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De Religione: Telling the Seventeenth-Century Jesuit Story in Huron to the Iroquois. Edited and translated by John L. Steckley.

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single entry. Previous editors did not always include attributions to a particular teller, but whenever possible, Mould identifies the source and provides detailed information about when and under what circumstances the story was collected. He notes whenever his own interviews were interrupted, even the brief pauses when a tape needed changing. But the volume's organization never allows the painstakingly researched academic apparatus to get in the way of telling the story. Citations and explanations are kept apart from the main body of text so that the individual stories appear with only the title, teller's name, and date collected or published. As soon as the tellings begin, the editor recedes into the background and lets the Mississippi Choctaws have their say. Mould is more facilitator than interpreter, and in *Choctaw Tales* he is not "explaining" the storytelling practices of the community to outsiders so much as arranging a meeting where they can talk among themselves.

Both previously published and new stories have been transcribed with minimal editing, and the resulting array of voices and styles serves as an object lesson in the complexity of representing oral literature in writing. Mould points out that in recording Pisatuntema's version of "Na Losa Falaya" in 1910, ethnologist and archaeologist David Bushnell presents a summary description of the supernatural being called *na losa falaya* instead of any specific narrative, a strategy that downplays verbal artistry while foregrounding elements of a belief system. Other translations have called attention to the literary value of the recorded material but by substituting written literary conventions for oral ones. Charles Lanman's 1850 recording of "The Spectre and the Hunter," translated and written by two Choctaws educated in English, J. L. McDonald and Peter Pitchlynn, is an intricately crafted and polished work, but the added literary flourishes lack the immediacy and intimacy of oral literature. By contrast, the newly gathered material allows the vocal richness of performance to infuse the written version. This is especially evident in two tales told by Cynthia Clegg to an audience of young children, whose questions and responses become part of the story as well. Their participation not only enhances the drama but also underscores the role of storytelling in the community. As told by Harry Polk, "Half-Horse, Half-Man" demonstrates a lively rhythm and flair for drama and humor. Together the stories and storytellers express creativity, wit, and a rich tribal heritage.

In the preface Mould describes a small, spiral-bound notebook used by Estelline Tubby to refresh her memory before beginning a story. *Choctaw Tales*, he says, is meant to be a sort of "communal notebook," a resource for the Mississippi Band of Choctaws and interested outsiders alike (xx). Unlike so many anthropologists who have written entirely for academic audiences, Mould has gathered stories from a community and helped to shape them for use by that community. *Choctaw Tales* deserves both praise and emulation.

Laura Adams Weaver
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De Religione: Telling the Seventeenth-Century Jesuit Story in Huron to the Iroquois. Edited and translated by John L. Steckley. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 224 pages. \$34.95 cloth.

John L. Steckley has made a significant contribution to the study of Christian missions and their importance to the Native peoples of America, particularly the Jesuit missions located among the Iroquoian-speaking Hurons and the Five Nations Confederacy during the seventeenth century. Steckley has studied and written about the Huron peoples and brings an expertise that comes from devoting so much of his life to this field. *De Religione* was first published in 1920 in the *Fifteenth Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario*. Steckley's edition presents the original Huron text on the left page opposite his English translation.

De Religione is a seventeenth-century document written by the Belgian Jesuit Father Philippe Pierson. Although the original was written many years earlier in Wendat, the language of the Huron people, it is directed at the five nations of the Iroquois: the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca. Fr. Pierson copied an earlier text, a common technique Jesuits used to learn Native peoples' languages.

According to Steckley this fifty-three-page pamphlet is the longest text in Wendat, which makes it particularly valuable because the last Native speaker died in the mid-twentieth century. Still, any linguistic contribution of this Wendat text has to be tempered by its French authorship. Steckley says *De Religione* is primarily valuable as an alternative to *Jesuit Relations* because it "helps to reveal the differences between what the Jesuits reported they communicated to Aboriginal people and what they actually said" (6). Steckley appreciates *De Religione* as an important source for the study of Iroquoian languages because it was written in the seventeenth century, when Europeans influenced Iroquoian languages much less than they would in later centuries.

Steckley's forty-five-page introduction explains much about the original Jesuit efforts to translate words before the priests understood the grammar and vocabulary of the Iroquoian speakers. The Frenchmen were also challenged by European metaphors, such as "the fires inside the earth" for those who die outside the faith. Raised to defy their torturers' fires, the Iroquois had to be convinced that hellfire did not offer them an opportunity to demonstrate their courage. Using Fr. Jean de Brebeuf's early catechism language, Steckley shows that the Jesuits decided to abandon their first errant attempts to translate difficult Christian concepts. The Jesuits learned from experience with the Hurons and from each other. The Jesuits chose to abandon Brebeuf's ungrammatical noun creations, using instead verb forms for *sin*, *Christian*, *God*, and so forth. He shows that Brebeuf's early effort to translate "our father" was received, unintentionally, as literally "she to us is father," which the Jesuits corrected before Fr. Pierson transcribed *De Religione*. In the early years of the Jesuit missions Brebeuf recognized the challenge of finding a word for the concept of soul because the Hurons had so many words for the various manifestations of what Christians simply called

“the soul.” The introduction includes familiar surveys of the history of the Jesuit missions and Iroquois relations with the French during the seventeenth century. Scholars unfamiliar with the historical context of the Jesuit catechism will appreciate the surveys, but both the uninitiated and the scholar will appreciate the clear linguistic explanations of translations and mistranslations of concepts and cultures.

This translation of the Jesuits’ catechism from Huron to English not only tells a modern audience what the Jesuits presented to the Iroquoian speakers as Catholic dogma but also tells us about what the Hurons heard from the missionaries. Steckley provides the reader with modern translations of Christian concepts into Huron, such as “mistake” for *sin*. We can understand the limitations of the Jesuit grasp of the Huron language and speculate on the Iroquois listeners’ comprehension of the Jesuit presentation of Christianity. By translating *De Religione*, Steckley helps scholars to appreciate the difficulties with which the seventeenth-century missionaries struggled to convey their Christian worldview. Troubles the Jesuits faced included cultural differences regarding wealth and poverty, for example. Obvious disparities in Europe did not exist in Iroquoian culture. The first Jesuits in Canada tried to convey “rich” by combining a verb root—*aki-*, meaning “to be a spirit”—with a suffix that meant “large, augmented.” This combination produced a word meaning literally “to be an augmented, large spirit.” What it meant to Hurons is open to speculation. Jesuits struggled with a word for “poor” also. Steckley struggled, himself, with accurately portraying the Huron understanding of the European sense of hierarchy and obedience.

De Religione is not a book read for recreation; it is a book to study. It has ten sections on Catholic beliefs, ranging from the nature of God, plants, animals, humans, and spirits; the body and soul in life, death, and eternal life; heaven and hell; the end of the world; the devil; the Jesuits; and mission, baptism, and creation. Considering the problems of translations, this is not the place for modern readers to learn about seventeenth-century Catholic teaching, but it provides a useful glimpse of the efforts made by Jesuits in New France to convey their theology to the Native peoples. Steckley makes a good decision not to try to “modernize” his translation so much that it would hide the original awkwardness of the Jesuits’ efforts. He chose to translate the Jesuit term for *sin* as “to be mistaken in some matter” without volition because he wants to preserve the Huron and Iroquois peoples’ “sense of confusion and frustration” (27). The Jesuits transcribed this text as an aid to learning the Iroquoian languages; thus, the theological explanations are expressed as the missionaries would convey them in their preaching and teaching. The text contains much repetition, which certainly helped the new priests commit to memory sentences and phrases that express Church teaching.

Steckley recognizes that his translation of the Jesuits’ Huron to modern English has problems similar to the Jesuits’ original efforts to translate their French into Huron, and he inevitably raises questions of how we are to interpret the annual reports Jesuits sent to France to publish their work during the middle of the seventeenth century. This book will aid any serious scholar of

missions to Native peoples. It belongs in every academic library as well. John Steckley has contributed an essential work to the field.

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Evil Corn. By Adrian C. Louis. Granite Falls, MN: Ellis Press, 2004. 126 pages. \$18.00 paper.

What is immediately striking about Adrian C. Louis's latest collection of poetry is its eerie cover and title. The cover artwork, *Scarecrow Skeleton*, depicts an animate corpse with fiery hair and a ghoulish smile amid an endless field of red and gold corn (or wheat) illumed by a setting harvest sun in the background. The eyes, nose, and mouth of the skeleton are clownlike, and its head is tilted as if it knows its viewer, as if it welcomes or waits for her or him. Even the book's title, *Evil Corn*, sets up an interesting confrontation: One term has associations with Judeo-Christian notions of hell and sin, while the other carries implications of an indigenous source of food and nourishment. Juxtaposed, the two words—which ride heavy atop the haunting cover piece—create an oddly caustic framework. The poems that follow embody that same aggregation of seemingly disparate parts, where readers are invited to walk into the scarecrow's field toward the foreboding horizon, but all the while, readers find themselves laughing alongside the speaker despite their uneasiness.

The trip, however wry, is starkly composed of the mundane. Louis's poems reside in the everyday; but amid this, the speaker shoots profoundly acute insights about the world around him. In his signature poem, "Evil Corn," the speaker has moved to the world of rural southwestern Minnesota, where "life is ordered," but "something about the place gives my bones the heebie-jeebies" (15). He is "left to the sun and / rain, this land of quaint squares of dark soil sprouts a / bright uniform green from road to road that murders anything natural" (15). This is the groundwork he lays for a penetrating acumen that follows: "Evil corn and its masters have / murdered this land" (15). The speaker explains how the fields around him do not yield the sacred corn that physically and spiritually nourished his Native ancestors across the continent for millennia; this "green death rises from this bad-heart land," a "mutant flora, a green American Frankenstein born of chemicals and greed" (16). Louis's poem, like so many of his others in the collection, turns quickly from ordinary observation toward unearthing and piercing political criticism of the world in which we all live.

What the collection exposes best, however, is the speaker's humorous, honest, and often self-effacing voice, which is fearless and constant in relaying the most intimate moments. And in these, where the carnal and libidinous are posited next to the religious and proper, Louis is able to subvert the very dichotomy he erects with a voice that is comedic. In Louis's poem "Minnesota Turkey Daze" the speaker—in "trying to decipher the corn and my place in it" (38)—exposes political and social injustices: