EVANGELINE: AN INQUIRY INTO CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND STORYTELLING

Acadia (Excerpt)
Karissa Wedman
from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

voices
stand
loud
the deep-voiced ocean
speaks
the hearts
leaped
the thatched-roofed village, home of Acadian farmers
forever
hope
enures
beauty
strength
traditions sung
Acadie, home

Acadia
lay in the fruitful valley
elves
Out of the turbulent tides
and welcomed the sea to wander
the tranquil evenings of summer

them
homeward
bolder grew
merely laughed
gladdened the earth
the reign of rest
seaside
their favorite
full
grand
peals of laughter

echoed back
heavily
faces
laughed
Couched in reflected sunshine
the
beating heart
not forgotten
best but not broken
beloved
triumph
remember
laughed
with gladness

Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie (Excerpt)
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow - 1847-1852

Prelude
This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines
and the hemlocks,
Bearded with moss, and in garments green,
indistinct in the twilight,
Stand like Druids of old, with voices sad and
prophetic,
Stand like harpers hear, with beards that rest on
their bosoms.
Loud from its rocky caverns, the deep-voiced
neighboring ocean
Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the
wail of the forest.

This is the forest primeval; but where are the
hearts that beneath it
Leaped like the sea, when he hears in the
woodland the voice of the huntsman
Where is the thatched-roofed village, the home of
Acadian farmers.
Men whose lives gled on like rivers that water
the woodlands,
Darkened by shadows of earth, but reflecting an
image of heaven?
Waste are their pleasant farms, and the farmers
forever departed
Scattered like dust and leaves, when the mighty
winds of October
Seized them, and whirled them aloft, and sprinkled
them far over the ocean
Naught but tradition remains of the beautiful
village of Grand-Pré.

Ye who believe in affection that hopes, and
endures, and is patient,
Ye who believe in the beauty and strength of
woman’s devotion,
List to the mournful tradition still sung by the
pines of Acadie;
List to a Tale of Lore in Acadie, home of the
happy.

Description: This project seeks to illuminate the
importance of storytelling to a culture’s collective
memory and consciousness through an inquiry of the
Evangeline Myth. The story of Evangeline has shaped
much of Acadian and Cajun identity. However, this
story was written by a non-Acadian, and therefore is
born of an outsider-looking-in perspective. This project
illustrates why an outsider perspective may have
negative consequences on a culture by using specific
elements from the Evangeline Myth to prove that the
Evangeline Myth is not an accurate portrayal of
Acadian-ness. Instead, it dilutes and whitewashes both
the Deportation of 1755 and the Acadian identity in the
minds of outsiders and insiders alike. A discussion of
writing as resistance introduces a type of poetry in
which former works are erased to create a new
narrative known as erasure or blackout poetry. This
erasure is done on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s
Evangeline itself, thus creating a new narrative out of
the old. I acknowledged that I am, like Longfellow, a
white Anglophone who does not belong to the Acadian
community. I further acknowledged that Acadie is not a
monolith, so this analysis of the Evangeline Myth may
not resonate in every corner of the diaspora.

“What did we the most harm was
the story of Evangeline”
-Zachary Richard, Cajun Heart (2016)

This work is inspired by Cam Awkward-Rich’s (2020) poem “Everywhere We Look” and Sally Wen Mao’s (2019) poem “Occidentals.”