

## Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) and the Politics of Civic Panegyric

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### The author:

Richard Serjeantson works on the history of the natural, human and political sciences between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. He is the author of essays on the political thought of Francis Bacon (in *For the Sake of Learning*, forthcoming from Brill in 2016); John Milton (in the *Oxford Handbook of Milton*, Oxford, 2009); and Thomas Hobbes (in *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, 2006), and of the Introduction to a recent student edition of Hobbes's *Leviathan* (Wordsworth Classics, 2014).

### The paper:

Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) is most often seen as inaugurating an entirely new genre - utopianism - that immediately seized the imagination of early modern Europe, and which has continued to inflect many different forms of social and political thinking ever since. This paper, by contrast, suggests that Thomas More's brilliant book might be better understood as a barbed contribution to an already well-established mode of renaissance political reflection: the genre of civic panegyric. In doing so, it offers some new perspectives on two key interpretative problems: the Utopians' form of government; and where Utopia might be found.