

Amanda Leigh Cox
Concordia University
MA Translation Studies – Year II
514.528.1610
shesfoundintranslation@gmail.com

Évangéline in translation: Récit, Resistance.

This presentation will examine Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem *Évangéline*, and its French Canadian translation by Pamphile Lemay. It will be demonstrated that the translation style of the French text attempts to resist the English-language original's Post-Colonial essentialization.

A quasi-historical epic poem published in 1847, *Évangéline* recounts the fate of young Acadien lovers *Évangéline Bellefontaine* and *Gabriel Lajeunesse*. The day after Gabriel asks his sweetheart *Évangéline* for her hand in marriage, their love affair is brought to an abrupt crossroads as the British Crown forcibly deports the Acadien settlement in 1755's *Le Grand Dérangement*.

Written almost a hundred years after the tumult that inspired it, *Évangéline* is very clearly marked by its author – an English man (Longfellow) who had never experienced Acadien culture, nor anything that approaches the hardship and terror felt by Acadiens during and immediately after *Le Grand Dérangement*. All the more interesting then, that in spite of the rampant historical inaccuracies and cultural insensitivity in *Évangéline*, since its translation into French Canadian it has established itself as the defining tale of Acadien nation.

Lemay's translation replicates Longfellow's style with exacting precision, which enables readers to experience Longfellow's melodramatic, flowery, and romantic writing – in stark contrast to the reality of the poem's subject. In this way, the translation attempts to subvert the authority of Longfellow's English, Post-Colonial text by faithfully replicating the essentialization of the Acadien people *Évangéline* therefore provides an interesting basis for studying resistance to Post-Colonial authority as seen through translation.