**Queer(ing) Biopolitics: Settler Colonial Sovereignty and the War on Terror[[1]](#footnote-1)**

ABSTRACT: This paper argues for a resituation of biopolitics from the framework of Foucaultian racism to the framework of settler colonial sovereignty, offered via close reading of Hobbes's Leviathan through an appropriated version of Lee Edelman's No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive. It argues for a queer reading of settler sovereignty as the distinctively modern formation of power that constitutes life as futurist desire. This re-reading explains the simultaneity of biopolitics and necropolitics and resolves the puzzle of how a championing of life can go hand-in-hand with the genocide of Native peoples. It concludes by showing the connection between settler colonialism's “savage” and empire's “terrorist,” demonstrating that the War on Terror is the logical consequence and necessary result of the settler colonial construal of life as futurist desire.

Politics is a name for the temporalization of desire, for its translation into a narrative, for its teleological determination.

Lee Edelman[[2]](#footnote-2)

[T]o have no desire is to be dead.

Thomas Hobbes[[3]](#footnote-3)

Even in its consolidation, the United States is haunted by the specters of its origins.

Jodi Byrd[[4]](#footnote-4)

In the grammar of Islamophobia, the future is tense.

Moustafa Bayoumi[[5]](#footnote-5)

Native Studies scholars and anticolonial critics alike have argued that contemporary U.S. imperial formations remain bound to the European incursions in North America and the violences of genocide, dispossession, warfare, disease, transfer, and forced removal that characterized the emergence and establishment of the U.S. nation-state. These scholars suggest that the study of contemporary empire must not only acknowledge the fact of this connection, but actively seek to excavate the historical, political, and cultural continuities between them in order to clarify the character of what Derek Gregory has called “the colonial present.”[[6]](#footnote-6) As Jodi Byrd explains, U.S. empire was begun with “the birth of the United States” and “its assumption of European colonialist agendas that sought to appropriate indigenous lands, knowledges, presences, and identities for its own use.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Perry Anderson points out that this is uniquely characteristic of the United States, whose “originating coordinates of empire were coeval with the nation.”[[8]](#footnote-8) As Moon-Kie Jung argues, the United States should be re-conceived not as a nation-state but rather an “empire-state,” since “for the United States, the political community to which the state has been coupled has never been the nation,” but rather hierarchically differentiated populations and unequal sovereignties. In particular, when viewed from “the vantage point of the Native peoples of North America,” for example, it is clear that “the birth of the United States as a state was at once the birth of the United States as an empire-state.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Reading biopolitical sovereignty in and for the 21st century, then, requires taking into account not simply its imperial manifestations, but also its colonial origins. Failing to do so risks producing an anti-imperial political analysis that covers, colludes with, or consolidates settler colonialism.[[10]](#footnote-10)

In this paper, I attempt to respond to this call from Native Studies scholars and anticolonial critics. However, I do so from within the terms of a different field altogether—that of queer theory—and from what I call a critical Nietzschean perspective. Using queer theory to interpret European sovereignty—in particular, using the work of Lee Edelman to re-read that classic thinker of sovereignty, Thomas Hobbes—makes clear that sovereignty is biopolitical not because of an exceptionalist understanding of life, as Giorigo Agamben has it, but rather because sovereignty is what constitutes life *as* life to begin with. In other words, life is not a “bare” or basely biological phenomenon that is only subsequently and inappropriately politicized. Rather, it is political through and through, an ideological determination constituted via the apparatus of sovereignty. Further, life is constituted “in itself” as overloaded with civilizational value. A privileged object of value and rationality, “life” in sovereign biopolitics is that which is impossible to refuse without being constituted as backward, irrational, unthinkable, and abominable. Thus this production of “life itself” entails the simultaneous production of “death,” a wholesale negation of “life itself” that is figured as simultaneously hostile and absurd.

This reading of biopolitics is both an elaboration and a revision of Foucault’s formulation of racism in *“Society Must Be Defended.”*[[11]](#footnote-11)As is well-known, in this text Foucault argues that modern biopower, which nurtures (the) life (of some) while leaving others to die, can only become actively murderous when it becomes racist. So, for example, while massacres, wars, genocides, drone strikes, and targeted assassinations may appear to contradict the biopolitical project of fostering life, racism resolves this paradox by inserting a biological breach in the population: “What in fact is racism? It is primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power’s control: the break between what must live and what must die.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Foucault argues that state racism “makes it possible to establish a relationship between my life and the death of the other that is not a military or warlike relationship of confrontation, but a biological type relationship.”[[13]](#footnote-13) Thus:

[T]he enemies who have to be done away with are not adversaries in the political sense of the term; they are threats, either external or internal, to the population and for the population. In the biopower system, in other words, killing or the imperative to kill is acceptable only if it results not in a victory over political adversaries, but in the elimination of the biological threat to and the improvement of the species or race. There is a direct connection between the two. In a normalizing society, race or racism is the precondition that makes killing acceptable.[[14]](#footnote-14)

However, following Mark Rifkin’s insight that a Foucaultian understanding of racism and biopolitics obscures and potentially naturalizes the settler state,[[15]](#footnote-15) as well as a host of scholars who have noted Foucault’s oversight of the history of European colonization in his excavations of modern power,[[16]](#footnote-16) I want to re-situate Foucaultian biopolitics more fully within this history in a way that does not occlude the fact of settlement. While Foucault suggests that the biological breach between what must live and what must die is the biopolitical operation of (specifically state) *racism* (his main referent for which is the Nazi genocide, the hazards of which I detailed in the previous chapter), I want to suggest instead that this biopolitical operation is the specifically *settler colonial* function of *sovereignty*, which produces the Native as “savage” simultaneously as it brings into the settler into being as “civilized.” The assertion of a “caesura,” in other words, is the operation not of racism but settler sovereignty. As I will elaborate below, sovereignty can institute the category and value of “life” only in and through the simultaneous positing of the deathly threat to that life which must be ceaselessly warded off, repudiated, and destroyed. It is this establishment of “civilization,” in other words, that brings into being the vile and absurd threat of “savagery,” otherwise known as the existence and endurance of indigenous people(s). As Kevin Bruyneel notes, “Only after centuries of European-based conquest, colonization, and settlement in North America did terms like *Indian* or *indigenous* gain any meaning at all by setting the collective identity of people such as the Cherokee, Pequot, Mohawk, Chippewa, and hundreds of other tribes and nations into contrast with the emerging Eurocentric settler societies…the words *Indian* and *American Indian,* like *Native American, aboriginal,* and *indigenous,* emerged as a product of a co-constitutive relationship with terms such as *colonizers, settler,* and *American*.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

This breaks with Foucault’s thesis that biopolitics more or less surpasses older, sovereign configurations of power.[[18]](#footnote-18) Moreover, it attends to the suggestion of many Native Studies scholars that closer attention be paid to differences between racism and (settler) colonization.[[19]](#footnote-19) Using Edelman to elucidate Hobbes, however, offers its own, specifically *queer* contribution to the literature on biopolitics and biopolitical theory. Reading Hobbes from a queer theory perspective foregrounds an oft-unremarked feature of *Leviathan;* namely, that the life it champions is fundamentally a phenomenon of *desire*, not (simply) biology and its proper or improper politicization. While Edelman is reliant upon Lacan to theorize desire, Hobbes is rarely given credit for his own astute psychology, which is by no means a depth psychology and obviously well pre-dates the emergence of psychoanalysis. Nevertheless, when Hobbes defines the motion that is life as fundamentally a matter of desire, he thereby anchors sovereignty in desire, since sovereignty exists in his schema solely to secure the motion that is life. Turning our attention from biology to desire, however, is not simply an innovation in biopolitical theory. It also allows the ideological and, more specifically, *moralizing* elements of biopolitics and settler sovereignty to come decisively into view. Unlike Nietzsche, who sees morality as the vengeful accomplishment of weak people who resentfully deploy it as and through punishment, Edelman instead argues that the moralization of life becomes possible via the transformation of human existence into a narrative of desire and its (dis)satisfaction. In my Nietzschean appropriation of Edelman and application of his work to biopolitical settler sovereignty, this means that the moralization of biopolitics and its civilizational investments are enabled by a particular story about desire that subjects human life to a futurist temporality, a logic that I will argue is a fundamentally settler colonial logic. What this chapter will show, then, is that at the heart of European sovereign biopolitics is an oppressive, heteronormative ordering of time that queers all those before, beyond, or outside its civilized progress narrative as specters of death, “savage” and immoral others who become valid targets of necropolitical elimination, and precisely in the sanctimonious name of preserving “life itself” and upholding its value.[[20]](#footnote-20) Necropolitics is therefore not somehow at odds with the biopolitical order such that it requires racism to explain it, as Foucault argues. Rather, necropolitics is the very operation of biopolitics which, through the vehicle of settler sovereignty, establishes life, the value of life, and those whose lives are valuable (i.e., “civilization”), simultaneously *through* its demarcation of death, the nihilism and meaninglessness of death, and those whose lives amount to a deathly threat to all meaning and value (i.e., “savagery”).

This intervention suggests productive collaborations among Settler Colonial Studies, Critical Indigenous studies, canonical political theory, and queer theory. Indeed, a motivating impulse of this chapter is to show that these different fields of inquiry can together provide a robust and critical picture of the biopolitical machinations of settler colonial sovereignty. If, as John Collins suggests, the global War on Terror is an outgrowth of the deep structures of colonialism that founded settler states,[[21]](#footnote-21) then there is much to be gleaned from returning to their theoretical origins and interrogating them from a broader perspective that can account not simply for their historical injustices, but also their foundational understanding of desire and its futurist narrativization that constitutes, on the one hand, “civilized” subjects of life and, on the other, irrational, immoral “savages” who both represent and portend death to those civilized beings and their civilization itself.

1. **The Future is Modern[[22]](#footnote-22)**

In *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive,* Lee Edelman argues that temporality itself is heteronormative, unfolding a linear, teleological progress narrative that demands self-sacrificial anticipation of an ideologically rosy future that, by definition, never arrives. That future, symbolized by an iconographic Child, is innocent, infinitely valuable, and vested with redemptive potential. The future as Child is a future that never ends, a future that never grows up, a future in which life and survival—if not ours alone, then ours in the guise of the species and its future generations—will be preserved to infinity. The impossibility of such an achievement, of course, is by both definition and design. Yet futurism obscures this impossibility and secures its own smooth functioning, Edelman argues, via the production of queerness. “Queer” designates all those who reject the future or stand in the way of reproduction or refuse to compromise their present aims or defer gratification. Queerness, in short, is a threat to survival. Edelman argues that queers instantiate a “death drive” within the social, a nihilistic and perverse harbinger of the disintegration of all meaning and cohesion that haunts any, only ever tenuous, stable human formation. At the political level, he recommends an embrace ofthis death drive as *the* act of resistance. That such an embrace entails the destruction of the social as such in its annihilation of futurism is no objection in his view, since putting a stop to the futurist narrativization of desire will also bring an end to the socio-political machinations by which queerness is produced precisely *as* death, nihilism, and the destruction of sociality as such. A defense of queerness, Edelman’s argument is also an embrace of death.

Setting aside both the Lacanian framework that grounds this analysis as well as the commonly received version of *No Future* wherein reproductive futurism relegates homosexuals to the domain of the childless and perverse, I want to suggest instead that *No Future* be read as articulating the *ideology of survival* that underpins settler colonial civilizationalism. Rather than a psychoanalytic theory of white, bourgeois heteronormativity, I read *No Future* as a biopolitics of modern sovereignty that, when put into conversation with Thomas Hobbes (as I will do in the following sections), makes clear the specifically *settler* character of that sovereignty and the temporal logic of desire that explains settler colonies’ transformation into expansionist security states. Challenging Edelman’s presentation of both “futurism” and “politics” as unmarked, universal entities and situating them instead within the colonial history of European political thought makes clear that the temporality he analyzes originates in a colonial project that is distinctively modern and vested with specifically settler anxieties about its own existence and future, anxieties that explain its transformation into securitized imperial expansionism.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Crucial to this re-reading of Edelman’s work is distinguishing between what he calls “reproductive futurism” and what I see as the more general logic of futurism as such*.* While much attention has been paid to the reproductive futurism that dooms homosexuals and feminists to instantiating society’s death drive in this text (although his mention of feminists is often overlooked), Edelman’s theory of politicsand the more generic logic of futurism he outlines has to date been under-recognized.[[24]](#footnote-24) Yet *No Future* certainly offers a political theory insofar as it claims to delineate “the logic within which the political itself must be thought.”[[25]](#footnote-25) That logic is futurism, of which I suggest that *reproductive* futurism be understood merely as one particular type. Put simply, *futurism* synopsizes the “presupposition that the body politic must survive,”[[26]](#footnote-26) the putatively apolitical article of faith in the necessary continuity of politics as such. *Reproductive* *futurism* is characterized more specifically by “a set of values widely thought of as extrapolitical: values that center on the family, to be sure, but that focus on the protection of children.”[[27]](#footnote-27) Futurism’s hallmark telos is survival, while that of reproductive futurism is, as its name suggests, reproduction; hence its specific iconographic signifier, the Child. However, the Child is only one possible version of the future’s symbolization; this iconography could take any number of forms insofar as the future itself can take any number of forms. Regardless, whether discussing the survival of the body politic in general [i.e., futurism] or the future as characterized specifically by the Child [i.e., reproductive futurism], Edelman importantly argues that their presuppositions are taken to be apolitical, which is precisely what makes them “so oppressively political.”[[28]](#footnote-28) For in either case, whether it is survival or children, the future is what cannot be opposed if political meaning and intelligibility are to be possible. To participate in politics at all, even in protest or dissent, means to “submit to the framing of political debate – and, indeed, of the political field – as defined by the terms of…reproductive futurism: terms that impose an ideological limit on political discourse as such.”[[29]](#footnote-29) The question of the future, in other words, is beyond debate, beyond any pro or con; the issue of futurity is wholly one-sided and definitely pro-life (as Edelman puts it, futurism is the “party line” that “every party endorses”[[30]](#footnote-30)). Regardless of the form it takes—whether it is survival in general or children in particular—demarcations of the future circumscribe the contours of the political itself and determine what can and cannot be spoken there, what can and cannot be “reasonably” upheld or advocated as politically viable. It is the absolute limit of intelligibility, sociality, community, and belonging, and this whether we are discussing a politics of the Right or the Left.

Edelman’s bold assertion that “*every* political vision is *a vision of futurity*,”[[31]](#footnote-31) however, requires some qualification if it is to be fully appropriable for critical biopolitical theory. Suspicious reader John Brenkman helpfully provides the political theory references missing from *No Future,* noting that “modern critical social discourse, whether among the Enlightenment’s *philosophes,* French revolutionaries, Marxists, social democrats, or contemporary socialists and democrats” all engage in the kind of future-wagering Edelman describes as definitively political.[[32]](#footnote-32) What goes unremarked in Brenkman’s otherwise apt observation is its historical and geographical qualifications. That is, futurism is a decisively *modern* and *European* phenomenon that must be tethered to, among other things, colonization of the so-called New World, the rise of the nation-state, and the advent of capitalism. Futurism is less an ahistorical or universalized psychoanalytic theory of the subject and its (de)formation than it is a fundamental baseline of modern culture and the workings of modern*,* necessarily European and Eurocentric, politics. Although, in *No Future*,Edelman appears to dismiss the necessity of historicizing his work,[[33]](#footnote-33) he nevertheless seems to do so himself in another essay, “Against Survival,” which clarifies and elaborates the argument of *No Future.*  There he discusses something he calls “modernity’s ideology of cultural survival,”[[34]](#footnote-34) which sounds rather like the general logic of futurism I am interested in. As well, in his contribution to a panel discussion of the antisocial thesis, he suggests that *No Future* “approaches negativity as society’s constitutive antagonism, which sustains itself only on the promise of resolution in futurity’s time to come, much as capitalism is able to sustain itself only by finding and exploiting new markets.” [[35]](#footnote-35) The analogizing of futurism to capitalism certainly suggests its status as a signal determinant of that historical and cultural formation known as “modernity.” Moreover, although Edelman does not offer *No Future* as a reading of either modernity or biopolitics, he does make clear that its argument unfolds on at least two levels, only one of which is the seemingly more “straightforward” level of hetero-repronormativity and queered homosexuality. As he writes, in response to a question regarding what might come “after” queer theory,

This compulsion to produce the “after” of sex through the naturalization of history expresses itself in two very different, though not unrelated, ways: first, in the privileging of reproduction as the after-event of sex—an after-event whose potential, implicit in the ideal, if not always in the reality, of heterogenital coupling, imbues straight sex with its meaning as the agent of historical continuity; second, in the conflation of meaning itself with those forms of historical knowing whose authority depends on the fetishistic prestige of origin, genealogy, telos. In each case the entry into history coincides with the entry into social narratives that work to domesticate the incoherence, at once affective and conceptual, that’s designated by “sex.”[[36]](#footnote-36)

Here Edelman seems to suggest that reproductive futurism—and the Child and *sinthom*osexual who are its starring antagonists—is both analogous with and simultaneously a specification of a broader phenomenon called “meaning itself,” which only becomes possible through a naturalized, progressive, narrative construal of history that “sex,” now in quotation marks, troubles, because it is “the site of drives not predetermined by any fixed goal or end” and, therefore, the site “where the subject of social regulation might come undone and with it the seeming consistency of the social order itself.”[[37]](#footnote-37) This is the version of futurism I’m interested in appropriating. My contention is that this form of futurism unqualified is the generalized temporalization of desire that resolves the broader question of “meaning itself,” and that this futurism is a specifically modern, European phenomenon. Indeed, in this same article, Edelman presents the Child as interchangeable with both “the absolutism of identity” and “the fixity of what is,”[[38]](#footnote-38) making clear both the social/symbolic overlap of futurism with reproductive futurism and the non-necessity of their coincidence or identification.[[39]](#footnote-39)

If futurism can be read as the temporal logic of modern, European and Eurocentric politics and political theory, then both the “queer” and the “Child” of Edelman’s model of reproductive futurism are placeholders as much as specifically defined references to, on the one hand, actual queer people and, on the other, “historical children.”[[40]](#footnote-40) *No Future* has garnered criticism for seeming anachronistically to overstate the threat of homosexuality to sociality; Tavia Nyong’o suggests that Edelman’s reading of homophobia and heteronormativity is nostalgic for a political moment already past, when homosexuality really did pose an ominous and spectral threat to the social order but does so no longer.[[41]](#footnote-41) However, when Edelman talks about “queers,” he does not necessarily mean LGBTQ people; rather, he means “all [those] so stigmatized for failing to comply with heteronormative mandates.”[[42]](#footnote-42) He actually is quite clear about this, saying that there is “nothing intrinsic to the constitution of those identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, transsexual, or queer” that “predisposes them to resist the appeal of futurity, to refuse the temptation to reproduce, or to place themselves outside or against the acculturating logic of the Symbolic.”[[43]](#footnote-43) Instead, Edelman argues, queerness “figures…the place of the social order’s death drive.”[[44]](#footnote-44) Queerness is the “*structural position*”[[45]](#footnote-45) endlessly generated by the futurist logic that is politics:

[Q]ueerness could never constitute an authentic or substantive identity, but only a structural position determined by the imperative of figuration; for the gap, the noncoincidence, that the order of the signifier installs both informs and inhabits queerness as it inhabits reproductive futurism. But it does so with a difference. Where futurism always anticipates, in the image of an Imaginary past, a realization of meaning that will suture identity by closing that gap, queerness undoes the identities through which we experience ourselves as subjects, insisting on the Real of a jouissance that social reality and the futurism on which it relies have already foreclosed.[[46]](#footnote-46)

In this account, the queer is the necessary counterpart to the Child and what most threatens it. This is both a descriptive claim (“The sacralization of the Child…necessitates the sacrifice of the queer”[[47]](#footnote-47)) and a normative one, for Edelman insists that “queerness *should* and *must* redefine such notions as ‘civil order’ through a rupturing of our foundational faith in the reproduction of futurity.”[[48]](#footnote-48) I will return to the normative component of this argument in Chapters 4 and 5. For now, what’s important to take away from this discussion is that queers are *structurally* opposed to the social order insofar as they refuse futurity’s seduction and prevent its realization: “the queer dispossesses the social order of the ground on which it rests: a faith in the consistent reality of the social—and by extension, of the social subject; a faith that politics, whether of the left or of the right, implicitly affirms.”[[49]](#footnote-49) What’s also clear is that, while the queer as homosexual and the Child as historical child may be concrete, daily exemplars of certain ubiquitous (if by no means exclusive) forms of white bourgeois heteronormativity, understood as a specific version of a more generalized futurist logic, the Child cannot simply be equated with reproduction, child-bearing, and child-rearing, just as the queer cannot simply be equated with the homosexual in Edelman’s temporal sense. The queer and the Child, while having specific material referents in Edelman’s particular reading of *reproductive* futurism, also hold structural places in the larger logic of *generic* futurism, and thus render this queer theory a political theory of modernity by which we can read the futurism of sovereign biopolitics. As will become clear in this chapter, the future of European biopolitical sovereignty is encapsulated by the notion of “civilization,” while the figure of the queer is the “savage.”

1. **The Future is Biopolitical**

Using Hobbes to illustrate generic futurism makes clear that futurism is specifically a *biopolitics* since, in Hobbes, Sovereign is he who makes life. This is not an Agambian biopolitics that declares, following Schmitt, that “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception.”[[50]](#footnote-50) On the contrary; in Hobbes, sovereign is he who produces life itself, both its existence and its content, and not its exceptionality from properly political life. Seeking a solution for (civil) war, in *Leviathan* Hobbes looks for a mechanism by which life – if not (only) of the individual, then at least of the Commonwealth that unites all subjects into one enormous individual (as illustrated by the book’sfamous frontispiece) – may be preserved forever, an obviously futurist endeavor. More radically, however, Hobbes also suggests that the Sovereign constitutes life *as* life to begin with, and that he does so by bringing the future into existence. Explaining and substantiating such an interpretation requires me to (re)turn to the already well-trodden ground of that all-too-familiar foundational—some might even say primal—scene of modern political theory, the state of nature. More than simply a theoretical or interpretive exercise, however, such an examination sheds light on the very real settler contours of biopolitical sovereignty (and their consequent, material impact). Robert Nichols has made clear that the state of nature narrative was crucial to the portrayal of indigenous peoples as “savage” and backward and therefore to their retroactive erasure and European denial of their claims to land and sovereignty. Such portrayals were effectively materialized, for example, in 18th and 19th century U.S. Indian policy.[[51]](#footnote-51) Such stories are by no means harmless, then, or mere philosophical devices, or inessential to the material workings of violence—they are part and parcel of conquest.

In that storied state of nature, then, which Hobbes defines as a situation where there is no security, no “power able to over-awe them all,”[[52]](#footnote-52) there is, in Edelman’s terms, *no future.* This is true in the most basic sense. As Hobbes observes, in the state of nature “there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth.”[[53]](#footnote-53) Without any assurance that what we make will see the light of day, much less remain ours long enough to be used or consumed by us, there is clearly no incentive to produce anything. Nor does agriculture make any sense, requiring as it does a long-term investment of time and labor in tracts of land that themselves must be constantly guarded when not being farmed. All this is seemingly self-evident, following as it does from Hobbes’s assertion that the state of nature lacks any guarantee of security.

Yet the situation is in fact more dire than this, and Hobbes’s argument more radical. While it is true that there is no agriculture, manufacture, or “commodious Building” in the state of nature (since large-scale social cooperation is impossible), Hobbes also relates the more complicated cultural and existential deprivations human beings face there, including “no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society.”[[54]](#footnote-54) Perhaps unwittingly revealing his class background, Hobbes acknowledges the impossibility of cultural formations like art, literature, and geography – “Society” in its bourgeois sense – in the state of nature. And yet, it is not simply the case that there is no Rembrandt in the state of nature; rather, there is no *imagery*. It is not simply that there are no maps in the state of nature; rather, there is no *representation*. It is not simply that there is no Shakespeare or Molière or Cervantes in the state of nature; rather, there is no *written word.* Put otherwise, it is not simply that material goods cannot exist where there is no Sovereign because both the process and the product of labor are endangered. More primarily, the kinds of cognitive, affective, and symbolic processes upon which these rely are impossible. By guaranteeing security, the sovereign protects not only the production process by which a map is made and secures the physical map itself from theft or destruction. He also makes possible the conditions necessary for the activity of representation itself, which allows for the possibility of maps or paintings or literature in the first place. In short, without a sovereign, representational or imaginary activity is impossible.

Similarly, then, Hobbes acknowledges that there is no “accounting of Time” in the state of nature. The argument here, I think, is the same. It is not simply that there are no clocks or calendars in the state of nature (although there surely are none) but more primarily that, in the state of nature, human beings have no way of measuring or marking for themselves the passage of time. In Edelman’s terms, they are unable to transform *time* into *temporality*. To produce a calendar, for instance, requires that one has observed a pattern of events with sufficient regularity such that they can be graphically mapped or represented and projected into the future. Similarly, to make a watch (Hobbes’s specific example of inorganic life in the Introduction and a significant fetish in this context), one has to have a sense of the passage of time – a notion of past, present, and (anticipated) future. According to Hobbes, without a sovereign, we not only lack machines or devices by which to measure time, but we are unable to make time comprehensible to ourselves, unable to render it intotemporality or understand it as a feature of lived human existence. Of course, this makes sense given Hobbes’s account of the state of nature as the lack of all security. When one is engaged in an unending struggle to secure one’s present existence, not only is the future unimaginable (because so tenuous), but the past becomes effectively irrelevant. One’s entire attention is devoted to securing the endurance of *now,* which is the only reality one is capable of knowing. However, this means is that, in Hobbes’s account, time is not a natural feature of human existence. Like art, literature, geography, and sociality, temporality is one political construct among many. Inhabitants of the state of nature abide in an enduring present that they are unaware of *as* an enduring present.[[55]](#footnote-55)

Surprisingly, then, timeis critical for Hobbes’s understanding of war. Just before the paragraph from which I have been quoting, Hobbes offers a description – he does not call it a definition – of war and how it is to be recognized. Time is crucial to it:

Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre; and such a warre, as is of every man, against every man. For Warre, consisteth not in Battell onely, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by Battell is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of *Time*, is to be considered in the nature of Warre; as it is in the nature of Weather. For as the nature of Foule weather, lyeth not in a showre or two of rain; but in an inclination thereto of many dayes together: So the nature of War, consisteth not in actuall fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is Peace.[[56]](#footnote-56)

Both poetic and apt, the analogy of war to bad weather captures the projective uncertainty that defines life in the state of nature and renders an “accounting of Time” there impossible. For of course it is impossible to determine with certainty the “inclination” of either another person or the weather. Just as cloudy weather does not necessarily forecast rain, so too do hostile neighbors not necessarily portend one’s imminent, violent demise.[[57]](#footnote-57) It is only when there is no guarantee otherwise that such conditions can amount to bad weather or war, respectively. Effectively, Hobbes is saying, unless the sun is incontestably shining, the weather is bad. Unless there is an indisputable reign of an all-powerful sovereign authority, there is war.[[58]](#footnote-58)

This is a curious claim for Hobbes to make, however, given that he then goes on to assert that there is no accounting of time in the state of nature. War may, indeed, consist of a “tract of time,” as he says, but there is no way such a tract could be parceled out or determined by anyone actually inhabiting the state of nature, since this would require an ability to distinguish between now, before, and after. I think the resolution of this seeming contradiction lies in recognizing that Hobbes’s assertion that war is constituted by a “tract of time” holds true only after war has come to a close. It is an observation possible only from a subsequent perspective of security and peace, a position wherein one has the comfort and leisure to reflect upon prior experiences and characterize them as being in relationship with other moments in time. Put differently, Hobbes’s claims about the state of nature and what happens there are anachronistic. They are statements about *time* from the perspective of *temporality*.

Therefore, while the Sovereign is crucial to bringing war to an end, what Hobbes’s discussion of war makes clear is that the Sovereign brings it to an end via *temporality*. Oddly enough, the Sovereign guarantees our physical survival by instituting of the passage of time—specifically, by securing (the possibility of) a future*.*[[59]](#footnote-59) A significant consequence of this reading is that the Sovereign effectively constitutes the very meaning and content of life itself. For, considered temporally, there is a way in which there is no distinction between life and death in the state of nature, insofar as there is no way to tell present from future. The state of nature’s enduring present entails that “life” there is kind of limbo-like existence, a suspension of living or perpetual near-death experience wherein we can never be certain of anything – even the one thing Hobbes deems a certainty in this text, self-preservation*.* Even more of a political theology than Schmitt imagined, Hobbes’s Sovereign is effectively the speaker of the sentence, “Let there be life.” This is perhaps why it is so important to institute the Commonwealth in the first place – not simply to preserve life, as Hobbes explicitly suggests, but, more primarily, to definitively demarcate life *as* life in the first place and differentiate it from death. Sovereignty, in short, is *the* definitive biopolitical regime, not insofar as it facilitates the proper life of some by abandoning others to an exceptionalized or “bare” life, as Agamben suggests, but rather because it *constitutes* and *determines* life as such, thereby distinguishing it from what becomes only subsequently recognizable as death.

Using *No Future* to read sovereign biopolitics also has the added virtue of foregrounding the role of desire in this schema. For, by inaugurating temporality, the Sovereign does more than simply guard our physical bodies; he also constitutes us as subjects. In his Introduction to *Leviathan*, Hobbes defines life as “but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principall part within.”[[60]](#footnote-60) It is on the basis of this admittedly spare definition that he argues that watches and engines are also alive, since “life” consists of no more or less than internally initiated motion. Yet, later on in the text, Hobbes offers much more than simply a physics of human motion, presenting an elaborate psychology in Chapter 6 describing the internally initiated motion of human beings specifically in terms of affect and desire. However “thin” (to use the philosophers’ word) this psychology may seem to be, it is not on the table at all with regard to watches and engines, suggesting that human “life” consists of something more or other than purely physical motion and that the problem of security cannot be solved within the physical domain alone. Security is established through temporality, and its existence is clearly performing more than simply a physical function. Indeed, the very fact that a future is necessary for survival at all suggests that “life” is more or other than a barely physiological category.

The importance of psychology to life and security is clear in Hobbes’s account of the state of nature, which is characterized not simply by the ever-present threat of physical death, but also by a lack of hope, and thus the ever-present threat of an emotional stasis that, in the motionlessness it portends, effectively amounts to death in the Hobbesian scheme. Physically, of course, and as is well-known, life in Hobbes’s state of nature is a kind of unceasing, mortal iteration of King of the Hill. He describes the rise of warfare in it this way:

if any two men desire the same thing, which neverthelesse they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their End, (which is principally their owne conservation, and sometimes their delectation only,) endeavour to destroy, or subdue one an other. And from hence it comes to passe, that where an Invader hath no more to feare, than an other mans single power; if one plant, sow, build, or possesse a convenient Seat, others may probably be expected to come prepared with forces united, to dispossesse, and deprive him, not only of the fruit of his labor, but also of his life, or liberty. And the Invader again is in the like danger of another.[[61]](#footnote-61)

Humans’ natural equality leads to competition, and the lack of security makes every other person a potential threat to one’s own existence. Even if one did manage to secure some precious morsel – food, say, or a (relatively) safe resting spot – by triumphing over the “single power” of a competitor, one has to fear yet another “Invader” who might arrive on the scene, perhaps in alliance with others, to dispossess him and potentially also enslave or kill him (As Hobbes notes near the end of the chapter, there is no property in the state of nature, “no *Mine* and *Thine* distinct”;[[62]](#footnote-62) rather, something is yours only if you can get it, and only for as long as you can hang onto it). Victory in a single battle, then, is insufficient to secure oneself, for one will simply face bigger, more powerful enemies down the road. And this is as true for the succeeding “Invader” as it was for the initial victor – both face exactly the same dilemma.

Considered psychically, however, it turns out that life in the Hobbesian state of nature is similarly difficult to endure. Human relations there are governed by what he calls “diffidence of one another.”[[63]](#footnote-63) Diffidence is importantly different from fear, the emotion most often associated with Hobbes and his state of nature. But Hobbes does not actually claim either fear in general or fear of death in particular as a cause of war, nor does he claim that either characterizes the development of war in the state of nature. Rather, he says that death is the worst “inconvenience” of the state of nature and names fear as one of the three passions (along with desire and hope) that inclines men to *peace.*[[64]](#footnote-64)Hobbes instead blames war on diffidence, which is a subset or amplification of despair—he defines it as “Constant *Despayre.*”[[65]](#footnote-65) Both fear and despair require “opinion” – they are feelings coupled with beliefs about either our own capacity or the capacity of the object, and these beliefs are crucial to the affective experience. But diffidence emphasizes not the power of the object, as fear does, but rather the powerlessness of the subject.[[66]](#footnote-66) Unlike the fear of death, which anticipates threat from outside, diffidence is a potentially immobilizing angst about the inadequacy of our own power. Moreover, Hobbes’s qualification of diffidence as *constant* despair suggests that regular or typical despair is time-limited, a feeling that at some point comes to an end. Diffidence is thus the *enduring* belief that one is unable to get what one wants. Constantly waiting, wanting, seeking, then, the prospect of a never-ending train of ever-stronger and more powerful Invaders causes one in the state of nature to succumb to uninterrupted hopelessness about the prospect of attaining anything at all. And while the experience of diffidence may not seem equivalent to the experience of death, the motionlessness it portends suggests that it is not simply physical violence that threatens death in the state of nature, but also psychological dis-ease.

To escape the insecurity and diffidence of the state of nature, one must not simply confront and topple competitors for desired objects like food or shelter. Momentary triumph in a game of the King of the Hill is only that – momentary. Rather, one must actively seek to expand one’s sphere of influence to include ever-greater reaches of power to the extent that one is dominating as many other people as possible – not just King of the Hill, but King of the Playground, the entire school, block, neighborhood, etc. Hobbes writes,

And from this diffidence of one another, there is no way for any man to secure himself, so reasonable, as Anticipation; that is, by force, or wiles, to master the persons of all men he can, so long, till he see no other power great enough to endanger him: And this is no more than his own conservation requireth, and is generally allowed.[[67]](#footnote-67)

This pre-emptive prerogative to dominate is also the legitimacy of the sovereign power Hobbes articulates in *Leviathan*, for this is its exact function. By extending his sphere of influence over an entire body of people, the Sovereign becomes perpetual King of the Hill, instituting a future for all by ensuring their defense and survival. No longer a temporary triumph, the Sovereign brings the enduring present of the state of nature to a conclusion, putting an end to people’s diffidence, alleviating their constant despair of their own power, and securing the indefinite future of sovereignty. The emergence of the Commonwealth is indeed the emergence of temporality, then, and in simultaneously physical and psychological terms. The Commonwealth allows one not simply to desire, but to believe it likely that you will attain the objects of your desire. It is the solution to competition and the de-escalation of diffidence, an alleviation of the psychic anguish that is, in Hobbes’s telling, inseparable from physical insecurity.

All this means that “life itself” in Hobbes exceeds mere biological subsistence. Life *as* life is not defined by a biopolitical substratum of minimal existence, akin to the neomort, the overcomatose, or the resident of a concentration camp, As Agamben suggests. Rather, life is internally initiated motion, preservation of which requires the removal of obstacles that are simultaneously physical (i.e., violence) andpsychic (i.e., despair) at once. The futurelessness of the state of nature means not simply that one will die, likely soon, likely at the hands of another. It also means that one can have no other aspiration for oneself other than death, likely soon, at the hands of another. The preservation of life therefore requires both physical survival as well as some measure of peace of mind and a sense of our own perseverance into the future. Physical existence without hope is just as motionless as a hopeful if blocked or incapacitated body; close reading of Hobbes makes clear that one needs both in order to be alive in his schema. In this he underscores an Edelman-esque point: the “survival” of the subject requires not just freedom from violence, but also some psychological salve, some promise, however proximate or tentative, that our efforts are not simply in vain, hopeless, or without a future.[[68]](#footnote-68) The Commonwealth, in the figure of the Sovereign, embodies this promise, and the more powerful he is, the more promising his guarantee. The Commonwealth therefore wards off not only our imminent demise at the hands of others, but also the debilitating torment induced by the constant threat of this imminent demise. In his enactment of the biblical decree, “Let there be life!”, the Sovereign brings into existence the desiring subjectivity of living beings, transforming the otherwise stuck and conflict-prone bits of matter that populate the state of nature into bodies in motion, living human subjects capable of imagining and desiring the future he makes possible for them.

1. **The Future is Settler Colonial**

Despite my emphasis so far on life and survival, the production of “death” through the inauguration of temporality is just as important as the constitution of life. After all, if life only becomes recognizable *as* life retrospectively, the same can and must be true about death. Thus, while the Sovereign is consistently presented as the beacon of peace in *Leviathan*, war and death are just as much his creations as are peace and life. This is one, merely formal way of substantiating the claim that biopolitics is simultaneously and necessarily a necropolitics. However, what is also evident in Hobbes (but notably absent in Edelman) is the important qualification of this bio/necropolitics as specifically *colonial*. Closer examination of the time/place that is the state of nature makes clear that Hobbes’s championing of life is a celebration and protection only of the lives of those who are “civilized,” a safeguarding that comes at the necessary expense, obliteration, transfer, removal, and dispossession of “savage” others. In other words, “life” in biopolitical sovereignty is specifically settler life, characterized as “civilization,” while “death” demarcates “savagery,” or all those who cannot or will not conform to this particular political formation, as its foremost threat. In other words, it is “life”’s specifically settler character that explains the simultaneity and coincidence of sovereignty’s bio- and necropolitics.

Returning once more to that notorious state of nature, recall my claim that time cannot exist there. Hobbes might potentially be seen as acknowledging this fact insofar as he refers to the state of nature not only as a “time” but also a “condition,” two terms he seems to use interchangeably throughout Chapter 13. For example, in the first sentence of the paragraph about war, he writes that “during the *time* men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that *condition* which is called Warre.”[[69]](#footnote-69) Later, entertaining objections to his arguments about the state of nature, he muses, “It may peradventure be thought, there was never such a *time*, nor *condition* of warre as this.”[[70]](#footnote-70) He then further complicates things by proceeding to conflate time and condition with geographical location, noting immediately thereafter, “and I believe it was never generally so, over all the world: but there are many *places*, where they live so now”[[71]](#footnote-71) – for example, “the savage people in many places of *America.*”[[72]](#footnote-72)

These ambiguous and confusing characterizations of the state of nature nevertheless cohere around one feature that unites them, which is their ultimately civilizationalist character. First, as already discussed, if the state of nature is a time– an era, say, or an epoch – it is simultaneously a moment that is completely timeless, an existence lacking any dynamism or principle of change. Indeed, although Hobbes famously characterizes life in the state of nature as “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short,”[[73]](#footnote-73) that last adjective is simply unwarranted given that no time is possible there. However rhetorically effective it may be, lodged at the end of a litany of dreary adjectives, life in the state of nature cannot be characterized as short any more than it can be characterized as long or even average because, as Hobbes makes clear, temporality does not pertain to it.[[74]](#footnote-74) However, if the state of nature is instead a *condition*, then it is one of “savage”ry, as Hobbes makes explicit. Bolstering the view that the state of nature is a story about humanity’s pre-history, Hobbes here rehearses the colonialist trope of indigenous peoples as European humanity’s ancestors and/or pre-modern childhood. Savagery is therefore associated with stalled temporality, timelessness, and the failure of forward movement or progress. Conclusively, however, when referenced as geographical location, Hobbes materializes the state of nature in “*America*” and the 17th century European notion of the New World, an uncharted territory ripe for exploration and conquest. The specifications of the state of nature as pre-modern, timeless, “savage,” and “America” make clear that the establishment of the Commonwealth imposes a distinction not simply between life and death, peace and war, but also between progress and timelessness, modernity and backwardness, civilization and savagery. Each of these categorial pairs functions as a surrogate for the others; taken together, they suggest the deep implication of categories of life and death with colonization and conquest for European political theory. Once sovereignty, civilization, and peace are established as the domain of life, the state of nature, “savagery,” and war are established as the domain of death. Nichols writes, “The ‘savage’ of the Americas thus becomes the symbolic negative—the embodiment of the state of nature itself, and thus all which is to be avoided by civilized men living in civil (political) society.”[[75]](#footnote-75)

The state of nature is most concrete, in Hobbes’s varying descriptions of it, as a place– i.e., “*America.*” Immediately after declaring this, however, he concedes:

But though there had *never* been *any time*, wherein particular men were in a condition of warre against one another; yet *in all times*, Kings, and Persons of Soveraigne authority, because of their Independency, are in continuall jealousies, and in the state and posture of Gladiators; having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their Forts, Garrisons, and Guns upon the Frontiers of their Kingdomes; and continuall Spyes upon their neighbours, which is a posture of War. But because they uphold thereby, the Industry of their Subjects; there does not follow from it, that misery, which accompanies the Liberty of particular men.[[76]](#footnote-76)

Rescinding his prior example of native North Americans, Hobbes concedes that there never really was any such time or condition as this state of nature. Not only are Native peoples not in a state of nature, then, but also, and quite literally, there *is* no state of nature because, as we have seen, *no time* is possible there. Instead, Hobbes now claims, in “all times,” the situation of international relations is like that of the state of nature, because heads of state are in perpetual warfare with one another. The state of nature, then, is neither a time nor a condition nor a place but, rather, an allegory of inter-state behavior. And yet, even in this new global location, anarchy does not lead to the misery of the state of nature Hobbes described earlier because, as he says, sovereigns engage in foreign wars in the interest of securing their domestic subjects (rather than their own personages, presumably). Thus *even as a metaphor* the state of nature does not exist. It is a time that is no time, a condition that cannot exist in its unconditionality, a place that is nowhere, a representation of the unrepresentable.[[77]](#footnote-77)

Hobbes’s vacillation, confusion, and ultimate retraction of any concrete examples of the state of nature can be productively deciphered by linking it to theories of settler colonialism, on the one hand, and Edelman’s critique of futurism, on the other. Regarding the first, Lorenzo Veracini has argued that settler colonialism is distinct from other types of colonialism insofar as its seeks consistently to erase itself *as* settler colonial, to “supersede the conditions of its operation.”[[78]](#footnote-78) Following Patrick Wolfe’s argument that settler colonialism pursues a “logic of elimination” whereby settlers seek to replace the natives and indigenize themselves post facto,[[79]](#footnote-79) Veracini argues that because it aims at the elimination of the native, settler colonialism necessarily aims at its own elimination:

The successful settler colonies “tame” a variety of wildernesses, end up establishing independent nations, effectively repress, co-opt, and extinguish indigenous alterities, and productively manage ethnic diversity. By the end of this trajectory, they claim to be no longer settler colonial (they are putatively “settled” and “postcolonial” – except that unsettling anxieties remain, and references to a postcolonial condition appear hollow as soon as indigenous disadvantage is taken into account). Settler colonialism thus covers its tracks and operates towards its self-supersession (this is why, paradoxically, settler colonialism is most recognizable when it is most imperfect – say, 1950s Kenya or 1970s Zimbabwe – and least visible in the settler cities).[[80]](#footnote-80)

The truly “successful” settler colonial project, in other words, would manage to efface the native entirely, whether through genocide or assimilation or some other form of disappearance—more recently, via a politics of recognition, as Glen Coulthard has argued.[[81]](#footnote-81) One way this happens is through the narration of settlement itself, which disappears the native through discourses of non-existence, invisibility, or *terra nullius.*[[82]](#footnote-82) In Hobbes, this emerges as his inability to definitively locate or circumscribe the state of nature. This is consistent with the originary imaginings of all settler polities. As Veracini observes,

It is not a coincidence that the cultural traditions of the settler polities often focus on real or imaginary locales putatively epitomising specific national attributes: the “outback,” the “backblocks,” and, most famously, the “frontier.” Generally speaking, these are not specific locations, and their most important characteristic is to be always somewhere else.[[83]](#footnote-83)

The state of nature is one such highly abstract geographical imagining and, as we have seen, Hobbes displaces it from a time to a condition to a place to a metaphor, eventually determining that it never existed at all, even as a hermeneutic.

Of course, regardless of how Hobbes defines or determines the “state of nature,” the fact of the matter is that neither settlement nor indigenous people are, in fact, “elsewhere,” but ever-present facts of the here and now.[[84]](#footnote-84) Veracini argues that settler colonialism must nevertheless constantly imagine Native peoples as elsewhere, an act of symbolic displacement that effaces the actual existence of Native peoples and erases them even in their existence:

If the indigene is fundamental to the settler relation, where the indigene is located does matter. Thus, the “real” indigence is always somewhere else; that is why, to play on Philip J. Deloria’s insight, he is always “unexpected” in actual places. Likewise, indigenous peoples are generally not seen in the settler cities, the places where the settlers live. Examples abound; the main point is that discursive devices aimed at redirecting attention away from emplaced settler-indigenous relationships are indeed many.[[85]](#footnote-85)

Veracini suggests that all forms of indigenous removal can be characterized as different versions of “transfer,” which he argues is foundational to the settler colonial project.[[86]](#footnote-86) Regardless of whether we call it transfer or elimination, however, unless and until it is accomplished, settler states engage in all sorts of contortions, both political and ideological, to obscure the native in order to naturalize conquest. In short, disappearance of the land’s indigenous inhabitants and subsequent attempts to “indigenize” settlers are the means by which land expropriation is simultaneously naturalized and obscured.

Veracini presents this iterative, imaginary displacement as either conceptually embedded in the definition of settler colonialism or else as a kind of bad faith on the settlers’ part, potentially implying a guilty conscience gives rise to a host of defense mechanisms to ward off (knowledge of) conquest. In other contexts, political theorists have considered that such recursive movement is definitive of sovereignty itself, which can establish the law only via a prior, extra-legal, and illegitimate assertion of force. Yet the recursive contortions of settler sovereignty are neither the result of guilt nor somehow intrinsic to its conceptual definitions. Robert Nichols has already persuasively argued that the recursive character of settlement is a means of facilitating dispossession, denying the existence of indigenous peoples, and disregarding their claims to land and sovereignty.[[87]](#footnote-87) Yet what to make of the specifically *ideological* character of this recursivity? What explains the reiterative *rationales* for conquest that attempt to erase it as conquest at all?

Borrowing from Edelman, one can say that while these ideological contortions are fundamental to settler colonialism, they are also fundamental to any futurist narrativization of “life.” The reason why Hobbes cannot definitively locate or circumscribe the state of nature is the same the reason why the settler state seeks ideologically to naturalize settlers as native to the lands they have conquered. It is because, to use Edelman’s vocabulary, both are futurist narrativizations of the *drive*, his Lacanian term for that aspect of human existence that resists any temporal or symbolic determination, and which Hobbes talks about in terms of “endeavor.” Edelman’s drive/Hobbes’s endeavor is what characterizes the unending present that is the time/condition/place of the state of nature; indeed, Hobbes’s state of nature is effectively an attempt at a representation of this drive/endeavor, which both thinkers are clear is *un*representable. For, while Hobbes defines the motion of human life in terms of desire and aversion, these terms are only appropriate monikers for motion once it becomes perceptible. Before it is manifest in the form of desire, it exists as “small beginnings of Motion, within the body of man, before they appear in walking, speaking, striking, and other visible actions.” [[88]](#footnote-88) In other words, it is only once endeavor takes an object and becomes motion toward something that it becomes simultaneously apprehensible and also properly called desire, whilst endeavor away from an object “is generally called Aversion.”[[89]](#footnote-89)

This drive/endeavor is not only prior to or outside of representation, but it also has no intrinsic justification, much less any clear or uncontroversial narrative articulation. It simply *is.* Thus any imposition of terms onto it—in order to render it apprehensible, coherent, or legible—is precisely that, an imposition, and thus an explicitly ideological move that serves a particular political agenda. For Edelman, this act of transforming the otherwise unsignifiable endeavor of human existence into “the fictive form of a narrative”[[90]](#footnote-90) is the very definition of politics. As he says, “politics is a name for the temporalization of desire, for its translation into a narrative, for its teleological determination.”[[91]](#footnote-91) This definition of politics explains his insistence that politics is necessarily “conservative”—because “it works to *affirm* a structure, to *authenticate* a social order”[[92]](#footnote-92) in its very existence—and also destined to fail. For Edelman, futurism perpetuates “the fantasy of meaning’s eventual realization,” a realization that is by definition impossible insofar as endeavor itself has no intrinsic meaning and “the future” as its justification is always only ever *to come*. As the future, it just out of reach, ever beyond our grasp, “an always about-to-be-realized identity.”[[93]](#footnote-93) Rather than confront its own, necessary impossibility, Edelman argues that futurism instead generates scapegoats to distract from and take the fall for it, people or places or events that become the displaced, villainized obstacles to futurism’s otherwise successful realization. His name for these scapegoats is “queer.” This queerness, also unrepresentable because it is another name for the drive/endeavor that politics (i.e., narrativization) impossibly seeks to domesticate and resolve, takes on the figure of whatever or whomever threatens the disarticulation of the self and social order, which are ideologically presumed to be the pre-political premises of our existence.

This futile and fantasmatic futurism is a surprisingly apt characterization of the settler state, the full realization of which would, as Veracini notes, effect its erasure. Settler colonies resort to any number of destructive forms of managing futurism’s failings, of course, from transfer and removal to outright extermination through war, massacre, starvation, and disease. (There are also a multitude of cultural forms of indigenous “transfer,” whether it be the usage of indigenous peoples as sports team mascots, the fetishization of indigenous religious and spiritual practices in order to deny Indianness to Indians while claiming it for settlers, or the racialization of Indians into minority populations.) Yet this anxious, reiterative activity is wholly predictable from an Edelmanian perspective and ineliminable from the structure of settler sovereignty, because the futurist narration of the drive/endeavor has rendered settlers beholden to an unsustainable temporality that must produce queerness or death in order to continue to produce meaning, survival, and civilization for itself. Settler sovereignty cannot, in other words, do without the death-native it brings into being; the native as death *must* exist in order to purchase life and survival for the settler and is the figure of queerness in this futurist scheme.

“Queerness” in Hobbes is represented, figured, or embodied by those who fail to conform to the lineaments of rationality his particular sovereign formation takes for granted—in this case, the rational character of life and its value. Hobbes calls these figures “absurd” rather than queer, but the meaning is the same. The queer or absurd are those who do not seek to preserve themselves or flee death. Such figures barely show up in this text and are largely incomprehensible in his schema. They both instantiate death and invite it as the only proper response to their incomprehensible and insupportable rejection of the social order. For example: any remaining holdouts in the state of nature unwilling to join a majority decision to create a commonwealth must be forced to go along with them “or be left in the condition of warre he was in before; wherein he might without injustice be destroyed by any man whatsoever.”[[94]](#footnote-94) This is the rationalization of conquest, however abstract, unmarked, or “rational” it may seem to be. For, as has become clear, those who do not recognize the value of life are not simply absurd or irrational; they are specifically those “savage” or pre-civilizational people(s) who have no concept of time or established system of governance.

Of course, the “savage” as deathly threat has been produced precisely *as* that threat by the settler polity itself, which can only sustain itself via this anxious, recursive, and impossible to resolve dynamic of producing and eliminating the enemy to its own order, the enemy it requires if it is to be an order at all and yet which it must eliminate if it is to “overcome” what it is. As Alyosha Goldstein observes, “United States colonialism is a continuously failing—or at least a perpetually incomplete—project that labors to find a workable means of resolution to sustain its logic of possession and inevitability by disavowing the ongoing contestation with which it is confronted and violent displacement that it demands.”[[95]](#footnote-95) This constant aspiration toward an unrealizable future is a promise bought at the expense of effacing the founding violence that is the institution of settler sovereignty itself. Because that foundation is impossible to leave behind, because the Native has *not* been finally eliminated once and for all, because the subjects of the Commonwealth remain settlers, they cannot rest. They cannot rest until the last trace of the native has been eliminated, such that settlement can become a truly legitimate Commonwealth founded on the basis of a free and equal social contract of its “native” citizens.

In the face of the impossibility of this achievement, they must find other outlets for their anxious desire. This is how and why the settler colonial foundation of biopolitical sovereignty transforms itself into an expansionist, imperial, security state that finds new enemies abroad, new obstacles to its endless expansion, thereby solving (albeit only ever temporarily and incompletely) the problem of futurist failure that constituted settlement to begin with. This transformation is immediately apparent in Hobbes’s astute psychology of the life of futurist desire. Regarding desire, Hobbes claims that one seeks not simply “enjoyment” in the present or “to enjoy *once* onely, and for one instant of time.” Rather, one seeks “to assure *for ever*, the way of his *future* desire.”[[96]](#footnote-96) If the nature of desire is such that we seek to assure satisfaction forever, indefinitely into the future, then life/desire is inevitably bound up with anxiety, on the one hand, and power-seeking, on the other. Perpetually uncertain about the prospects of successfully getting what we want, we must continually seek to enlarge our power in order to secure the objects of our desire. It is important to note that this ever-expanding sphere of influence is not the result of a snowballing or addictive sort of pleasure-seeking behavior, nor is it due to some essential will to power at the heart of human nature. It is, rather, simply what is required in order to preserve the status quo:

[It] is not alwayes that a man hopes for a more intensive delight, than he has already attained to; or that he cannot be content with a moderate power: but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more.[[97]](#footnote-97)

Mere maintenance of the present, in other words, requires accumulation, undertaken in perpetual reference to an uncertain future. The successful maintenance of an indefinite present is, for Hobbes, the content of human happiness: “*Continuall* *successe* in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth, that is to say, continuall prospering, is that men call Felicity.”[[98]](#footnote-98)

Such felicity is impossible, of course, as Hobbes concedes in the very next sentence: “I mean the Felicity of this life. For there is no such thing as perpetuall Tranquillity of mind, while we live here; because Life itself is but Motion, and can never be without Desire, nor without Feare, no more than without Sense.”[[99]](#footnote-99) Hobbes acknowledges, in other words, that based on his own futurist accounting of life/desire and in fact precisely becauseof it, “happiness” (i.e., getting what you want) is impossible. Even supposing one were able to secure the requisite amount of power necessary to maintain the status quo, such an (impossible) achievement would mean that our desire would be satisfied, and therefore extinguished. It would mean, in other words, no longer being alive, since “to have no desire is to be dead.”[[100]](#footnote-100) As he explains,

To which we are to consider, that the Felicity of this life, consisteth not in the repose of a mind satisfied. For there is no such *Finis ultimus,* (utmost ayme,) nor *Summum Bonum,* (greatest Good,) as is spoken of in the Books of the old Morall Philosophers. Nor can a man any more live, whose Desires are at an end, than he, whose Senses and Imaginations are at a stand. Felicity is a continuall progress of the desire, from one object to another; the attaining of the former, being still but the way to the later.[[101]](#footnote-101)

Suggesting that (attainment of) the highest good of Aristotelian ethics is itself a kind of stasis or death, Hobbes plainly rejects the idea that the endless motion that characterizes human life could come to a halt in some fashion that does not entail death. Understood psychologically, he is making clear that human happiness—the only kind available to us in “this life”—means never *actually* being satisfied. The perpetuity of enjoyment at which desire aims is a consumption that is never, can never fully be (allowed to be) complete(d).

Hobbes’s specifically futurist and expansionist understanding of desire makes clear that, rather than confront the impossibility of security, happiness, and immortality, he instead offers the Commonwealth and an ever-expanding pursuit of power as a substitutive satisfaction. In other words, he both institutes life and pushes it forward via a futurist narrativization of endeavor into an insatiable, accumulative desire. Rather than face the founding violence that brought peace and “life itself” into being, Hobbes instead naturalizes this act by declaring it to be “a generall inclination of all mankind” to engage in “a perpetuall and restlesse desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death.”[[102]](#footnote-102) Yet while desire may push us ever forward, ever beyond the initial moments of settlement, it cannot erase that settlement or relieve settler sovereignty of the burden of conquest. This is neither because of settler colonialism’s theoretical definition nor because settlers secretly feel guilty about conquest, but rather because of the impossibility of fulfilling futurism’s fantastical promises. Empire functions as a kind of substitutive satisfaction to compensate for the failure of settler sovereignty to finally and fully exterminate indigenous peoples. The pleasures of endless imperial expansion—the restless desire of “power after power” in an attempt to secure the future, once and for all—relieve the burden of the failed “completion” of the settler colonial project and the impossible promise of happiness. Empire is thus the settler impulse turned outward. It is a salve for settlement in its promise of an impossible, if now externalized, future happiness and security.[[103]](#footnote-103)

Built into Hobbes’s understanding of desire, then (and, therefore, the Commonwealth), is the failed teleology of futurism which, as Edelman instructs, is fundamentally and futilely political. The reason the Commonwealth cannot alleviate the anxiety that runs apace with desire is because it cannot eliminate the foundations of its existence and the basis of its regime: on the one hand, indigenous removal and dispossession; on the other, the futurist constitution of “life” and/as desire. Indigenous removal and dispossession is accomplished, therefore, not only via the exertion of violence, domination, war, famine, genocide, and disease, but also via a specifically ideological imposition of the meaning of “life” and “death” that requires an indigenous removal and dispossession that it cannot accomplish without killing itself. This intractable dilemma explains the transformation of settler societies into security states, which reformulates the indigenous threat of “savagery” and death into external, terroristic opponents of its “way of life.” As Jodi Byrd observes, “Indianness becomes a site through which U.S. empire orients and replicates itself by transforming those to be colonized into ‘Indians’ through continual reiterations of pioneer logics, whether in the Pacific, the Caribbean, or the Middle East.”[[104]](#footnote-104) Empire, in other words, re-locates the state of nature from the domain of the indigenous “savage” to the “wilderness” abroad, itself in need of taming and civilizing if life and its value are to be satisfactorily protected. Twenty-first century empire is thus legible, as Byrd and others have argued, as an outgrowth of the settlement of the U.S. and contemporary episode of its ongoing structure.[[105]](#footnote-105)

Stephen Silliman has documented the U.S. military’s usage of “Indian country” to describe Iraq and Afghanistan in the War on Terror. While the Revolutionary or Civil Wars possess just as much “resonance in the psyche of the United States as wars for freedom, unity, and democracy,” nevertheless “soldiers in the Middle East draw on the ‘Indian wars’ of the 19th century to inform their daily experiences in combat.”[[106]](#footnote-106) Silliman argues that “The efficacy of this metaphor relies not in the accuracy of the historical or cultural details…but on the believability and acceptability of them as part of a narrative of conquest and nation building…”[[107]](#footnote-107) The “Indian country” characterization serves, in other words, to naturalize the “success” of the conquest of North America by casting contemporary U.S. empire as an inevitably victorious, if now world-wide, battle against “savagery,” this time in the form of Islam and “terrorism.” Of George W. Bush’s expressed desire to “smoke” Osama Bin Laden “out of his cave,” for example, Alex Lubin writes,

The invocation of the Western drama of settler colonialism has always animated American thinking about and activity in the Middle East, and Bush is merely tapping into a well of affective politics that links the United States to the Middle East as well as provides support for increased surveillance and the suspension of rights domestically. Yet, in the contemporary era of neoliberal globalization, the United States’ comparative rendering of the Middle East through its own settler colonial past has been multiplied and transformed into a “global war on terror.” That is, the United States’ unparalleled superpower status enables it to universalize and globalize its comparative politics into a global “clash of civilizations.”[[108]](#footnote-108)

Simultaneously, then, as the “terrorist” obstacles to empire become projected versions of Indians, Indians become retroactively legible as the first or foundational examples of “terrorism.” Of the Declaration of Independence, for example, which complains that King George “has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions,” Byrd observes,

The non-discriminating, proto-inclusive “merciless Indian Savage” stands as the terrorist, externalized from “our frontiers,” and functions as abjected horror through whom civilization is articulated oppositionally. This non-recuperative category, a derealization of the Other, serves as a paranoid foundation for what Jasbir K. Puar defines in *Terrorist Assemblages* as Islamic “monster-terrorist-fags,” the affectively produced and queered West Asian (including South Asian, Arab American, and Muslim) body that is targeted for surveillance and destruction by U.S. patriotic pathology.[[109]](#footnote-109)

The “terrorist” of today, the contemporary obstacle to empire, is the native of an alleged “yesterday,” the archaic obstacle to settlement. Whether in the domain of conquest or empire, however, however, the failed futurism of settler colonial sovereignty produces abjected queer repositories of death that stand as a threat to the civilized life of the settler society.[[110]](#footnote-110) Their interconnection is crucial; the logic that connects them continuous.

Unsurprisingly, then, Hobbes’s political theory serves as a justification for what it claimed only to describe. While an unmarked self-preservation and fear of death have typically been taken to be the natural and logical preconditions of the sovereign politics Hobbes institutes in *Leviathan*, an Edelmanian approach to this text reveals them to be the premier *values* settler sovereignty ideologically seeks to retroactively (re)produce and uphold. What this means, then, is that Hobbes’s entire state of nature story is an anachronism. Like all origin stories, it is fundamentally ideological and offered primarily in order to legitimate an already existing political order and the political commitment of its storyteller.[[111]](#footnote-111) The particular agenda being naturalized in Hobbes’s biopolitical story of the state of nature is settler conquest, and its futurist determination is the reason why he cannot decide when and where it is, and also why settler colonial societies seek constantly to erase themselves as settler societies.[[112]](#footnote-112) The insecurity lodged at the heart of settler colonialism’s futurist desire renders satisfaction impossible, an impossibility that remains unacknowledged and is instead foisted onto those “savages” who refuse collaboration with its ideological ruses. *Leviathan* is thus a settler colonial text par excellence. Like Agamben in this regard, it is a rationalization of empire that ignores all those queered by its machinations. Unlike Agamben, however, it makes explicit the connection between the biopolitics of settler colonialism and that of contemporary empire, revealing the futurist temporality that links them together and renders them continuous projects.

1. **The Future is Moral**

Readers of *Leviathan* usually find Hobbes’s claims regarding the rational character of self-preservation persuasive. They are the basis of much so-called rational choice theory in the social sciences, typically found unproblematic by undergraduates (if not reproduced by them), and would seem plausible, if not self-evident, in most mainstream U.S. cultural and political discourse. This is symptomatic of, among other things, the unstated if nevertheless profound impact of Hobbes on American politics and political culture (and therefore his impact on the world – or, at least, everything touched by American trade and foreign policy), as well as his compatibility with and adoption by capitalism and purveyors of capitalist ideology (the social sciences prominent among them).[[113]](#footnote-113)

Despite the hegemony of Hobbes’s “rational” presuppositions, however, it does not take much critical reflection to recognize their obviously normative character (and thus the exceedingly narrow and non-universal character of “rational” choice theory). Hobbes tries desperately to construct a universal psychology wherein all human beings, by definition, seek to preserve life and avoid death. In the Introduction, for example, Hobbes claims that his book offers a reading of the nature of “not this, or that particular man; but Man-kind,” an ability that qualifies one “to govern a whole Nation.”[[114]](#footnote-114) This familiar European philosophical conceit—that its author has divined the true character of all humanity—and the characterization of this accomplishment as a qualification to rule them highlight the imperial character and aspirations of this text. In typical imperial fashion, then, the existence of counterexamples to its biopolitical logic serves not to undermine Hobbes’s argument but rather to bolster its universalist logic and stigmatize those who fail to conform to its mandates as irrational, absurd, or unthinkable. Recall that Hobbes declares that anyone not recognizing the value of the Commonwealth, the rationality of joining it, or the legitimacy of its sovereignty (all of which are synonymous) may justly be “destroyed” because, by remaining in a condition of war, they are a threat to the life of the Commonwealth and its subjects. These refusers, in other words, are also enemies. Such people are not simply figures of the “absurd” who cannot be fit into a rational schema. Rather, or additionally, their existence is *opposed* to the civilized life of peace and society, and thus a legitimate target of elimination and death. The “absurd,” in other words, is synonymous not simply with “irrational” but also with “enemy,” and even “murderer” or “terrorist.” This is the specifically moralized content of the “savage,” who is not simply pre-modern, stuck in non-linear time, and lacking rationality, but also a mortal threat to the settler polity and its security and way of life. Hobbes is not simply outlining an empirical description of human nature here, in other words; he is elaborating an ideologically determined and explicitly moralizing characterization of life, the value of life, and the absurd and hostile threat posed by all those who do not accede to its mandates. As Tom Roach writes, “Biopower…operates not on the principle of taking life away, but of investing it with the highest value—promising a heaven on earth, a life worth living. Death, by contrast, is necessarily relegated to the category of pure negation and constitutes the normative framework of life’s value. In short, the biopolitical state does not turn away from death; it simply mobilizes it in a different manner.”[[115]](#footnote-115) The mobilization of death and/as “savagery” make clear the extra-empirical and, indeed, highly normative character of Hobbesian biopolitics.

Thus it is insufficient to say, with Agamben, that Native people(s) are produced as “bare life,” as people(s) who are able to be killed but not sacrificed. This formulation does not adequately capture the threat, negativity, and terror that moralizingly constitutes the category of the “savage” within settler sovereignty. Natives are constituted as a kind of deathly negativity that disarticulates the very social itself, in a form that Edelman would describe as the “death drive” of the settler polity. Their existence is more than mere fodder for killing or letting die; rather, their existence is a mortal threat to the coherence, meaning, sovereignty, stability, and persistence of the settler state. This why they must be actively eliminated: not simply because they are a remnant of what has been exceptionalized from politics, but rather because their continued existence embodies an out-and-out menace to the polity as such. Genocide of indigenous peoples, then, insofar as they flout or refuse the imposition of settler sovereignty, is fully compatible with a moralizing valuation of “life itself,” and is the material reality of the more formal theoretical claim that sovereign biopolitics is always already a necropolitics. As noted already, in the Hobbesian schema, this is wholly “rational.” That even rationality itself is caught up in the logic of conquest, or civilizationalist hierarchies of biopolitical determination, is what has been erased from the rational choice characterization of self-preservation as self-evident, obvious, or common-sense. “Self-preservation” is no empirical baseline of human existence; rather, it is a moralized championing of “life” and the value of “life itself” that justifies and legitimates the genocide of indigenous peoples. It is a futurism that commits its subjects to the punitive production of queerness, which, as a settler scheme, commits settler societies to the production of the Native as uncivilized, “savage,” backward, and absurd, as that which can and must be destroyed if “life” and “civilization” are to endure.

In today’s moment, those irrational, unthinkable figures of death inevitably produced by futurism’s civilizational project seem less associated with Native people(s) and more familiarly with Muslims and the now pervasive and toxic Islamophobia that is one prominent site and residuum of the War on Terror. Indeed, the widespread conflation of Islam with “terrorism,” anti-modernity, savagery, backwardness, a culture of death, and an irrational death wish renders “the Muslim terrorist” the contemporary U.S. imperial queer *par excellence.* Just like indigenous peoples who do not recognize the sovereignty of the settler state (but ostensibly are no longer), the enemy of U.S. empire in the contemporary form of the “terrorist” is the one who todaydoes not accept the “civilized” rules of engagement, has no respect for life, and obliterates all worth and meaning in the refusal to recognize the difference between “innocent” life and proper military targets. The American Commonwealth is the global savior of civilization, protector of life and democracy, guarantor of a civilized future. The Muslim “terrorist,” by contrast, is the remorseless annihilator of life, the very emblem of futurelessness, the epitome of “savagery” in his (and sometimes her) destruction of people and places whose lives have already been determined to be valuable.

Of course, the very determination of who or what counts as “terrorist” is a political calculation. As Hobbes makes clear for anyone who cares to notice, the state is the biggest “terrorist” of all insofar as deploying violence against civilians to instill fear in the service of accomplishing political goals is its essential function.[[116]](#footnote-116) Yet what is perhaps clearest about the increasingly global War on Terror is that “terrorism” is never considered to be an action undertaken by states; rather, it is what states seek to eliminate. This is perhaps an illustration of the irony that, in the Hobbesian schema, the Commonwealth protects us from “death” even as it is anointed as the only legitimate source of our death. Thus, shockingly yet somehow not surprisingly, during a 3-month span in 2011, the Obama Administration extrajudicially executed four U.S. citizens living abroad: 40 year-old Anwar al-Awlaki, his 16 year-old son Abdulrahman al-Awlaki, 26 year-old Samir Khan (all three were living in Yemen at the time), and 20 year-old Jude Kenan Mohammad (in Pakistan).[[117]](#footnote-117) In doing so, Obama undertook the one thing Hobbes hardly bothers to forbid the Sovereign from doing because he considered it so unthinkable: waging war on his own subjects. What these extrajudicial killings make clear, however, is not (simply) that Hobbes is definitively a thinker of tyranny. It makes clear is that there is no need to exceptionalize Muslims in order to kill them or relegate them to spaces of death. Rather, we simply need to recognize Islam and “terrorism” as a nihilistic death cult in order to proceed with its necropolitical elimination. This seamless transposition of biopolitics and necropolitics is not the result of an increasing politicization of bare life, but rather the logical consequence of a futurist biopolitical order that moralistically produces queers or “savage” figures of death and destruction as the inevitable and necessary by-product of its constitution and reproduction of life as such, itself the legacy of an unresolved settlement that has not succeeded in eliminating the native.[[118]](#footnote-118)

1. This paper is an adaptation of Chapter 2 of my forthcoming book, *Queer Terror: Life, Death, and Desire in the Settler Colony* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan,* ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996 [1651]), p. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press*,* 2011),p. 206. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Moustafa Bayoumi, *This Muslim American Life: Dispatches from the War on Terror* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. xiii. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Perry Anderson, *American Foreign Policy and Its Thinkers* (New York and London: Verso, 2015), p. 3. (). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Jung, “Constituting the U.S. Empire-State and White Supremacy: The Early Years,” in *State of White Supremacy: Racism, Governance, and the United States,* eds. Moon-Kie Jung, João Costa Vargas, and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 3, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See also, among others, Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*; Scott Morgensen, “The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism: Right Here, Right Now,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 1.1. (2011); Andrea Smith, “American Studies Without America: Native Feminisms and the Nation-State,” *American Quarterly* 60.2 (June 2008); Neferti Tadiar, “Decolonization, ‘Race,’ and Remaindered Life under Empire,” *Qui Parle* 23.2 (Spring/Summer 2015). See also Alyosha Goldstein, ed., *Formations of United States Colonialism,* which aims “to place U.S. overseas empire and settler colonialism into the same analytic frame…[in order to] argue that addressing the multiple histories and present-day formations of colonialism in North America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific are essential for coming to terms with how and why the United States is what it is today” (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Michel Foucault, *“Society Must Be Defended”: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978,* trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave, 2003), p. 254. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Foucault, *“Society Must Be Defended,”* p. 254. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Foucault, *“Society Must Be Defended,”* p. 255. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Foucault, *“Society Must Be Defended,”* p. 256. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Mark Rifkin, “Making Peoples into Populations: The Racial Limits of Tribal Sovereignty,” in *Theorizing Native Studies,* eds. Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ann Stoler broke the ground on this critique with her study, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s* History of Sexuality *and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. ix. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See, among others, Foucault, *“Society Must Be Defended”; The History of Sexuality, Vol. I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1978); *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978,* trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Joanne Barker notes the differences between racial minorities, who may seek inclusion within U.S. frames of rights and privileges, and indigenous peoples, who either do not recognize U.S. sovereignty and/or view themselves as already sovereign peoples (Barker, “For Whom Sovereignty Matters,” in *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination,* ed. Joanne Barker [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005). In the U.S. context specifically, Robert Nichols argues that understanding the oppression of indigenous peoples as a problem of racial inclusion can actually furthersettler colonialism (Robert Nichols, “Contract and Usurpation: Enfranchisement and Racial Governance in Settler-Colonial Contexts,” in *Theorizing Native Studies,* eds. Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith [Durham: Duke University Press, 2014]). For a compelling critique of racialization as a re-colonizing “logic of genocide” when applied to Native peoples, see J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). Meanwhile, from the other side, Jared Sexton rejects Achille Mbembe’s “subsumption” of racial slavery under the larger rubric of colonial necropolitics, while Afro-pessimism more generally insists on the importance of distinguishing between, as Frank Wilderson puts it, “red, white, and black” political and ontological positions (see Sexton, “People-of-Color-Blindness: Notes on the Afterlife of Slavery,” *Social Text* 8.2 [Summer 2010], p. 37; Wilderson, *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* [Durham: Duke University Press, 2010]). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. As Tom Roach explains, “If biopolitical disciplinarity functions through lived behavioral norms which aid in reproducing the status quo, it likewise benefits from a normative conception of death. Taking into account Lee Edelman’s claim in *No Future* that queerness plays the fantasmatic role of the death drive in reproductive futurism, we can see that the ‘death’ so important to biopower is not only physiological but also imbued with a sexual, relational and communal essence” (Roach, “Sense and Sexuality: Foucault, Wojnarowicz, and Biopower,” *Nebula* 6.3 (September 2009), p. 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. John Collins, *Global Palestine* (London: Hurst & Co., 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Parts of this section have been adapted from my “Homonationalist Futurism: ‘Terrorism’ and (Other) Queer Resistance to Empire,” *New Political Science* 37.1 (2015): 71-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Many have criticized *No Future* for its neglect of any facet of subjectivity and social life other than sexuality (e.g., race, class, gender, nation, and (dis)ability, among others). The most famous of these, which functions as a kind of précis of these criticisms, is José Esteban Muñoz’s claim, in reference to *No Future,* that “It has been clear to many of us, for quite a while now, that the antirelational in queer studies was the gay white man’s last stand” (“Thinking Beyond Antirelationality and Antiutopianism in Queer Critique,” in “Conference Debates: The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory,” *PMLA* 121.3 [2009], p. 825). I engage these criticisms substantively and at length in Chapter 4 of *Queer Terror*. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. With the exception of John Brenkman, who extensively engaged the ideas that led to *No Future* in a public exchange with Edelman in the journal *Narrative* in 2002, which I return to below. Regarding feminism, I remain grateful to Carolyn Terranova’s close study of Edelman’s references to abortion as well as her memorable undergraduate thesis using Edelman to analyze the queerness of clitoral sexual pleasure and, therefore, female sexuality. Terranova’s argument is distinctly at odds with J. Halberstam’s claim that “Edelman always runs the risk of linking heteronormativity in some essential way to women, and, perhaps unwittingly, woman becomes the site of the unqueer” (*The Queer Art of Failure* [Durham: Duke University Press, 2011],p. 118). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *No Future,* p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *No Future,* p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. *No Future,* p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. *No Future,* p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. “Post-Partum,” *Narrative* 10.2 (May), p. 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. *No Future,* p. 13, first emphasis added. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Brenkman, “Queer Post-Politics,” *Narrative* 10.2 (May), p. 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. In Chapter 1’s now-famous footnote 19, Edelman pre-emptively critiques the call to historicize his work as oblivious to its own reproduction of the futurist logic he is seeking to dismantle (*No Future,* pp. 157-8). I take up a broader version of this criticism in Chapter 4 of *Queer Terror*; for now, I would simply say that I agree with Kevin Floyd that while Edelman’s own textual references to politics and history are limited, “this doesn’t mean one cannot productively read as historically specific a claim he tries to make absolute, that politics are by definition oriented toward the future” (“The Importance of Being Childish: Queer Utopias and Historical Contradiction,” in *Works and Days* 30.1&2 [2012], p. 328). On the importance of situating Edelman’s work more concretely within history, see Lisa Duggan, “Atlas Shrugging: The Impossible Queer Desire of Ayn Rand,” Keynote Address, *International Feminist Journal of Politics* Conference (University of Sussex: May 17, 2013); Chandan Reddy, *Freedom With Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the U.S. State* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Shannon Winnubst, “Review Essay: *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive,*” in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28.1 (2010). I am grateful to Shannon Winnubst for pressing me on this point. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. “Against Survival,” p. 148. In this sentence Edelman is making the claim that Hamlet remains an important text because it “anticipates” this modern ideology of survival. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. “Antagonism, Negativity, and the Subject of Queer Theory,” in “Conference Debates: The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory,” *PMLA* 121.3 [2006], p. 822). Floyd would likely reject Edelman’s analogizing of futurism to capitalism, however, insofar as he reads Edelman’s overall ahistoricism as “symptomatic of a moment in which capital’s colonization of the future appears both unassailable – in, for example, the narrative of ‘no alternative’ Edelman would critique with such forceful abstraction that he seems to reinscribe it – and concretely violent in a way that suggests the opposite: accumulation’s radical fragility” (“The Importance of Being Childish,” p. 336). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Edelman, “Ever After: History, Negativity, and the Social,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106.3 (Summer 2007), p. 470. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. “Ever After,” p. 470. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. “Ever After,” p. 471. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. He also describes the queering of those non-cooperative unbelievers in survival as a “calamity,” noting that “reproductive futurism is *one* of the forms this calamity takes” (“Ever After,” p. 471, emphasis added). In *No Future,* he observes that “The Child, *in the historical epoch of our current epistemological regime,* is the figure for this compulsory investment in the misrecognition of figure” (18, emphasis added). Futurism itself, however, he calls “the substrate of politics” (60). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. *No Future,* p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Tavia Nyong’o, “Do You Want Queer Theory (or Do You Want the Truth)? Intersections of Punk and Queer in the 1970s,” *Radical History Review,* Issue 100 (Winter 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. *No Future,* p. 17. Indeed, it is not even wedded to terms of the human: “As my insistent refusal of identity politics should be taken to suggest, the *sinthom*osexual has no privileged relation to any sex or sexuality—or even, indeed, to any species, as chapter 4 [on Alfred Hitchcock’s film *The Birds*] makes clear” (p. 165, n. 10). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. *No Future,* p. 17. And indeed, the seduction of futurism’s lure for gay folks is painfully apparent in the mainstream LGB movement’s near-obsession with “marriage equality”; on this, see my “Homonationalist Futurism.” [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. *No Future,* p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. *No Future,* p. 27, original emphasis. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. *No Future,* pp. 24-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. *No Future,* p. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. *No Future,* p. 17, original emphases. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. *No Future,* p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Schmitt, *Political Theology*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Robert Nichols, “Realizing the Social Contract: The Case of Colonialism and Indigenous Peoples,” *Contemporary Political Theory* 4 (2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. *Leviathan,* p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. *Leviathan,* p. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. When I have taught Hobbes in classes, student veterans have attested to how well he describes this enduring present that characterizes warfare. Waiting, poised, unsure what will happen next – one student declared that, in such situations, he never knew if a few minutes had passed or several hours. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. *Leviathan,* pp. 88-9, original emphasis. Foucault reads this passage as indicating that there is not, in fact, any actual war in the state of nature, but rather “a sort of unending diplomacy between rivals who are naturally equal.” The “tract of time” Hobbes uses to define war “designates, then, the state and not the battle, and what is at stake is not the forces themselves, but the will, a will that is sufficiently known, or in other words a system of representations and manifestations that is effective within this field of primal diplomacy” (“*Society Must Be Defended,*” pp. 92-3). A brilliant reading, it nevertheless does not foreclose the possibility, much less the inevitability, of “blood” or “corpses” whatsoever, which Foucault is at pains to declare absent in the Hobbesian state of nature. On Foucault’s erasure of war from Hobbes’s account of sovereignty, see Banu Bargu, “Sovereignty as Erasure: Rethinking Enforced Disappearances,” *Qui Parle* 23.1 (Fall/Winter 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Although they certainly did in the case of the confessed shooting deaths of 23-year-old Deah Barakat, his 21-year-old wife, Yusor Mohammad, and her sister, 19-year-old Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha, by neighbor Craig Hicks on February 11, 2015 in Chapel Hill, NC in a seemingly clear-cut case of Islamophobic violence. Ironically, a Hobbesian reading of the biopolitics of U.S. empire might have made their deaths more predictable, if not necessarily more preventable. More on this in later on and also in Chapter 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. And Hobbes likens the sovereign to the sun elsewhere in *Leviathan,* when he enumerates the various prerogatives of sovereignty in Chapter 18 (p. 128). [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. As Hobbes says, we join the Commonwealth from the “foresight” of our own preservation (*Leviathan,* p. 117). Thanks to Carolyn Terranova, who first drew my attention to this significant word in this important sentence. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. *Leviathan*, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. *Leviathan,* p. 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. *Leviathan,* p. 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. *Leviathan,* p. 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. *Leviathan*, p. 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. *Leviathan,* p. 41, original emphasis. *Despair* is the aversive motion Hobbes contrasts with the appetitive motion of hope*.* He defines hope as “*Appetite* with an opinion of attaining” and despair as “the same, without such opinion” (p. 41). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Hobbes defines fear as “aversion with opinion of hurt from the object,” and contrasts it not with hope, as we might expect, but rather with courage; i.e., fear plus the “hope of avoyding that Hurt by resistance” (*Leviathan,* p. 41). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. *Leviathan,* pp. 88-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Asma Abbas affirms “the centrality of time” in the formation of modern postcolonial subjects, calling time itself “a conceit folded into the concept of sovereignty” and arguing that if we are to extricate ourselves from these formations, “desire itself needs to be rethought” (“In Terror, in Love, out of Time,” in *At the Limits of Justice: Women of Color on Terror,* eds. Suvendrini Perera and Sherene Razack [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014], pp. 504, 523. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. *Leviathan,* p. 88, emphases added. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. *Leviathan,* p. 89, emphases added. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Ibid., emphasis added. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Ibid., original emphasis. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. *Leviathan,* p. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. William Connolly poetically notes how this sentence performs the bereftness of life in the state of nature, with clauses and words falling out of the locution until eventually we are left simply with a series of adjectives. This “grammatical structure combines with other rhetorical elements to elicit in the reader something of the loss of continuity, the emptiness, the fear that would govern life were there no common power to bring order to it” (*Political Theory and Modernity* [New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988], p. 30). Robert Nichols observes that this sentence is “rarely read in relation to its practical implications for the people living in his time: or, if it is, the circle of influence is limited to those western European nations in which Hobbes’ works were widely read. However, there is another group of peoples who are directly implicated in this Hobbesian depiction—the Amerindians” (Nichols, “Realizing the Social Contract,” p. 47). [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. “Realizing the Social Contract,” p. 47. This differs from critical race accounts that explain such hierarchies via focus on the determination of the *human* rather than *life*. For example, Alexander Weheliye describes racialization “as a conglomerate of sociopolitical relations that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans” (*Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* [Durham: Duke University Press, 2014]*,* p. 3), while Charles Mills defines the social contract as a racial contract, or a set of agreements among white people to constitute non-white people as “of a different and inferior moral status, subpersons” (*The Racial Contract* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997], p. 11). The project of Afro-pessimism takes this claim further, arguing that blackness is the ontological void upon which the human itself is constituted, thereby rendering all humanisms forms of antiblackness (see, e.g., the work of Calvin Warren in “Onticide: Afropessimism, Queer Theory, & Ethics,” <https://www.scribd.com/doc/252308869/calvin-warren-onticide-afropessimism-queer-theory-ethics-pdf> and “Onticide: Afro-pessimism, ~~Gay~~ Nigger #1, and Surplus Violence,” *GLQ* 23.3). *Queer Terror* is a re-thinking of biopolitics in terms of “life” rather than “the human”; in this, I diverge not only from the biologisms at stake in racism and anti-racist inquiry but also from the centralization of race “itself” to the biopolitical project (although Warren makes room for contesting not simply “the human” but also the values of “life” and “survival” for biopolitics in his “Black Nihilism and the Politics of Hope,” *CR: The New Centennial Review,* 15.1 [2015]). This is not to dispute that race and racism are biopolitical endeavors, that biopolitical racism is definitive of European modernity, or that settler colonialism can also operate according to biologically racialized logics. Rather, it is an effort to zero in on and specify the particular version of settler colonial biopolitics that does not operate primarily in terms of either biology or racism, but rather the presence or absence of “civilization.” I touch very briefly on if and how the kind of sovereign biopolitics I examine in this book might function within the U.S. as a form of racialization in Chapter 4; however, fuller engagement with this issue remains a task for future work. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. *Leviathan,* p. 90, emphases added. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Hobbes does suggest that we can conclude the state of nature is real via inference by noting what happens when states are wrent by civil war, confirming the view that *Leviathan* is, among other things, a critique of the English civil war. In this sense, Mills rightly notes that Hobbes is exceptional among the social contract theorists insofar as he allows for the possibility that Europeans themselves are capable of savagery (*The Racial Contract*, pp. 65-7). However, one wonders if this allowance is of the Arendtian variety; namely, one that traffics in a racialized civilizationalism wherein “savagery” belongs, naturally, to non-Europeans, and thus European “savagery” becomes the outrageous, anomalous scandal that is worse than the colonization that founds and perpetuates it. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Lorenzo Veracini, “Introducing *Settler Colonial Studies,*” *Settler Colonial Studies* 1.1 (2011), p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8.4 (2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Veracini, “Introducing *Settler Colonial Studies,*” p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Glen Coulthard, *Red Skins, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014). Nichols argues that “North American settler states have moved from openly coercive and violent relations with indigenous communities towards a more flexible, docile, politics of recognition and assimilation—a move away from the ‘hard infrastructure’ of military operations and residential schools to the ‘soft infrastructure’ of public apologies and cultural accommodation” (Nichols, “The Colonialism of Incarceration,” *Radical Philosophy Review* 17.2 [2014], p. 448). See also Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014) and Brenna Bhandar and Jonathan Goldberg-Hiller, “Law, Sovereignty, and Recognition,” in *Plastic Materialities: Politics, Legality, and Metamorphosis in the Work of Catherine Malabou,* eds. Brenna Bhandar and Jonathan Goldberg-Hiller (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Jean O’Brien, for example, examines the “ideological process” by which New England settlers constituted their own modernity: through various narratives of the “first”ness of Anglo culture, by replacing Native people and places with settler names, monuments, and histories, and narrating Indians as already-extinct (*Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010]). [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Lorenzo Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present* (New York: Palgrave, 2015), p. 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Byrd, *Transit of Empire*; Morgensen, “The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism”; Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting;* Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus* and “The State is a Man: Theresa Spence, Loretta Saunders and the Gender of Settler Sovereignty,” *Theory & Event* 19.4 (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Veracini, *Settler Colonial Present,* p. 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave, 2010), pp. 33-52. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. See Robert Nichols, “Realizing the Social Contract” and Nichols, “Theft is Property! The Recursive Logic of Dispossession,” *Political Theory,* Prepublished April 2, 2017, DOI: 10.1177/0090591717701709. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. *No Future,* p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. *No Future,* p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. *No Future,* pp. 2-3, original emphases. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. *No Future,* p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. *Leviathan,* pp. 123-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Goldstein, “Introduction: Toward a Genealogy of the U.S. Colonial Present,” in *Formations of United States Colonialism,* p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. *Leviathan,* p. 70, emphases added. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. *Leviathan,* p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. *Leviathan,* p. 46, original emphasis. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. *Leviathan,* p. 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. *Leviathan,* p. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. *Leviathan,* p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. *Leviathan,* p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. For Nichols, incarceration serves this purpose, a practice of empire that is also importantly distinct from it: “the contemporary carceral system colonizes and re-colonizes in a classical sense: by providing a solution to that which exceeds and destabilizes sovereignty via a spatial reorganization of populations and a depoliticization of that process. While this apparatus is currently situated within empire and manifests itself in fully racialized terms of articulation today, it cannot be reduced to these other formations” (“The Colonialism of Incarceration,” p. 454). [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Byrd, *Transit of Empire,* p. xiii. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Indeed, Iyko Day suggests that American exceptionalism, coupled with a “history of empire building,” are “possibly the most exemplary expressions of settler colonialism” (Day, “Being or Nothingness: Indigeneity, Antiblackness, and Settler Colonial Critique,” *CES: Journal of the Critical Ethnic Studies Association* 1.2 [Fall 2015], p. 104). [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Stephen Silliman, “The ‘Old West’ in the Middle East: U.S. Military Metaphors in Real and Imagined Indian Country,” *American Anthropologist* 110.2 (2008), p. 242. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Silliman, “The ‘Old West,’” p. 241. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Alex Lubin, “‘We are all Israelis’: The Politics of Colonial Comparisons,” in *Settler Colonialism,* special issue of *The South Atlantic Quarterly,* eds. Alyosha Goldstein and Alex Lubin107.4 (Fall 2008), p. 684. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Byrd, *Transit of Empire,* p. xxi. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Byrd, *Transit of Empire*, p. 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. As is the case with any origin story and every variation on the state of nature. As Andrea Smith aptly notes, “[W]hen we critique a contemporary context through an appeal to a prior state ‘before the fall,’ we are necessarily masking power relations through evoking lost origins” (“Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism,” *GLQ* 16.1-2 [2010], p. 46). I would add that this is true regardless of whether the story told is one of progress or decline—in either case, the pre-requisites for the desired outcome are projected onto a mythical past that serves to anchor, naturalize, and legitimate the pre-determined outcome the storyteller is invested in perpetuating. “Thus,” says Marx, “the theologian explains the origin of evil by the fall of Man – that is, he assumes as a fact, in historical form, what has to be explained” (“Estranged Labor,” *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan [Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 1988], p. 71). [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. To quote Smith once more: “Normative futurity depends on an ‘origin story’” (“Queer Theory and Native Studies,” p. 47). That origin story is the state of nature in the social contractarian account, which in Edelman is cast as the narrativization of desire. In either case, however, that founding fiction is, in the case of sovereignty, a civilizationalist one that abjects or “queers” all those who fail to abide by its temporal mandates. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. For Hobbes’s impact on modern conservatism, see Chapter 2 of Corey Robin’s *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. *Leviathan,* p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Roach, “Sense and Sexuality,” p. 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. See, e.g., p. 120, wherein Hobbes declares “terror” to be the means by which the Sovereign shall secure peace. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Donald Trump swiftly followed suit by having al-Awlaki’s 8-year-old daughter killed in a U.S. raid in Yemen, the first military operation of his administration. Unlike her brother Abdulrahman, the young girl was not a U.S. citizen; however, this act is perhaps a fulfillment of Trump’s campaign promise not simply to go after “terrorists,” but also “to take out their families” (<http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/02/politics/donald-trump-terrorists-families/>). [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Sima Shakhsari argues that, in parallel fashion, the ‘people of Iran’ is a population constituted as rightfully killable, both in the name of human rights and in order to protect human rights: “Standing between biopolitics and necropolitics, the *politics of rightful killing* explains the contemporary political situation in the ‘war on terror’ where those whose rights and protection are presented as the raison d’être of war, are sanctioned to death and therefore live a pending death exactly because of those rights” (Shakhsari, “Killing Me Softly With Your Rights: Queer Death and the Politics of Rightful Killing,” in *Queer Necropolitics,* eds. Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco [New York and London: Routledge, 2014], p. 103). [↑](#footnote-ref-118)