the Affect of the Insignificant. Nicholas Manning (Paris-Sorbonne)**

Can the feelings of literature, culture, or ourselves, ever properly be deemed “minor”? In considering them as such, do we necessarily relegate them to a subaltern status—as frivolous or inconsequential states to be negatively compared to consecrated emotional heritages such as patriotic courage, romantic love, or Aristotelian pity and fear? Or can we on the contrary construct a veritable valuing of “minor feelings”, not in order to transform them into major categories, but to preserve and cherish precisely that which “makes” them minor?

“Something about the cultural canon itself,” observes Sianne Ngai in her seminal 2005 study *Ugly Feelings*, “seems to prefer higher passions and emotions—as if minor or ugly feelings were not only incapable of producing ‘major’ works, but somehow disabled the works they do drive from acquiring canonical distinction.” Ngai’s work is part of recent movements in affect studies, feminist ethics, and cultural theory, aimed at restoring the value of supposedly minor emotional modes. The ethics of care elaborated by feminist criticism since the 1980s, for instance—in the work of theorists such as Carol Gilligan, Eva Feder Kittay, or Sara Ruddick—argues against a particularly American neglect of minor, subsidiary, “feminine” emotions, in contrast to both moral reasoning and supposedly “heroic” affective states. The critique is similar to Bergson’s objection to spatial thinking with regards to time: namely, for states of feeling, are the notions of smallness or minority, grandeur and maximality not only clumsy, but reductive and harmful metaphors? Are such notions as amplitude and intensity not only rich but also inevitable ways of thinking about spectrums of emotional experience?

Indeed, whether tropological or not, American literature and culture has often been seen to have a marked preference for the grand emotional gesture. When William Faulkner criticized Ernest Hemingway in 1947 for using overly simple language, Hemingway responded: “Poor Faulkner. Does he really think big emotions come from big words?” Though Hemingway defends here his right to a simple, “minor” language, the notion of literature’s highest end being to create grand emotions is taken as a given. From Ishmael’s efforts to incorporate all exhilaration and despair in one elusive creature, to the small green light which contains and expresses the full intensity of Jay Gatsby’s longing, minute details—both phenomenal and textual— in American literature expand into grand emotions just as often as they give rise to subtle or attenuated states. Moreover, the advocating for a grandiose, maximized emotionality in such authors as Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, or Saul Bellow, interacts in complex ways with these same authors’ valuing of an intensely detailed world.

This panel will welcome papers on all aspects of so-called “minor” feeling in American literature and culture, including, but not limited to: neglected or undervalued feelings; the emotions arising from detail; the minor feelings of maximal works; the interaction between a “minor” American language and minor feeling; the emotions of political and social minorities; the validity of minor feeling as a critical and cultural category.

**Contact:** Nicholas Manning ([nicholas.manning@paris-sorbonne](mailto:nicholas.manning@paris-sorbonne)).

**Panel 17 African American intellectuals and thinkers 1 : The precision of detail: W.E.B. Du Bois and the exploration of the African American experience. Nicolas Martin-Breteau (Lille III)**

In his masterpiece, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), W.E.B. Du Bois declared that “It is easy for us to lose ourselves in details in endeavoring to grasp and comprehend the real condition of a mass of human beings.” In this book, Du Bois alternates different modes of exploration of the African American experience with chapters aimed to “sketch” in broad strokes the features of the black world and others in which he studies its economic and social history with “deeper detail.” The juxtaposition of diverse methods and narratives multiplied the analytical perspectives on such renowned concepts as the color line, the veil, and African Americans’ double consciousness.

Du Bois’ work combines empirical analyzes and theoretical reflections, each enriching the others. His scientific work is thus characterized by a rich “accuracy of detail” (*The Philadelphia Negro*, 1899) on which his theoretical reflections are based. Du Bois’ attention to social facts and processes allows him to escape what he considered the intellectual plague of his time: namely, “bad metaphysics and false psychology” (“The Laboratory in Sociology at Atlanta University,” 1903). During his long intellectual life, Du Bois used many types of discourse—historical, sociological, economic, philosophical, literary, autobiographical, journalistic, and political—which helped him grasp with remarkable acuity the different aspects of the African American experience.

Its polyphony makes Du Bois’ work a monument in contemporary intellectual and political history. Over the last few years, the major role of Du Bois in the founding of U.S. social sciences has been re-evaluated. Several important publications have highlighted how innovative a thinker he has been for disciplines as diverse as history, sociology, and critical theory, giving rise to research perspectives still explored today. In particular, his reflections on the global articulation of race and gender hierarchies within the colonial capitalist system remain relevant to think not only of the African American experience but more generally the experience of racialized populations.

While we are about to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth in early 2018, Du Bois remains relatively unknown outside the United States. In France, the books and articles dedicated to this author, as well as the translation of his works, are extremely rare. In 2004, for the centenary of its first edition, the pioneering translation of *The Souls of Black Folk* by Magali Bessone was a notable exception. In fact, the theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions of Du Bois are still confined to the margins of the French academic world.

Therefore this workshop proposes to study the work and thought of Du Bois in order to map out the French research on this author. This workshop will also seek to identify avenues of future investigation that can complement the vast body of research already accomplished over the past several decades by our American colleagues. According to the logic that structures Du Bois’s work, this workshop is resolutely inter- even trans-disciplinary. It will thus welcome papers by young and experienced researchers on the literary, sociological, philosophical, and/or historical aspects of Du Bois’ work. Papers addressing the methodological issues of his work will also be considered.

**Contact:** Nicolas Martin-Breteau ([nicolas.martin-breteau@univ-lille3.fr](mailto:nicolas.martin-breteau@univ-lille3.fr))

**Panel 18 African American intellectuals and thinkers 2: What is at stake in producing anthologies of historical writings? Reflections and perspectives on an uncommon genre: a workshop on African-American history and historiography, and book history, open to all lovers of anthologies. Claire Parfait (Paris 13) et Marie-Jeanne Rossignol (Paris Diderot).**

« An anthology has three characteristics: the author is a third party, the anthology looks back at past writings, and it is based on criteria defined by literary history »<sup>1</sup>. Anthologies, the collected fragments or details of one particular work of literature or genre, are primarily relevant in the field of literature. In the United States and in other countries, « culture wars » have been fought over the literary canon. These « culture wars » have led to a broadening of the literary canon and caused the publication of thicker and more inclusive anthologies, taking into account minority writing.

The case of history is quite different. For Leslie Howsam, owing to the specific intellectual culture of the discipline, this kind of enterprise is not looked upon favorably, and the « crisis of historical intelligibility » (Roger Chartier) has not played out around the definition of a « historical canon ». Historical work relies on the knowledge of past historiography and past historical schools, but required reading for history students is usually based on the most recent and supposedly « innovative » work<sup>2</sup>. With few exceptions, the texts written by historians of the past are thus rather neglected and are only re-published in the case of outstanding intellectual personalities (W. E. B. Du Bois) or outstanding monographs (*The Strange Career of Jim Crow* by C. Vann Woodward).

However, the project « Writing History from the Margins », which has focused for the past four years on the intellectual production of African-Americans who wrote during the years of segregation, will conclude in the spring of 2018 with the publication of an online and interactive anthology which brings together 11 journal articles or book chapters by African-American historians, translated into French for the first time<sup>3</sup>. The workshop will start with a live presentation of the online anthology but the organizers welcome participants willing to debate and illustrate the following questions (this list is not exhaustive):

**1) What is/ what could be/ the « use » of anthologies in history?** – Are anthologies helpful for teachers of history? – Can anthologies be seen as instruments of legitimization and promotion for certain historical productions, or as political instruments of protest? – Are anthologies meant to save texts bound to be forgotten?

**2) Editorial and commercial context** – Should the anthologies be printed or accessible online, free or sold through commercial networks?

**3) The work of editing anthologies:** how do editors of anthologies select, classify and organize the fragments? How do they choose between « two types of selection process: either selecting texts that are representative of a certain type of history writing, or selecting texts whose meaning comes from the way they are brought together and arranged within the book »<sup>4</sup>.

**4) Thinking about readers and the readership of anthologies:** – How do we define a target audience? How do readers read an anthology? Does the format inevitably conduce readers to a fragmentary reading of the anthology, and not to a reading of the whole? How do readers appropriate an anthology? –

**5) Anthologies in history and literature:** similarities and differences. Can historical monographs become « classic » texts? Can we read them alongside recent historical writing without being disappointed? Or do we read historians of the past merely to assess the evolution of history as a discipline?

This workshop is open to all scholars working on African-American intellectuals and historians, and interested in discussing their contribution to the discipline of history in North America and the world today, as well as discussing the role of « past historians » in the construction of contemporary knowledge.

Contact: Claire Parfait ([claire.parfait@univ-paris13.fr](mailto:claire.parfait@univ-paris13.fr)) et Marie-Jeanne Rossignol ([rossignol@univ-paris-diderot.fr](mailto:rossignol@univ-paris-diderot.fr)).

## Panel 19. An aesthetic of detail in Hollywood cinema. Gilles Menegaldo (Poitiers) et Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris (Paris Nanterre)

The cinematographic detail is inscribed in the composition of a frame and enhanced by framing effects. It can be staged in such a way that the viewer's attention will be called to it and it will unleash a whole range of emotions. Using details is by no means exclusively a question of framing, misframing, fragmentation or blow up,

---

<sup>1</sup> René Audet et Geneviève Dufour, « De la représentativité à la singularité. Fonctions de l'anthologie et du collectif de nouvelles », *Voix et Images* 35/2 (hiver 2010) : 27-41 <https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/vi/2010-v35-n2-n2/039163ar/>

<sup>2</sup> 3 Leslie Howsam, *Past into Print: The Publishing of History in Britain 1850-1950*, The British Library and University of Toronto Press, 2009, x-xi.

<sup>3</sup> <https://hdlm.hypotheses.org/> (December 5, 2017). See <https://hdlm.hypotheses.org/anthologie> for a brief presentation of the forthcoming anthology.

<sup>4</sup> Emmanuel Fraisse, *Les Anthologies en France*, Paris, PUF, 1997, p. 8.

it also participates in the process of narrativization, especially through the use of recursive strategies but also through concealment/revelation mechanisms. Over the course of the movie, the cinematographic detail can be captured through different styles of framing or lighting, camera angles, and be accompanied or not by a musical score.

We will therefore explore the inscription of details on screen and their evolution as well as the special relation of one frame to another or one movie to the next, and of the part to the whole that they generate. We will also pay special attention to the type of interruption strategy imposed by the inscription of details within the frame which causes a catastrophic collapse of meaning and brings us to reconsider the entire work. Details then function like a magnifying glass enhancing emotion and the sense of what is under scrutiny.

Focusing on details also implies reconsidering the history of film, the creation and transformation of a work of art. Confronting two versions of a movie by the same director foregrounds how minor changes redirect and sometimes revert the chain of meaning. Using details in the frame also contributes to a strategy of borrowing and quotation, whether in the filmic, pictorial or musical field, or of self-citation as was the case with Hitchcock, Kubrick or Scorsese. The paintings inserted in Kubrick's movies (*Lolita*) for instance highlight the reflection and *mise en abyme* effects. Musical citations (in Kubrick's or Scorsese's works among others) can direct the reading of an entire opus (*Clockwork Orange*) or create a subtle correspondence - such as a tribute being paid or a cinephilic echo - between two filmmakers (*Le Mépris* and *Casino* or *Django* and *Django Unchained*). Analyzing Welles's *Macbeth* for instance underscores the issue of integrating details into a coherent narrative. Details are also integral to a global *mise en scene* strategy. In DeMille's movies, they are often in the form of insert shots and participate in a miniaturizing process turning each fragment into a whole world and structuring the filmic narrative.

A thorough exploration of sound bites can uncover their strategic importance as in Coppola's *The Conversation* or De Palma's *Blow Out*. Coppola's movie revolves around the repetition with variations of a detail from a sound bite heard several times. The treatment of the sound detail therefore greatly contributes to the narrative mechanism and the cryptic dimension of the whole film. Meanwhile, it also covers up viewer manipulation in the filmic narrative.

To what extent then can we say that there's a special treatment of details in American films and TV series (*Hannibal*, *True Detective*) that takes root in the work of early filmmakers such as Edwin Porter in *The Great Train Robbery* or D. W. Griffith in *Birth of A Nation* – who allegedly « invented » detail – and keeps on existing, being sometimes consistently staged in some movies by Hitchcock (*Strangers on a Train*) or Antonioni (*Blow Up*) as well as in certain TV shows (*Dexter*, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*) ?

**Contact:** Gilles Menegaldo ([gilles.menegaldo@univ-poitiers.fr](mailto:gilles.menegaldo@univ-poitiers.fr)) and Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris ([paquet.deyris@yahoo.fr](mailto:paquet.deyris@yahoo.fr)).

## **Panel 20. New Forms of Wonder: the Poetics of Degradation. Jean-Yves Pellegrin (Paris Sorbonne) et Anne-Laure Tissut (Rouen)**

This workshop will focus on details in the representation of degrading processes. The proliferation of details contributes to a poetics of erosion and corruption while letting the marvelous emerge from processes of alteration-crumbling and disfiguration—somewhat in the vein of magic realism. As if through a form of contagion, the materiality of ruined objects and the corporality of undone beings are transferred over to language, in the works of Lance Olsen, Peter Markus, Blake Butler, Gary Lutz, or Brian Evenson, to name but a few.

Are those contemporary literary phenomena a prolongation of the vein of “wonder” masterfully analysed by Tony Tanner in American literature from the XIXth century up to the 60s? Relying as it does on the illusion that the text delivers the world as it is perceived, in its raw profusion, and without any structure having been imposed upon it by an organizing narrative—and perceiving—consciousness, the writing of wonder seems to have recently taken a resolute turn towards language as its main object. Most texts eventually proceed from and convey a sense of wonder at words, but the latter seems to have become prominent over the past few decades. Speech appears to have acquired a relative autonomy, while the materiality of words is enhanced, possibly as a reaction against a growing materialism and the worrying, sometimes overwhelming multiplication of objects, as signs of an outrageous wealth spreading its tempting images all around the world, in contrast with rampant poverty. Unless such visions of degradation should come as counterpoints to fancies of immortality as made increasingly real by technologies aimed at prolonging life.

The workshop will question such odd embodiments of discourse, which enable it to touch in other ways than through denoted meaning, and lying beyond the rational, as aesthetic emotion crops up from sordid contexts for the reader who finds herself submerged in sonorous, sometimes even palpable words. Details become anchoring points for reinvented relations between text and reader, even as the text seems to offer itself on its



own, in some perceptual desert, or in the purity of its irruption, according to the ideal acknowledged by Tony Tanner regarding writers of “wonder”. Such relational aim seems to be returning to contemporary American literature, especially in the trend identified as “post-postmodernism”, for lack of a better word, unless the relational aim is the achievement of emergence of a goal which was already present in postmodernism, although not always acknowledged as such.

The workshop could focus, though not exclusively, on the very recent—and diverse—work labeled “post-postmodernist”, in which Mary K. Holland among others perceives a renewal of humanist preoccupations: “[...] literature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century seeks to salvage much-missed portions of humanism, such as affect, meaning, and investment in the real world and in relationships between people, while holding on to postmodern and post-structuralist ideas about how language and representation function and characterize our human experiences of this world” (7)<sup>5</sup>.

Through the analysis of the forms and representations of details, the workshop will endeavor to better define the kind of experience they seem to be reflecting, and which changes in the configuration of experience may be conveyed through the attention paid to details. Following Jacques Rancière, the question could be raised of the concepts on which the esthetics of detail is grounded when it relates to degradation, as well as of “the manners of perceiving and of being affected” on which they depend (*Aisthesis*, p. 9)<sup>6</sup>.

What is the experience of the reader caught in the flux of details expressing a situation drawing toward nothingness, and who is put face to face with the fleeing wealth of the world that is escaping her? What meaning remains to be found to words describing what will soon no longer be? How to go on, start again, amongst the proliferating debris of the old world, and what language to invent anew?

**Contact:** Jean-Yves Pellegrin ([jean-yves.pellegrin@paris-sorbonne.fr](mailto:jean-yves.pellegrin@paris-sorbonne.fr)) and Anne-Laure Tissut ([altissut@yahoo.fr](mailto:altissut@yahoo.fr))

## **Panel 21. The “Telescopic” and the “Microscopic”: Law and Literature in the Long Nineteenth-Century. Hélène Quanquin (Sorbonne Nouvelle), Cécile Roudeau (Paris Diderot)**

*De minimis non curat lex.* According to this Latin maxim still in use today, the law does not concern itself with trifles. Too small a risk, too insignificant an infringement, should legally, and rationally, go unpunished or unnoticed. And yet... In 1880, R. Vashon Rogers, writing for the *Albany Law Journal*, compiled a list of cases involving hairs, needles, pennies, and punctuation as evidence that “Justice . . . has an eye both telescopic and microscopic, and a most comprehensive mind, which, while considering nothing as too great to intermeddle with, yet deems many of the smallest things as not only worthy of, but demanding her attention.” (Rogers) Notwithstanding the ancient dictum, then, details matter. They are what the law, the law as practice and the law as text, is made of. As recently shown by political theorist Danielle Allen, a comma—or is it an “errant spot of ink”?—may after all alter the meaning of the Declaration of Independence. A change in the order of the signatures at the bottom of a newly uncovered second parchment manuscript of the foundational text—a mere “detail,” no doubt—also sheds light on a novel interpretation, laying emphasis “on a unitary national people, and not on a federation of states” (Allen, 2017). In legal, and truer still, in constitutional texts, details signify because they have “force of law.” (Derrida, 1992)

Literary scholars can only concur, who have long been used to paying attention to the merest detail—Flaubert’s barometer being a case in point—, to transmuting the resistance to meaning of the insignificant fragment into the ultimate denotation of the “real” (Barthes, 1968). If details, as the tell-tale signs addressed to readers by writers who know how to ply their trade, are the mainstays of a “hermeneutics of suspicion” (Ricoeur), they are also—absent their eloquence—the very material of a denotative reading of literary texts. Details, then, are of importance as symptoms or mere denotations; in literature as in law, details can save or slay; they tell on the criminal or mete out justice—an analogy that may however prove deceptive.

In *Residues of Justice: Literature, Law, Philosophy* (1996), Wai-Chee Dimock warns us: details, what justice dismisses or its residues, are what the literary text is all about; but in literature, justice comes back to us with a difference. Away from the “language of formal universals, one that translates warring particulars into commensurate ratios,” literature, as the textualization of justice, restores the detail to “the messiness of representation”. Details unsettle interpretation; they are the minute particulars that slip between the premises

---

<sup>5</sup> Holland, Mary K : *Succeeding Postmodernism, Language and Humanism in Contemporary American Culture*, New York, Bloomsbury, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Rancière, Jacques : *Aisthesis* Paris: Galilée, 2011

of the world-as-is. Poetic justice, in that sense, does not gesture towards the hegemony of an abstract system, a totality that guarantees interpretation; literary details as residues upset the very possibility of a resolution.

Building on the fertile field of “law and literature,” which has expanded from its primary focus in the 1980s on “law-in-literature” and “law-as-literature” (Robert Weisberg, 1989), this workshop proposes to pay attention to details in legal and literary texts, legal fictions and fictional laws throughout the long nineteenth-century, with a view to assessing their value and function on what Dimock has called “two different signifying theaters.” Possible questions include:

- How did the “intertextual traffic” (Richard A. Posner) of details between law and literature manifest itself during the long American nineteenth century? (from John Neal to Albion W. Tourgée)
- How did legal cases and norms reverberate in contemporary fiction? As shown by Karla F.C. Holloway in *Legal Fictions: Constituting Race, Composing Literature* (2014), legal constructions of race have pervaded black authors’ fiction since the nineteenth century (William Wells Brown, Charles Chestnutt...). They also permeated canonical literature (examples can be found in Brockden Brown, Cooper, Poe, Twain, Melville, Stowe or Dickinson...). How did the *literary* treatment of legal rules and sometimes minutiae, albeit crucial—for instance the “one-drop rule” and questions of jurisdiction as raised by the Massachusetts Judicial Court decision *Commonwealth v. Aves* (1836) and the 1857 Dred Scott case—participate in the rewriting of legal constructions of race?
- What is the role of details and interpretations in the great “legal fictions” of the long nineteenth century, from the “right of discovery” and “separate but equal” to the system of coverture, which considered husband and wife as one person, that of the man? (Lydia Maria Child, EDEN Southworth, the “slave-marriage plot” (Tess Chakkalakal, 2013)...)

**Contact:** H  l  ne Quanquin ([helene.quanquin@univ-paris3.fr](mailto:helene.quanquin@univ-paris3.fr)) and C  cile Roudeau ([cecile.roudeau@gmail.com](mailto:cecile.roudeau@gmail.com)).

**Panel 22. « From the Small Detail to the Big Picture ». G  raldine Chouard (Paris-Dauphine/LARCA, Paris-Diderot), Camille Rouquet (LARCA, Paris-Diderot)**

This workshop proposes to “take a closer look” (Arasse, *Le D  tail* [translation: *Take a Closer Look*], 2009) at American visual arts through an examination of how various types of details function within artworks. Whether it operates as index, metonymy, or icon, the detail reveals the most minute aspects of systems of representation and of processes of perception. Deceiving or surprising, enigmatic or emblematic, inconspicuous rebellion or bold statement against established codes, the detail offers to the “detailing” critic a new interpretation of the visual. Attention to detail can therefore allow one to reconstruct the genesis of a work of art, and to open critical analysis up to new historical concerns and esthetic forms.

This wide topic engenders many questions, among which the relationship between a detail and the economy of its original artwork, regardless of the medium or genre it belongs to, may be of particular interest. In the American context, the elements that come to be featured in the visual heritage or in the esthetic canon deserve particular attention; their consecration ensues from a system of representation that should be examined in the light of some of those details which exist, according to D. Arasse, to “draw us in, to create discrepancies, to be anomalies.” Exploring the “possibilities presented by these anomalies,” even in icons, will no doubt suggest connections between macro-history (history of the nation) and micro-history (history of communities and individuals) ranging across a fruitful imagery of America.

**Contact:** G  raldine Chouard ([geraldinechouard@gmail.com](mailto:geraldinechouard@gmail.com)) and Camille Rouquet ([camille.rouquet@me.com](mailto:camille.rouquet@me.com)).