



Hobbes, Sovereignty, and Early American Literature (Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture)

Paul Downes

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Hobbes, Sovereignty, and Early American Literature pursues the question of democratic sovereignty as it was anticipated, theorized and resisted in the American colonies and in the early United States. It proposes that orthodox American liberal accounts of political community need to be supplemented and challenged by the deeply controversial theory of sovereignty that was articulated in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651). This book offers a radical re-evaluation of Hobbes's political theory and demonstrates how a renewed attention to key Hobbesian ideas might inform inventive re-readings of major American literary, religious and political texts. Ranging from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Puritan attempts to theorize God's sovereignty to revolutionary and founding-era debates over popular sovereignty, this book argues that democratic aspiration still has much to learn from Hobbes's *Leviathan* and from the powerful liberal resistance it has repeatedly provoked.

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