

SECTEUR, DISCIPLINE, DOMAINE, OBJET DE RECHERCHE ET CHAMP D'APPLICATION

A) Identifiez, par ordre de priorité (1, 2, 3 ou 4), le(s) principal(aux) secteur(s) de recherche de votre demande.

1 sciences humaines et sociales

B) Quelle(s) discipline(s) caractérise(nt) le mieux les activités de recherche de votre demande?

1. Histoire

2.

C) Au regard des domaines de recherche du Fonds Société et Culture, dans lequel situez-vous votre demande?

Cultures, religions et civilisations

D) Identifiez, par ordre d'importance, les objets sur lesquels portent les activités de recherche de votre demande (deux choix maximum).

1. Migrations, peuplements, contacts culturels

2. Trajectoires familiales

E) Dans quel(s) champ(s) d'application s'inscrivent les activités de recherche de votre demande (deux choix maximum)?

1. Populations

2. Solidarité sociale

F) Indiquez les six mots-clés, du plus général au plus particulier, qui décrivent le mieux les activités de recherche de votre demande.

migration experiences

family networks

narratives of migration

postwar Italy

social memory

postwar Canada

TITRE

Décrivez le titre du projet de recherche, pour fin de promotion (doit être rédigé en français).

Histoires en mouvement : Lettres de famille, histoire orale et la mémoire sociale des migrations

Informations relatives à votre directeur de thèse de doctorat

Carr

Nom du directeur principal

Graham

Prénom du directeur principal

Nom du laboratoire, centre, équipe ou groupe : _____

Département : History Dept. and Assoc. Dean, Research and Graduate Studies

Établissement : Concordia University

THÈSE DE DOCTORAT

A) Titre de la thèse de doctorat

Those Who Remained Behind: How Italian Families Made Sense of Migration in Postwar Italy and Canada

B) Résumé de la thèse de doctorat.

My doctoral thesis is an empirically-based original research that explores how Italian family networks made sense of migration through 500 letters written by immigrants and their families between 1947 and 1973. This interdisciplinary research is co-supervised by Dr. Graham Carr (History) and Dr. Sally Cole (anthropology) at Concordia University, and by Dr. Bruno Ramirez at Université de Montréal. It argues that the impact of migration on both sides of the ocean was enormous, and that the transnational flow of letters was central to the making-sense process of migration, settlement and mental negotiation of separation. These letters—retrieved in the private family archives of Italian immigrants in Canada--were sent from families in Italy to immigrants in Canada who had just arrived in the postwar years in cities like Montreal, Toronto, Michel-Natal, and Powell River. By drawing on these unpublished letters of six kin networks, this groundbreaking research underscores the centrality of texts of migration as dialogic expressions of transnationalism as they manifest themselves in the bi-directional flow of news, information, norms, perceptions, advice, and other realms inherent to long-distance communication between kin, including dynamics of gender and gender relations postwar Canada and Italy, movement of kinship and networks across borders, myths and realities of living and working in "America", and emotional discourses that are part of the cultural language of the letters. Moreover, it advances knowledge on the personal, familial and local segments of postwar Italian rural and urban working-class societies.

C) État d'avancement de la thèse de doctorat

I have completed my data analysis, and am drawing conclusions from my findings. I am completing one chapter of my thesis to be presented in Nov. 06 at the Social Science and History Association Annual Meeting. As guest co-editor, I am working on the special no. of Studi Emigrazione in which I contribute two articles related to my thesis. I am also revising an article related to my thesis (presented in Feb. 06, CEETUM) that was submitted to Diversité Urbaine. From Nov. onwards, I am writing and completing my doctoral thesis for submission in 2007.

D) Lien entre le sujet de la thèse de doctorat et le projet de recherche postdoctorale

Grounded on the findings of my doctoral research, this project argues that two sources of memory in migration (family letters and oral history narratives) are key empirical sources that offer a singular contribution to understanding the human elements in migration. This original research compares and contrasts the findings related to the content, text and context of the letters (of my doctoral research) with new findings resulting from oral history accounts. This empirical and methodological contribution has not been problematized in the field.

RÉSUMÉ

Décrivez votre projet de recherche (doit être rédigé en français) (maximum une demi-page).

Cette recherche compare deux sources clefs de la mémoire issue du vécu des Italiens qui ont émigré au Canada dans l'après guerre. Par le biais d'une analyse qui compare les lettres envoyées depuis l'Italie et le Canada par des familles d'émigrants aux narratives orales de contemporain/es dans les deux nations, cette recherche examine comment chacune des deux sources de mémoire sociale aurait agit dans la ré/construction d'un passé migrant. Cette démarche est unique dans son genre, car cette corrélation entre l'histoire orale et les lettres des familles en tant que sources de mémoire n'a jamais été posée comme problématique historique. Ce projet puise dans les contributions théoriques d'historiens qui ont de plus en plus conçu la migration comme étant un processus transnational et dont les résultats scientifiques ont été des plus novateurs. Notre démarche méthodologique s'adresse à chacune de ces sources, ainsi qu'à leur contextes et contenus spécifiques—ce qui devrait m'amener à des conclusions originales quant à la dimension humaine au cœur du processus migratoire. Elle promet de pousser nos connaissances des phénomènes migratoires vers des nouvelles frontières, tout en invitant les historiens des migrations au Canada ou ailleurs de récupérer ces réservoirs de mémoire qui disparaissent assez rapidement.

DESCRIPTION DU PROJET DE RECHERCHE

Décrivez clairement votre projet de recherche en précisant, dans l'ordre : a) la problématique; b) l'originalité du projet et sa contribution attendue à l'avancement des connaissances; c) l'approche théorique; d) les objectifs; e) la méthodologie ou la démarche utilisée; f) le calendrier des réalisations (évituez les abréviations) (maximum trois pages).

In an interview held in June 2005 in Mogliano Veneto, Italy, an elderly woman who had frequently written to her brother when he immigrated to Canada in 1948 offered me the following reflection on her brother's absence from home: "I really don't remember too much, other than we missed him terribly, and awaited his return home." Ironically, the over one hundred letters her brother has preserved of his family in Italy tell a different story. A) In contrast to memory generated through oral interviews, letters written in a context of migration reveal a plethora of frozen details on how families made sense of the spatial and temporal distance separating them. In light of this window into the human dynamics of migration--revealing personal, familial, emotional, and socio-cultural universes that have been immortalized on paper--these letters, written by ordinary men and women are textual memory. Moreover, as sites of memory, the letters--similarly to, if not more than a photograph--have the capacity of evoking strong, dynamic reactions by family-archivists as they are reread and reflected upon years later. On the other hand, oral history methodologies are increasingly used by social historians to recapture the living memories of historical events and contexts. Since the 1970s, oral history has specialized in retrieving, archiving and digitizing the "ordinary" voices, silences and subjectivities of past and present historical events and contexts. Through two sources of memory (textual and living), this research examines the postwar migration experiences between Italy and Canada. In migration history, this movement is a key example of the transatlantic "highway" that involved the intense mobility of people, letters, news and networks. In just two decades, over 400,000 men and women boarded ships heading for Canada, leaving behind an enormous void in their families and communities back home. By analytically comparing and contrasting Italian family letters of migrants and their families in Canada and Italy with contemporary oral narratives of women and men in both nations, this research examines how each source of social memory is related to the re/construction of a past in migration. This analysis is unique of its kind. The correlation between oral history and family letters as memory sources has not been historically problematized. B) This postdoctoral project argues that the migration experiences retrieved through private family letters and oral history methodologies are a significant empirical source that needs to be valorized, archived and analysed for its contribution in enhancing our understanding of the human ramifications in migration. The letters I have canvassed, in addition to new letter-collections, are testimony to the overarching "wire system" (Ramirez, pers. communication) of moving messages, ideas and aspirations across borders. The time to recover these historical accounts is now. As time elapses, the interview possibilities with postwar Italian immigrants who arrived in Canada over 50 years ago and the availability of their letters are dwindling, thus contributing to the fast disappearance of this reservoir of memory. By retrieving and comparing oral history accounts with family letters, this empirical and methodological contribution investigates the shifting and consistent mental mappings connected to emotional making-sense processes, kin

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network movements, human agency, decision-making, and hopes and dreams, as they are inherently part of migration experiences, yet have largely been neglected in traditional migration paradigms. Recently, oral historians (Portelli, Passerini, Berger Gluck and Patai) have emphasized the merits of recording ordinary lives as a means of developing a fuller "ground-up" perspective on the life-stories of ordinary women and men. At the same time, they faced the complexities in retrieving memory, which as historian P. Nora suggests, "is affective and magical, [and] only accommodates those facts that suit it..."(8) In contrast, while immigrant letters have been used as key sources in scholarly analyses (Thomas and Znaniecki, Erickson), through the recent work of D. Gerber we begin to conceptualize the complexities and opportunities in working with immigrants' letters. While my project complements Gerber's study of letters, it also underscores key elements on the conceptual analysis and significance of letters in migration. This work of comparing and problematizing two salient sources of memory is an empirical and methodological contribution that advances knowledge on primary human dynamics in migration to Canada and opens research frontiers in other contexts. C) This project draws from theoretical frameworks articulated by migration historians on the importance of a transnational perspective of migration movements (Thistlethwaite, Harney, Ramirez, Baily, Gabaccia) and the rewards of a comparative theoretical framework (Gabaccia, Ramirez, Baily). These historians have accurately argued that migration movements and experiences need to be examined in both the receiving and sending societies as a form of transnational continuum. The new insights and theoretical questions this comparative research engenders on a micro- and macro-scale are tantamount to highlighting the regional, local and familial contexts pertaining to interviewed participants and their letters. It illuminates the intersections between letters sent and received, and the effects of correspondence on the life choices of migrants and their kin left behind, thus underscoring the historical premise that migration is indeed a transnational experience. Gerber's theoretical framework on immigrant letters is also important to my work. By examining the strategies of interpersonal relations through immigrant correspondence, Gerber's analysis valorizes immigrant letters, as previous works have done, and more poignantly, underscores the salience of letters in migration processes. My work contributes to this innovative démarche. D) First, this research valorizes the sources of textual memory and living memory as essential vehicles in unveiling human dynamics in migration processes. Through this research, the emotions, affections, rituals and obligations experienced by women and men in migration emerge as key elements of research that have until now been unavailable. In doing so, this research shows how women and men were deeply impacted by migration on a local and global scale. Secondly, this research is testimony to the legitimacy and utility of these sources as historical tools of analysis oriented towards advancing historical knowledge on past and current migration experiences. Finally, this project raises new methodological and theoretical questions and encourages students and scholars to retrieve, and record

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new findings through similar sources. These sources relate to an era prior to the dissemination of telephone communication among working-class families, and as a result, this research promises to yield new findings on the human and emotional layers in migration when letters were the primary means of communication. E) My methodological approach is oriented towards the nature of each source and its historical content and context, enabling me to draw original conclusions on the human dimension of migration. First, new letter collections will need to be retrieved--in addition to the letters I have already collected--through an expanding personal network I have canvassed as a result of previous fieldwork. The second phase requires planning and designing oral interviews with approximately 50 participants and their families in Rome, Campobasso, Pordenone, Vicenza and in Montreal and Toronto. Once the interviews will be completed, I will be transcribing, selecting and analysing the content of the interviews in order to evaluate them independently and in relation to each other. Next, the content and context of both sources are carefully analysed, evaluated and compared in an effort to re/construct elements of a past in migration of narrators and correspondents. Finally, once the findings are complete, my hypotheses will be elaborated for publication in scholarly journals in the U.S., Canada and Italy and subsequently reworked and expanded in a draft of the monograph. F) During the first 6 to 9 months of the project, I will be locating and collecting new private letter-collections from migrants in Montreal and Toronto. At the same time, I will be holding interviews with participants in Montreal and Toronto. Further, under the guidance of Dr. Gabaccia, I will be actively engaging in research and teaching activities at the Immigration History Research Center (IHRC) and History dept. at the University of Minnesota, and consulting the IHRC's repository of papers and publications on immigrant life, and its collections of Italian immigrants' letters and oral histories. In Montreal, as I conduct fieldwork research, I will also engage in research and teaching activities with Dr. Ramirez at the History Dept. of the Université de Montréal, and the Groupe de recherche étnicité et société. In the next three-month period, I will locate additional private letters in Italy, and hold interviews with participants in Italy through my network of contacts. The following 6 months require gathering, selecting, archiving, comparing and contrasting my research findings and hypotheses drawn from an in-depth analysis of both sources of memory, and consulting with Dr. Gabaccia and Dr. Ramirez. In this stage, I will be analytically comparing the contents/contexts of the narratives of migration and the memories they elicit through an emerging theoretical framework. During the final six-months, I will submit my findings to scholarly journals as I draft the monograph. Briefly, by retrieving, recording, analysing, comparing and problematizing these two memory-sources, this empirical and methodological contribution opens new frontiers of historical investigation on the human, multi-layered realities of migration and pushes open gateways of historical knowledge and impels students/scholars in migration to retrieve this disappearing memory reservoir among other migrant groups in Canada and elsewhere.

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

Présentez une bibliographie sommaire en lien avec le projet de recherche, la problématique et les procédures méthodologiques (maximum une page).

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- Erickson, Charlotte. *Invisible Immigrants: The Adaptation of English and Scottish Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century America*. Coral Gables, Fl.: University of Miami Press, 1972.
- Gabaccia, Donna. *From the Other Side: Women, Gender, & Immigrant Life in the U.S. 1820-1990*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994.
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- Thomas, William I. and Florian Znaniecki. *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*. 5 volumes. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1927.
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MILIEU DE RECHERCHE (maximum deux pages)

- A) Justifiez la qualité et la pertinence du milieu de recherche (faites ressortir la spécificité, la complémentarité entre votre projet et la programmation de votre superviseur ou du milieu de recherche proposé).
- B) Spécifiez votre apport au milieu de recherche proposé.
- C) Justifiez la valeur ajoutée du choix du milieu de recherche proposé par rapport à la formation doctorale.

a) I am extremely fortunate that pioneering Italian migration historians, Dr. Donna Gabaccia, Director of the Immigration History Research Center and Professor of History at the University of Minnesota, and Dr. Bruno Ramirez, Professor of History at the Université de Montréal enthusiastically support my project as co-supervisors. At the University of Minnesota, the Immigration History Research Center (IHRC) maintains the largest repository of papers, periodicals and publications on immigrant and refugee life in North America, and a rich collection of oral histories and immigrants' letters. Each year, it sponsors 25 to 40 scholarly events (lecture series, workshops, seminars) on migration, and welcomes 200 researchers from around the world to consult its collections. In collaboration with the Journal of American Ethnic History, the IHRC is involved in publishing new findings in migration. As postdoctoral fellow associated with the IHRC, I will be working with Dr. Gabaccia in planning its scholarly events. I will also present my research during the IHRC's interdisciplinary seminar, and participate as lecturer in its graduate seminars. At the History dept., my knowledge and experience will serve to provide council and advice to graduate students. Dr. Gabaccia is a foremost world expert in migration history, Italian global migration, and immigration to the U.S. with interests in interdisciplinary research, gender, labour and ethnicity. In Canada, leading migration historian, Dr. Bruno Ramirez is Professor of History at the Université de Montréal, and active member of the Groupe de recherche étnicité et société (GRES) which specializes in multidisciplinary issues on migration. Through GRES, researchers plan seminars and related events, present their findings and publish their work (Diversité Urbaine). As postdoctoral researcher associated with Dr. Ramirez and his research activities in Canada and abroad, I will be lecturing in his yearly graduate seminar and other graduate courses, in addition to participating in related research/teaching activities at History and GRES. As a foremost authority in Canada on Italian migration to Canada, Dr. Ramirez is widely recognized for his work on Italian and French-Canadian migration (including oral history narratives). Throughout their careers, both Dr. Ramirez and Dr. Gabaccia have broken new ground by adopting innovative methodological approaches (quantitatively and qualitatively), and theoretical frameworks (comparative analysis) to their studies, while providing new historical findings to the field. Over the years, they have been instrumental in training students in migration history, and have collaborated together on several research initiatives on Italian world migration.

b) At the University of Minnesota's IHRC and History Dept., Dr. Gabaccia has invited me to work with her in planning the lecture series, workshops, and seminars for two years of my residency. I am expected to present my research during the IHRC's interdisciplinary seminar, and plan an event (seminar or workshop) related to my research interests. Dr. Gabaccia has also asked me to

MILIEU DE RECHERCHE (maximum deux pages) (suite et fin)

- A) Justifiez la qualité et la pertinence du milieu de recherche (faites ressortir la spécificité, la complémentarité entre votre projet et la programmation de votre superviseur ou du milieu de recherche proposé).
- B) Spécifiez votre apport au milieu de recherche proposé.
- C) Justifiez la valeur ajoutée du choix du milieu de recherche proposé par rapport à la formation doctorale.

introduce students enrolled in her graduate seminar, "Comparing World Migrations" in spring 2008, to my specific interdisciplinary methodology and areas of expertise. I will also provide council and advice to graduate students in migration at the University of Minnesota's History dept. At the Université de Montréal's History Dept., Dr. Ramirez has asked me to participate as lecturer in his graduate seminar, "Immigration et étnicité en Amérique du Nord," and the Italian program's course he has helped design, "Italie-Quebec: itinéraires culturels." Moreover, I will be participating in several of the dept.'s teaching activities, including undergraduate courses and graduate seminars on family history. I will also be providing council and advice to graduate students with similar research interests in migration studies. Through GRES, I will be interacting with migration experts, participating in the annual conference and submitting some of my research findings in Diversité Urbaine.

c)At the IHRC and the History depts. of the Universities of Minnesota and Montréal, I will benefit enormously from the stimulating environments in migration history. The PhD in Humanities program (Concordia University) in which I am completing my doctoral thesis is an interdisciplinary program in which I have benefited highly by investigating narratives of Italian migration from an anthropological and historical angle. This postdoctoral project branches out from my PhD thesis, and inserts itself within the parameters of migration history. As a postdoctoral researcher at the IHRC and History depts. of the Universities of Minnesota and Montreal, I am orienting my academic career within the discipline of history. Further, by engaging in research and teaching activities outside of Quebec/Canada, and into the U.S., I will be increasingly familiar with pioneering research initiatives being developed on a transcontinental scale. The possibilities of expanding my network of researchers for future scholarly collaborations multiply considerably as I engage in seminars, workshops, debates, discussions, and interactions with scholars of migration. Moreover, this postdoctoral research will enhance my linguistic abilities outside a strictly English-speaking environment. By interacting with scholars and students in French at the Université de Montréal in Montreal (one of the cities for my fieldwork research), I will be among few migration scholars who fluently conduct research and teach in more than two languages. Moreover, in light of personal circumstances involving my immediate family in Montreal, a co-supervision between the two universities is an optimal opportunity to engage in full-time research in both locations, while maintaining close contact with my family. In short, this collaborative effort with two of the world's foremost experts on Italian migration history at two highly regarded research centers in North America positions me in an ideal scholarly environment in which the possibilities of exceeding the frontiers of scholarly investigation are boundless.