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Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3
Site Saint-Charles, salle 002

Séminaire « Le voyage européen des républiques anglaises XVII^e – début XIX^e siècles »
dirigé par Luc Borot (IRCL, Univ. Montpellier 3) et Myriam-Isabelle Ducrocq (IRCL, Univ. Paris 10)

Conférence de Rachel Hammersley

James Harrington

The man behind the republican mask



Ever since John Toland published an edition of James Harrington's works in 1700, authors and editors have tended to shape Harrington for their own purposes. While Toland appears to have taken fewer liberties with Harrington's text than he did with some of the others he edited, his frontispiece and other paratextual material encouraged readers to understand Harrington's works in a way that suited the political and religious circumstances of the early eighteenth century, and was in tune with Toland's own campaigns. Where Toland sought to downplay Harrington's republicanism, insisting that his ideas were perfectly adaptable to the constitutional monarchy that had emerged out of the Glorious Revolution, more recent authors have challenged Toland's interpretation, insisting on Harrington's status as a 'classical republican' and 'England's premier civic humanist and Machiavellian'. Yet Harrington's current status, as a committed republican, raises a number of questions regarding his life and works. Why, as a future republican, was Harrington not more active in the political and military campaigns of the

Civil Wars? How could a leading republican of the 1650s have been on such good terms with Charles I in the late 1640s? And, if Harrington was a leading republican, why did he disagree so fundamentally with other interregnum republicans, such as Sir Henry Vane and John Milton? This paper will offer a fresh examination of Harrington's life and works, in an effort to provide a basis for answering these questions. It will argue that, politically, Harrington was less concerned with countering monarchy than with the establishment of a form of modern democracy. It will also move away from the narrowly political reading of Harrington that has been a key feature of republican accounts, revealing - among other things - the importance of literary form and style to Harrington's works.

Dr Rachel Hammersley is Senior Lecturer in Intellectual History at Newcastle University and an expert on early-modern British political thought and its influence in eighteenth-century France. She is the author of *French Revolutionaries and English Republicans: The Cordeliers Club, 1790-1794* (Boydell and Brewer, 2005) and *The English Republican Tradition and Eighteenth Century France* (Manchester University Press, 2010). She is currently writing an intellectual biography of James Harrington, details of which can be found at www.rachelhammersley.com.