



# REWRITING THE CLASSICS IN EARLY MODERN CANADA: CENTONIC POEMS, COLONIAL ARCHIVES AND JESUIT UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE PAST

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In a short Latin poem written in 1663 by the French Jesuit François Ragueneau, we encounter a classicizing and implicitly colonizing vision of early modern Canada, one populated by heroic figures drawn from ancient models. The poem is filled with quotation of and allusion to classical poets: Virgil, Ovid and Juvenal, among others. Of course, these allusions to ancient poetry are not merely ornamental: they are generative, in the sense that they propose an aetiology for the Jesuit experience in New France. As in other centonic contexts, the intertexts are the point, and we will see that this text and its allusions are just one small piece of a larger corpus of Jesuit Latin literature in and on New France that writes the old world into the new. But we will also attempt to move beyond these literary allusions, in order to examine the manuscripts that transmit these poems; to consider their place in the colonial archives that house them; to interrogate the role of ancient literature in the epistemic violence that underlies Jesuit missionary efforts in Canada; and to understand the ongoing relevance of this rather obscure corpus to classicists living and working on this land today.

**3:30-5:30 PM**

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