

## 19 The Reception of Hobbes's *Leviathan*

The traditional story about the reception of *Leviathan* was that it was a book that was rejected rather than read seriously.<sup>1</sup> *Leviathan's* perverse amalgamation of controversial doctrine, so the story goes, earned it universal condemnation. Hobbes was outed as an atheist and discredited almost as soon as the work appeared. Subsequent criticism was seen to be the idle pursuit of a discredited text, an exercise upon which young militant churchmen could cut their teeth, as William Warburton observed in the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> We need to be aware, however, that this was a story that was largely the creation of Hobbes's intellectual opponents, writers with an interest in sidelining *Leviathan* from the mainstream of the history of ideas. Research over the last few decades has pointed increasingly towards a rather different account of the fate of Hobbes's most notorious work.<sup>3</sup> It is true that the book attracted a large amount of hostile comment throughout the latter half of the seventeenth century, but the reason for this was not that *Leviathan's* arguments were too absurd to be taken seriously. In fact, in many cases *Leviathan's* critics were more moved to attack the book precisely because it *was* being read and used by many different individuals and groups. *Leviathan's* arguments addressed a whole range of religious and political debates in the later seventeenth century, and its dramatic contribution to those debates could not be ignored. As a result, the book remained a live issue in the political discourse of the period, even when it was subject to official condemnation.

To understand how *Leviathan* could be part of mainstream political and religious discussion we need to look beyond the traditional story of the book's instant rejection. If we look at *Leviathan's* early reception what becomes clear is that neither Hobbes nor his book

was as notorious as they were later to become. Hobbes himself was a respectable figure, admired in England for his translation work (particularly his translation of Thucydides) and his Latin poetry. Among those who were familiar with the new natural sciences, his work on mathematics and optics promised much. Politically, his exile in France and service at Court identified him as a royalist, although his ambiguous political treatise *De Cive*, and its fashionable use of natural law theory, suggested that the theoretical basis for his royalism was unusual. Hobbes's treatment of religion in the same text raised some suspicion about the orthodoxy of his theology. That said, English readers, particularly the royalists and scientists, looked forward to great things from Hobbes as an intellectual elder statesman.<sup>4</sup>

What those readers got in May 1651 for their eight shillings and sixpence was an unusual folio volume with a strange title.<sup>5</sup> It wasn't immediately clear what the monster from Job was supposed to signify. Brian Duppa wrote to Justinian Isham in July 1651 that 'there is another production in the press, that Affrick hath not seen a greater monster, and that is Mr Hobbes his Leviathan; a title that I wondered at first'.<sup>6</sup> Guy Holland in 1653 thought the title and the volume itself 'prodigious'.<sup>7</sup> There were many other reasons why the book should seem strange to an English reader. Although written, and mostly read, in English, Hobbes's masterpiece had been shaped by exposure to continental thought: politically it drew upon European natural jurisprudence; philosophically it owed much to continental science; stylistically it drew upon French traditions of burlesque and satire.<sup>8</sup>

*Leviathan* was undoubtedly strange, but at the same time there was much that was familiar. The book trades upon the English Protestant reader's familiarity with our obligation to the eternal laws of nature, the need for political authority, texts of Scripture and the thought that the Church of Rome was part of the 'Kingdome of Darknesse' (Part IV of *Leviathan*). But *Leviathan's* readers became uncomfortably aware that for all the window dressing, its author was up to something potentially dangerous. The conventional elements within *Leviathan* are reordered towards strikingly unconventional conclusions; self-preservation appears to become the practical source of our obligation to natural law, the sovereign the source of authority for Scripture. For all the talk of God, He seems to drop out of the picture. Brian Duppa's response is typical of the characteristic unease: 'as in the man, so there are strange mixtures in the book; many

things said so well that I could embrace him for it, and many things so wildly and unchristianly, that I could scarce have so much charity for him, as to think he was ever Christian'.<sup>9</sup> Alexander Ross's critique of *Leviathan* opens with a similar thought: 'I finde him a man of excellent parts, and in this book much gold, and withal much dross; he hath mingled his wine with too much water, and imbittered his pottage with too much Coloquintida'.<sup>10</sup> As a royalist, Robert Filmer could read Hobbes's defence of sovereignty approvingly, but found Hobbes's method of getting to it deeply problematic.<sup>11</sup> In all of these cases, the mixture of acceptable and unacceptable positions caused confusion. For Hobbes's later critics, this amounted to a deliberate and characteristic rhetorical tactic which marked a distinctive departure from the scientific clarity of his earlier political work. In 1676 Edward Hyde, the earl of Clarendon, noted that Hobbes's heterodoxy was concealed beneath quotable and innocuous phrases.<sup>12</sup> In 1673 John Eachard commented that Hobbes's message was insinuated with 'all demureness, solemnity, quotations of Scripture, and appeals to conscience and church-history'.<sup>13</sup> Thomas Tenison noted in 1670 that Hobbes's apparent references to God as a first cause tricked his readers into assuming that he was a sincere theist: 'By this argument', he wrote, 'unwary men may be, perhaps, deceived into a good opinion of your Philosophy; as if by the aids of it, you were no weak defender of natural Religion'.<sup>14</sup> The presentation of *Leviathan's* political thought laid traps for the book's critics, Ross often finds himself agreeing with Hobbes and William Lucy's earnest attempts to analyse *Leviathan* line by line led him to more endorsement than condemnation.<sup>15</sup> Clarendon, to whom Lucy had dedicated his critique, counselled against such methods for that precise reason.<sup>16</sup>

For all the rhetorical gloss, Hobbes's central theoretical messages were unmistakeable; the horrors of a state of war, the need for a powerful, undivided sovereignty and the relationship between protection and obedience. But beyond these positions, *Leviathan's* arguments left a host of open questions that puzzled contemporaries as much as they do scholars today; did Hobbes's contract theory sustain or subvert his absolutism? Did this make him a royalist, or some sort of rebel? Could *Leviathan* sustain a theory of toleration, or an oppressive civil religion? Was Hobbes some kind of Protestant, or did his unusual theology mask atheism? Naturally the problems of reading *Leviathan* depended upon one's initial prejudices. For recusant

writers like John Austin, *Leviathan's* rabid anti-Catholicism signalled that its author could be categorised as a Protestant divine to be categorised alongside Calvin and Bucer.<sup>17</sup> That said, Protestant readers like Edward Bagshaw were equally capable of locating Hobbes within an acceptable Protestant tradition.<sup>18</sup> It was undeniably harder for mainstream Anglicans and Presbyterians to come to terms with *Leviathan's* ecclesiology because the arguments he used against the ecclesiastical jurisdictions of Roman Catholicism could just as easily be turned against their own *jure divino* conceptions of church government. Nevertheless, to no side was it as clear as it has been made to seem that Hobbes's odd divinity necessarily meant that he was an atheist, and his more cautious critics were careful not to jump to that assumption. In practice this meant that the formulae in *Leviathan* could be taken seriously in a range of discursive environments, and this may tell us something about Hobbes's intentions. As the book's critics noted, *Leviathan* seduces its reader with familiar or attractive positions,<sup>19</sup> but in swallowing down the argument one internalises a set of Hobbesian relationships. Like a virus, Hobbes's theory alters the DNA of the host discourse in such a way as to reconstitute a new creature altogether, the *Leviathan* itself.

This *viral* character may help to explain *Leviathan's* presence in a range of debates in the early 1650s, not least in controversies over religious authority. John Austin found passages that could be used to support toleration for Catholics, and republican journalist Marchamont Nedham borrowed Hobbes's anticlerical rhetoric in his own attacks upon the power of priests.<sup>20</sup> *Leviathan's* sustained assault upon clerical pretensions to civil power would be crucial in attracting and maintaining an anticlerical readership. However strange the book's theology might be (and Hobbes freely admitted that it was), its ecclesiology made the philosopher a potential ally of religious radicals against Presbyterians and Episcopalians. One of the first defences of *Leviathan* was produced by radical Independents protesting against attempts by Presbyterians to have the book banned.<sup>21</sup> In 1657 John Owen, the Independent leader, was reported to admire *Leviathan* as a 'booke ye most full of excellent remarques of any'.<sup>22</sup> Owen certainly suspected Hobbes's strange text of the gravest heterodoxy, but Hobbes's erastianism and anticlericalism made the book too useful to ignore.

With its defence of sovereignty rather than any particular form of government, *Leviathan* was no less adaptable politically. In 1651 William Rand had noted that *Leviathan's* surprising political ambiguity meant that the apparently royalist Hobbes might prove serviceable to the commonwealth.<sup>23</sup> His book would be even more serviceable to the Protectorate. *Leviathan's* defence of an omniscient sovereign power made it particularly attractive to supporters of Cromwell's regime after 1653, which was soon being defended in Hobbesian terms.<sup>24</sup> Writers like Thomas White and John Hall of Richmond borrowed liberally from *Leviathan* as they adapted the book's ideas in support of Cromwell's regime.<sup>25</sup> Although these writers were cautious about acknowledging Hobbes's influence, *Leviathan's* arguments were being reproduced in a variety of contexts. Such evidence makes plausible Hobbes's boast in 1656 that *Leviathan* had 'fram'd the minds of a thousand gentlemen' to obedience;<sup>26</sup> the book was being read and it was doing its work; not only transforming passive readers into responsible authors of commonwealths, but also replicating its logic among those writers deploying Hobbesian tropes. But this is not to suggest that Hobbes met with no opposition. As we have seen, there was plenty of suspicion that Hobbism was a disease, and this gave rise to determined efforts to publicise an account of *Leviathan* that would make its unacceptable features clear to readers. In what would become a distinctive tactic of Hobbes's opponents, the poison in the text was extracted and presented to the world as a sign of its danger. The first group to try this were London-based Presbyterian booksellers, who in 1652 produced an itemized list of Hobbes's unacceptable religious views in an attempt to get *Leviathan* and other works banned.<sup>27</sup> That their petitioning was unsuccessful reflects the relative political impotence of Hobbes's opponents at the time. Many of Hobbes's critics were Anglicans or Presbyterians who were on the back foot politically in the 1650s and therefore unable to achieve anything like an official condemnation. The introduction to the 1750 edition of Hobbes's *Works* suggests that 'while the church was oppressed, Mr Hobbes was not very loudly accused of atheism here at home'.<sup>28</sup> Hobbes's Anglican critics had possibly the hardest task; John Bramhall's *Catching of Leviathan*, a work that revealed *Leviathan* to be a 'rebel's catechism' was produced while he was in exile on the Continent;<sup>29</sup> while William Lucy's work was published

under a pseudonym to little acclaim.<sup>30</sup> Other critics such as John Wilkins and Seth Ward criticised Hobbes's science and his attitude towards the universities, but Ward's major refutation of Hobbes's projects was published for a scholarly audience in Latin.<sup>31</sup> As the fate of their petition suggests, Presbyterians were not much more effective. Richard Baxter attempted to mobilise his followers in Cambridge against *Leviathan* soon after its publication, following this up with unsuccessful calls to have the book burned in 1655.<sup>32</sup> The Oxford Presbyterian John Wallis spearheaded an attack upon Hobbes's mathematics, partly to discredit *Leviathan*,<sup>33</sup> but this may have had the effect of convincing the ascendant Oxford Independents that Hobbes was worth defending. Yet another Scottish Presbyterian reported *Leviathan* as an atheistic work to a committee of parliament in 1657, but all of these attempts failed to bring about any official condemnation, ban or burning.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, reading *Leviathan's* critics in the 1650s, one rapidly becomes aware that far from being triumphant, they often appear to be on the defensive. They readily acknowledged the success that the book was having with its various audiences. The royalist cleric William Lucy, frustrated by what he saw as a *lack* of criticism, took up his pen in 1657 complaining that he found *Leviathan* 'admir'd by many Gentlemen of sharp wits, and lovers of learning'.<sup>35</sup> The Presbyterian George Lawson felt compelled to write his *Examination of Leviathan* in the same year because it had been too popular with 'many Gentlemen and young Students in the Universities'.<sup>36</sup> Edward Hyde, later the Earl of Clarendon, trying to encourage Matthew Wren to attack Hobbes in 1659, reported that he had heard that some tutors in the Universities read *Leviathan* to their pupils, instead of Aristotle and Cicero.<sup>37</sup> There may be an element of moral panic here, not least from those critics eager to make a case for their books, but this needs to be set alongside the persuasive evidence of readers taking Hobbes seriously.<sup>38</sup>

The political and religious environment in England during the 1650s thus allowed *Leviathan* to attract readers and become an established part of the political canon to be taken seriously by republicans like Harrington and Royalists like Matthew Wren.<sup>39</sup> It is even possible to go further to suggest that *Leviathan's* characteristic interventions in discourses such as natural law theory were so successful that even those authors who chose not to name him as a source

were haunted by *Leviathan's* formulae. That the state of nature was a state of war and that the only solution to it might be a distinctively Hobbesian sovereignty is a recurrent thought that stalks the pages of Wren's *Monarchy Asserted* and Locke's unpublished *Tracts on Government*.<sup>40</sup> By the end of the 1650s, discussions of sovereignty, state of nature, natural law, protection and obedience may well have been unthinkable without bringing to mind Hobbes's striking presentation of such positions.

The return of Charles II in 1660 marked the start of a new phase in the reception of *Leviathan* in England. An ambiguous event for Hobbes, the Restoration brought Hobbes a royal patron but at the same time the reinstatement of many of his inveterate opponents to positions of power and influence. Clarendon became Charles's chief minister and the bishop's bench included the likes of Seth Ward and Clarendon's friend George Morley. Unsurprisingly rumours soon spread that the bishops wished to try Hobbes for heresy.<sup>41</sup> Hobbes would be protected by his powerful patrons, but the changing political environment meant that attitudes towards his works hardened considerably. The Anglican royalist account of *Leviathan* as an atheist's handbook for rebellion was soon entrenched as the official view, and Hobbism became a politically charged term of abuse. Edward Stillingfleet, a latitudinarian Anglican, fell foul of such accusations for his pre-Restoration work *Irenicum* (1660). His response was to add an appendix to the second edition (1662) in which he undertook to attack *Leviathan* directly. *Irenicum* illustrates a surprising but recurrent feature of later critiques of *Leviathan* that they often came from individuals whose work was actually too close to Hobbes for comfort.<sup>42</sup> Official disapproval of Hobbes encouraged such writers to assault Hobbes in order to establish their orthodoxy. The result was that official caricatures of *Leviathan's* arguments were replicated and reinforced and any debt to Hobbes's argument was concealed or suppressed. As a result *Leviathan's* arguments were present in Restoration discourse both as caricatured primers of atheism and subversion and, in more subterranean ways, as essential analytical tools exercising a hidden and unacknowledged but pervasive form of influence.

As the 1660s wore on, there was a shift from official disapproval to the beginning of a sustained campaign against Hobbes and his work. There were several reasons for this upsurge in *Leviathan*-related

anxiety, and perhaps the most important was the changing political climate in England. The fall of the Earl of Clarendon in 1667 and his replacement by a regime sympathetic to religious toleration returned a rights-based natural jurisprudence to the political agenda, a discourse for which *Leviathan* was a useful resource. Supporters of toleration appealed to the King to protect their religious liberty in return for loyalty, an appeal to a relationship between protection and obedience that could be read in Hobbesian terms. Some of Hobbes's more quotable lines appeared in parliamentary debates on the issue.<sup>43</sup> Even Presbyterian dissenters like Louis du Moulin could at this point reassess Hobbes as an ally, albeit an extremely unlikely one.<sup>44</sup>

These developments inevitably provoked a reaction to all things seemingly Hobbesian. *Leviathan* was investigated by a Commons Committee in 1666 for atheism, and in 1668 the rumour that the Bishops would not allow *Leviathan* to be printed again sent Samuel Pepys scurrying off to invest in an expensive second-hand copy.<sup>45</sup> The ecclesiastical authorities achieved their biggest anti-Hobbesian coup in 1669 with the trial and published *Recantation* of the Hobbesian Cambridge don Daniel Scargill. Scargill's offending Hobbism, organised in point form, included the propositions that 'all right of dominion is founded only in power'; second, that all moral righteousness is founded only in the law of the civil magistrate; third, that Scripture is 'made law only by the civil authority'; and lastly, 'that whatsoever the magistrate commands is to be obeyed notwithstanding contrary to divine moral laws'. All of these arguments focused upon Hobbes's apparent subversion of natural law, and the dangerous implications of his account of sovereignty.<sup>46</sup> The widely circulated *Recantation* put the worst possible construction upon ideas extracted from *De Cive* and *Leviathan* and left readers in no doubt that those works led to atheism and moral corruption, a view that soon came to inform popular accounts of what *Leviathan* was really about.<sup>47</sup>

With these negative connotations, Hobbism became a common accusation on both sides of the toleration debate; Anglicans like Samuel Parker accused nonconformists of seditious Hobbism in their self-interested demands; the dissenters responded with the charge that Parker's erastianism came from *Leviathan*.<sup>48</sup> If *Leviathan* was useful for promoting toleration and authority in the 1650s, in the following decade its negative image made it an extremely potent rhetorical weapon against the same positions. Compromised



supporters of nonconformism and Anglicanism responded with face-saving critiques of Hobbes in an attempt to exorcise *Leviathan's* shadow. So Wolseley's *Unreasonableness of Atheism* and Thomas Tenison's *Creed of Mr Hobbes Examined* gave detailed Hobbist catechisms and creeds that redefined Hobbes as an immoral Epicurean atheist.<sup>49</sup> These hostile descriptions entered the popular imagination and took on a life of their own, assisted by popularisations such as John Eachard's *Mr Hobbs's State of Nature Considered* (1672).<sup>50</sup> *Leviathan* became emblematic for a range of unacceptable positions largely defined by Hobbes's critics.<sup>51</sup>

These critical accounts of *Leviathan* achieved an extraordinary cultural presence during the early 1670s. John Dryden's amoral stage characters were traced back to *Leviathan*, and libertine behaviour was associated with it.<sup>52</sup> In what appears to be a blowback from the clerical campaign against Hobbes, the libertines reportedly adopted the clerical criticism of *Leviathan* rather than reading the book itself. In the *Character of a Coffee-House* of 1673, the author satirises the dissolute young wit who, equipped with 'only two leaves of *Leviathan*, decries scripture and takes his gospel from the Apostle of Malmesbury'. The author comments sourly that it is more probable that the wit 'ne'er read, at least understood ten pages of that unlucky author'.<sup>53</sup> Ignorance of Hobbes was also the defining feature of the *Town Gallant*, whose character, sketched in a pamphlet of 1675, represents the Gallant swearing that the *Leviathan* may 'supply all the lost leaves of Solomon, yet he never saw it in his life, and for ought he knows it may be a treatise about Catching of Sprats, or new regulating the Greenland Fishing Trade'.<sup>54</sup> Some began to wonder whether the obsessive pursuit of one atheist did not actually create more.<sup>55</sup>

*Leviathan's* critics ended up as the popular sources for *Leviathan's* doctrines in part because the book itself was difficult to get hold of, as Pepys's experience suggests. Pepys paid twenty-four shillings in 1668, but the second-hand price was to rise still higher, hitting upwards of thirty shillings in the 1680s.<sup>56</sup> Publishers naturally attempted to capitalise upon this growing demand, and there were several illicit attempts to republish *Leviathan* under the original date. Two new editions appeared; they have become known as the 'Bear' and the 'Ornaments' after printers' devices that distinguish them from the original first edition, both providing evidence of the

demand for the book and the difficulties faced by those who wished to supply it.<sup>57</sup>

But if *Leviathan* was now hard to get hold of in English, the 1660s saw the text translated into first Dutch and then Latin, developments that brought the book to the attention of a Continental audience for the first time. The fact that *Leviathan* was written in English meant that the European reception of Hobbes had been dominated by the more moderate *De Cive*. Arguably this may supply the reason why Hobbes was, as he claimed, more respected abroad than he was at home, a situation that would change with the increasing availability of his most radical text.<sup>58</sup> The Dutch translation of 1667 was the work of the Utrecht-educated schoolmaster Abraham van Berkel, and its appearance may be related to the debate over toleration in the Netherlands, where the protoleration States party were campaigning against the orthodox Calvinist Counter-Remonstrants.<sup>59</sup> As in the English context, Hobbes's anticlericalism made *Leviathan* a useful resource in support of a toleration agenda. Perhaps the best example of this is the use made of *Leviathan's* theological ideas by Spinoza in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670), a work whose political theory already owed much to a Dutch republican tradition informed by Hobbes's *De Cive*.<sup>60</sup> The many links with Spinoza's works would ensure that Hobbes and *Leviathan* would be closely associated with the Dutch freethinker and condemned in the same terms, both in England and on the Continent. Although this may have given *Leviathan* added *cachet* for a new generation of anticlerical radicals, it definitely marked a turning point for the reception of Hobbes on the Continent, which from 1670 onwards was largely hostile.

The 1668 Latin edition of *Leviathan* was the text most accessible to Continental readers. Published as part of Hobbes's *Opera* (and issued separately in 1670), the translation had been conceived with the European market in mind in the early 1660. But the collection also became available for purchase in London where the refusal to grant a license for a new domestic edition restricted the circulation of *Leviathan*.<sup>61</sup> Hobbes's domestic opponents were quick to examine the text, and it soon formed the basis for critical comment. Richard Cumberland's *De Legibus Naturae* (1672) referred to the Latin text and identified passages where Hobbes had toned down offending sections of the English edition; and John Templer devoted his *Idea*

*Theologiae Leviathanis* (1673) to a detailed rebuttal of the theology of the new Latin edition.<sup>62</sup> The fact that these critiques of the Latin *Leviathan* were also in Latin themselves meant that the new version of the work had no sooner appeared than European readers could turn to substantial challenges from Hobbes's English opponents. As a result the Latin critiques of *Leviathan* by Sharrock, Cumberland, Parker and Templer gained popularity in Europe that they struggled to achieve against the well-established vernacular canon of anti-*Leviathan* works in England.<sup>63</sup> Thus, on the Continent, by contrast with England, *Leviathan* was rapidly identified as a dangerous and heretical work, part of a genealogy of modern atheism inextricably linked to Spinoza's *Tractatus*. Formal censures and bans soon followed. In April 1674, for example, the Court of Holland introduced penalties for printing and distribution of the work.<sup>64</sup>

If *Leviathan's* European debut proved to be controversial, those theorists who had been engaging with *De Cive* for nearly thirty years produced more extreme examples of the same evasive tactics that characterised scholars who engaged with Hobbes in England. Samuel Pufendorf is a good example of a writer whose early endorsement of Hobbes required some systematic back-peddalling after 1670. In his *Elementorum Jurisprudentiae Universalis* (1660) Pufendorf had been happy to acknowledge his debt to *De Cive*, arguing that 'although it savours somewhat of the profane, [it] is for the most part extremely acute and sound'.<sup>65</sup> Pufendorf was understandably less eager to acknowledge such debts when he produced his masterpiece *De jure naturae et gentium* in 1672. Although it is clear that Pufendorf is not an uncomplicated disciple of Hobbes, his natural law theory stressed the role of self-interest and the potential for conflict within the state of nature, all deeply compromising arguments in the changed intellectual environment.<sup>66</sup> Like those English writers dangerously associated with Hobbes's arguments, Pufendorf resorted to attacking *Leviathan* and *De Cive* in the *De Jure Naturae*. Unfortunately for Pufendorf, this was not enough to prevent accusations that his work in the end reduced to a simple Hobbesian utilitarianism.<sup>67</sup> Desperate to put clear intellectual distance between himself and Hobbes, he assaulted the philosopher as an Epicurean and helped himself to Richard Cumberland's critiques of *Leviathan* and *De Cive* in an attempt to establish his orthodoxy.<sup>68</sup> Pufendorf's reputation as an anti-Hobbesian writer thus conceals the many points of contact

between his own ultimately mainstream natural law theory and Hobbes's ideas.

By the time of Hobbes's death in 1679, *Leviathan's* complicated legacy was reflected in the various broadsides and pamphlets that appeared to mark Hobbes's passing. Naturally *Leviathan's* clerical enemies contributed to the extended obituary. *True Effigies of the Monster of Malmesbury, or Thomas Hobbes in his proper colours* was in many ways emblematic of the clerical campaign against *Leviathan* and Hobbism. The pamphlet celebrated in verse the early defeat of the Monster by opponents like Bramhall and Ward, simultaneously reinforcing the official condemnation of Hobbes as an unacceptable atheist.<sup>69</sup> This was literally an attempt to rewrite the story of Hobbes's reception because the poem was a systematic inversion of Cowley's ode in *praise* of Hobbes's achievement.<sup>70</sup> Such rewriting would form the basis for the traditional story of *Leviathan's* rejection, but even the author of this particular 'true effigy' takes us back to *Leviathan's* ambiguity when he suggests that Hobbes's books 'contain some Truths, and many a Lie, some Truths well known, but strange Impiety'.<sup>71</sup> This ambiguity would continue to haunt those who had officially rejected *Leviathan* but whose arguments seemed to draw upon the work. The year 1680 would see Anglican clergymen like John Tillotson and Edward Stillingfleet accused of Hobbism for their authoritarian assault upon religious dissent.<sup>72</sup> The next few years would see other Anglicans deploying unadulterated but unacknowledged Hobbesian arguments in support of the Crown's authority, in some instances only weeks after the University of Oxford had formally condemned and burned *Leviathan* for sedition.<sup>73</sup> *Leviathan*, although too dangerous to acknowledge, was, as always, too useful to ignore. As the *Elegie upon Mr Thomas Hobbes* suggests, those 'who his writings still accus'd in vain/were taught by him of whom they did complain'.<sup>74</sup> Samuel Butler put it more trenchantly when he compared those who 'condemned and stole from Hobs' with the 'French thief that murders when he Robs'.<sup>75</sup>

If the clergy were often in denial about the continuing importance of *Leviathan*, there was one group who became less shy about celebrating the text's heterodox implications, and that was the freethinking radicals. A broadside titled *The Last Sayings*<sup>76</sup> gathers selective quotations from *Leviathan* and Hobbes's other works that present the philosopher as the scourge of priestcraft, superstition and religious imposture. The selection begins with the 1651 *Leviathan's*

controversial definition of religion as 'fear of power, feigned by the mind, or imagined from Tales publicly allowed'.<sup>77</sup> Recent research has demonstrated that *Leviathan* became an essential resource for radical enlightenment thinkers throughout Europe.<sup>78</sup> Hobbes's discussion of religion in chapter xii of *Leviathan* formed the basis for clandestine classics such as *De tribus impostoribus*, works that attempted to expose Moses, Mohammed and Jesus as 'imposters'. Hobbes's denial of Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch in chapter xxxiii of *Leviathan* inspired radical critiques of the Bible.<sup>79</sup> There can be little doubt that *Leviathan* played an important part in stimulating freethinking and deism. An epitaph from 1680 put Hobbes's role more elegantly: '*Leviathan* the great is faln . . . but see the small *Behemoths* of his progenie, survive to duel all divinitie'.<sup>80</sup>

This radical legacy was perhaps the most visible feature of Hobbes's reception because radicals were among those most likely to openly acknowledge their dependence upon the book. But as the evidence has suggested, radicalism was the tip of an iceberg if we are thinking of *Leviathan's* more general impact. *Leviathan's* reception operated in complex ways because it contained arguments that could be and were used in a range of debates central to late seventeenth-century politics. *Leviathan* could function as a justification for both protectorate and monarchy, as a plea for toleration and an argument for persecution. In its later incarnation as a wicked book it could be represented as an apologia for tyranny and absolutism and as a source of sedition, atheism and immorality. But according to the rule that negative publicity works as effectively as positive, these demonized versions of his theory transmitted Hobbes's central tenets about the relationship between the individual and the state just as effectively to multiple audiences, and even to audiences at one remove from the text itself, as the work of apologists. That the manifestly different forms in which Hobbes's doctrines were transmitted could equally shape the thought of his critics, whether they chose to admit it or not, demonstrates the transformative powers of Hobbes's extraordinary text.

## NOTES

- I. For the classic accounts of accounts of Hobbes's isolation and rejection, see S. Mintz's *The Hunting of Leviathan: Seventeenth Century Reactions to the Materialism and Moral Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes*

- (Cambridge, 1969) and J. Bowle, *Hobbes and His Critics: A Study in Seventeenth Century Constitutionalism* (Cape, 1951), but see also G. P. Gooch, *Political Thought in England: Bacon to Halifax* (London, 1915), 23; H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'Thomas Hobbes', in *Historical Essays* (London, 1957), 233; and C. Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution* (London, 1958), 91.
2. William Warburton, *Works*, ed. R. Hurd, 12 vols. (London, 1811), vol. iv, 32.
  3. See for example the groundbreaking reassessment of Hobbes's relationship with his contemporaries by Quentin Skinner in 'The Context of Hobbes's Theory of Political Obligation', in *Hobbes and Rousseau*, ed. M. Cranston and R. Peters (New York 1972), 85–108; a revised version of which can be found in Q. Skinner's *Visions of Politics* (Cambridge, 2002), vol. iii, 264–86. See also Mark Goldie, 'The Reception of Hobbes', in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, ed. J. H. Burns and Mark Goldie (Cambridge, 1991), 589–615 and Noel Malcolm's treatment of Hobbes's reception in Europe, 'Hobbes and the European Republic of Letters', in *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford, 2002), 457–545.
  4. For Hobbes's respectability more generally, see G. A. J. Rogers, 'Hobbes's Hidden Influence', in *Perspectives on Thomas Hobbes*, ed. G. A. J. Rogers and A. Ryan (Oxford, 1988), 188–205 and for Hobbes's scientific reputation, in the same volume, N. Malcolm, 'Hobbes and the Royal Society', esp. 51–4.
  5. The price is mentioned in a letter from Hobbes's friend Robert Payne to Gilbert Sheldon in May 1651, British Library MS Harleian 6942, no. 132. For information on the prices of the various editions of *Leviathan* see Malcolm, 'The Printing of the Bear', in *Aspects of Hobbes*, 341–5.
  6. *The Correspondence of Bishop Brian Duppa and Sir Justinian Isham 1650–1660*, ed. G. Isham (Northamptonshire Record Society, 1951), vol. xvii, 41.
  7. G. Holland, *The Grand Prerogative of Human Nature* (London, 1653), 119.
  8. For Hobbes's continental connections see Malcolm, 'Hobbes and the European Republic of Letters', esp. 457–8; for the role of French satire and burlesque, see Q. Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge, 1997), 13; for Hobbes and the burlesque tradition, see Patricia Springborg, 'Mythic History and National Historiography', in *The Historical Imagination in Early-Modern Britain, History, Rhetoric and Fiction 1500–1800*, ed. D. R. Kelley and D. H. Sacks (Cambridge, 1997), 290; for the genesis of the frontispiece see Malcolm's essay 'The Title Page of *Leviathan*, Seen in a Curious Perspective', in *Aspects of Hobbes*, 200–33.

9. *Correspondence of Bishop Brian Duppa*, 41.
10. A. Ross, *Leviathan drawn out with a Hook* (London, 1653), Preface. Coloquintida is the spongy pulp of the bitter cucumber, an Asiatic plant related to the watermelon.
11. R. Filmer, *Patriarcha and Other Writings*, ed. J. Sommerville (Cambridge, 1991), 184–5.
12. Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *Brief View and Survey of Leviathan* (Oxford, 1676), Ep. Ded.
13. John Eachard, *Some Opinions of Mr Hobbes* (London, 1673), Sig. A5r-v.
14. Thomas Tenison, *The Creed of Mr Hobbes examined* (London, 1670), 132.
15. William Lucy, *Observations, censures and confutations of divers errors in the first two chapters of Mr Hobbes his Leviathan* (London, 1656).
16. Clarendon, *Brief View and Survey*, 1.
17. [J. Austin] W. Birchley, *The Christian Moderator. Third Part* (London, 1653), 27.
18. Hobbes, *The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. N. Malcolm (Oxford, 1994), vol. i, 497–9; vol. ii, 782–5.
19. Ross, *Leviathan drawn out with a Hook*, preface.
20. See W. Birchley [J. Austin], *The Christian Moderator* (London, 1651), 13; *The Christian moderator... Third part* (London, 1653), 21, 27; M. Nedham, *Mercurius Politicus* 60 (24–31 July 1651), 950–1. For discussion see J. Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes*, ch. 5.
21. *The beacons quenched* (London, 1652), 13.
22. Hobbes, *Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes*, vol. i, 459.
23. Hartlib Papers 62/30/4a.
24. See for example John Hall of Durham's *Confusion confounded* (1654), which refers to Hobbes as 'a learned Modern', 9.
25. T. White, *The grounds of obedience and government by Thomas White* (1655); J. Hall, *Of government and obedience as they stand directed and determined by Scripture and reason four books* (1654). For discussion see J. Peacey, 'Nibbling at Leviathan: Politics and Theory in England in the 1650s', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 61/2 (1998), 241–58 and J. Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes*, ch. 5.
26. Hobbes, *English Works*, ed. Molesworth (London, 1839–45), vol. vii, 336.
27. L. Fawn, *A beacon set on fire* (London, 1652), 14–15.
28. Hobbes, *The moral and political works of Thomas Hobbes* (London, 1750), xxvii.
29. J. Bramhall, *Castigations of Mr. Hobbes his last animadversions, in the case concerning liberty, and universal necessity. With an appendix concerning the catching of Leviathan, or the great whale* (London, 1658).

30. See Waller's dismissive comments to Hobbes, *Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes*, vol. i, 295.
31. Wilkins and Ward attacked Hobbes in the *Vindiciae Academicarum* (Oxford, 1654); Ward's *In Thomae Hobbii Philosophia Exercitatio Epistolica* (Oxford, 1656), perhaps one of the most comprehensive demolitions of Hobbes's positions, failed to reach a nonspecialist audience.
32. For Baxter's campaign, see *The Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, ed. N. H. Keeble and G. F. Nuttall (Oxford, 1991), vol. i, 74–5; for his call to have *Leviathan* burned see Baxter, *Humble Advice* (London, 1655), 9.
33. J. Wallis, *Elenchus Geometriae Hobbiana* (Oxford, 1655), A3v-r. For the long-running dispute between Hobbes and Wallis, see D. Jesseph, *Squaring the Circle: The War between Hobbes and Wallis* (Chicago, 1999).
34. T. Burton, *Diary of Thomas Burton*, ed. J. T. Rutt (London, 1828), vol. i, 348.
35. C. Pike [William Lucy], *Examinations, Censures* (London, 1657), Sig. B3v.
36. G. Lawson, *An examination of the political part of Mr Hobbs his Leviathan* (London, 1657), Sig. A2r-v.
37. Edward Hyde, quoted in the 'Appendix' to P. Barwick, *The Life of the Reverend John Barwick DD* (London, 1724), 430.
38. It is striking that in a catalogue of the best-selling books produced in 1658, *Leviathan* is listed with a large range of Hobbes's other works. W. London, *A catalogue of the most vendible books in England* (London, 1658), xii.
39. Harrington attacks *Leviathan* in *Oceana*, but acknowledges Hobbes's influence elsewhere. For Harrington's relationship to Hobbes see particularly J. Scott, 'The rapture of motion: James Harrington's republicanism', in *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, ed. N. Phillipson and Q. Skinner (Cambridge, 1993), 139–63 and also Scott's *England's Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge, 2000), 324–41. Wren positions himself on the same side as Hobbes against Harrington in his *Considerations on Mr. Harrington's Common-wealth of Oceana* (London, 1657).
40. For example, M. Wren, *Monarchy Asserted* (Oxford, 1659), 100; J. Locke, 'Second Tract on Government' in Locke, *Political Essays*, ed. M. Goldie (Cambridge, 1997), 70.
41. J. Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, vol. i, 339.
42. E. Stillingfleet, *Irenicum* (London, 1662), 32; for discussion of Stillingfleet's position see J. Parkin, *Science, Religion and Politics in Restoration England* (Woodbridge, 1999), 18–23. Noel Malcolm first



- drew attention to this phenomenon with regard to Hobbes's hostile reception among Royal Society scientists in his 'Hobbes and the Royal Society'.
43. See, for example, Charles Wolseley, *Liberty of Conscience in the Magistrate's Interest* (London, 1668), 4, 17; Anon., *A Second Discourse of the Religion of England* (London, 1668), 13; for Hobbes's quotation in Parliament see Anchitell Grey, *Parliamentary Debates* (London, 1763), vol. 1, 103. Edward Seymour quoted from chapter xi of *Leviathan*.
  44. Louis du Moulin wrote to Richard Baxter praising the new emphasis on toleration and expressed some surprise that 'men as ill-principled as Grotius and Selden, yea Hobbes as bad as can be, should come nearer the truth than many good men', quoted by Mark Goldie in 'Priestcraft and the Birth of Whiggism', in *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain* ed. N. Phillipson and Q. Skinner (Cambridge, 1993), 209–31.
  45. Pepys paid 24 shillings and noted that new copies were selling for 30. Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. R. Latham and W. Matthews (London 1971, 1995), vol. ix, 298–9.
  46. The Scargill affair has been discussed most recently by J. Parkin in 'Hobbiism in the Later 1660s', *Historical Journal* 42/1 (1999), 85–108, but also in detail by C. L. S. Linnel, 'Daniel Scargill, A Penitent Hobbist', *Church Quarterly Review* CLVI (1953), 256–65. A much more substantial consideration of the manuscript sources is given in J. Axtell, 'The Mechanics of Opposition: Restoration Cambridge v. Daniel Scargill', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 38 (1965), 102–11. For briefer discussions see Mintz, *Hunting of Leviathan*, 50–2; John Twigg, *The University of Cambridge and the English Revolution* (Woodbridge, 1990), 259–60.
  47. The text can be read either in the original *Recantation of Daniel Scargill* (Cambridge, 1669), or as it is reproduced in Masters, *History of Corpus Christi College*, Appendix, or more accessibly in C. L. S. Linnel, 'Daniel Scargill, 'A Penitant "Hobbist"', *Church Quarterly Review* 156 (1955), 257–60.
  48. For identification of Parker as a Hobbist see Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (London, 1696), part II, 123; John Humfrey, *A Case of Conscience* (London, 1669), 11, 12; Henry Stubbe, *Rosemary and Bayes* (London, 1672), 18; Anon., *Insolence and Impudence Triumphant* (London, 1669), Sig. A3r. Even Anglican clergyman Herbert Thorndike thought that Parker sounded like Hobbes, as did Locke. Herbert Thorndike, *Discourse* (London, 1670), 113–14; Locke, *Political Essays*, ed. M. Goldie (Cambridge, 1997), 212–14.
  49. C. Wolseley, *The Unreasonableness of Atheism* (London, 1669), 193–4, 197–9; Thomas Tenison, *The Creed of Mr Hobbes Examin'd* (London,

- 1670), 8–9. Wolseley had campaigned for toleration; Tenison had been Scargill's tutor.
50. Eachard produced another satirical attack on Hobbes the following year, *Some Opinions of Mr Hobbs Considered* (London, 1673).
  51. It is symptomatic of such developments that commonplace book entries from the 1670s purporting to list Hobbesian positions do not quote *Leviathan* at all, but rather Scargill's *Recantation* and Tenison's *Creed*. British Library Additional MS 8888; British Library Sloane MS 1458.
  52. Particularly the characters of Almanzor and Boabdelin from Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada* (1672), see L. Teeter, 'The Dramatic Use of Hobbes's Political Ideas', *English Literary History* 3 (1936), 140–69; J. A. Winterbottom, 'The Place of Hobbesian Ideas in Dryden's Tragedies', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 57 (1958), 665–83.
  53. Anon., *The Character of a Coffee House* (London, 1673), 4–5.
  54. Anon., *Character of a Town Gallant* (London, 1675), 7.
  55. H. Atherton, *The Christian Physician* (London, 1683), 4.
  56. Noel Malcolm suggests that this might have been due to the effect of the fire of London as well as Hobbes's growing notoriety. Malcolm, 'The Printing of the Bear', in *Aspects of Hobbes*, 343–5.
  57. See particularly the Noel Malcolm's extraordinary piece of detective work, 'The Printing of the Bear'.
  58. For Hobbes's claim, see particularly his *Mr Hobbes Considered* (p. 51) in *English Works*, IV, 435. For the best study of Hobbes's continental reception see Malcolm, 'Hobbes and the European Republic of Letters'.
  59. For Abraham van Berkel's translation see Malcolm, 'Hobbes and the European Republic of Letters', 465–6; C. W. Shoneveld, 'Thomas Hobbes and Holland' in *Intertraffic of the mind* (Leiden, 1983), 29–62; M. J. Petry, 'Hobbes and the Early Dutch Spinozists', in *Spinoza's Political and Theological Thought*, ed. C. de Deugd (Amsterdam, 1984), 150–70.
  60. For Hobbes and the Dutch republican tradition see Noel Malcolm, 'Hobbes and Spinoza', in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, ed. J. Burns and M. Goldie (Cambridge, 1991), 547–50; see also H. Blom, *Morality and Causality in Politics* (Rotterdam, 1995), ch. 6; M. J. Petry, 'Hobbes and the Early Dutch Spinozists'.
  61. For the publishing history of Hobbes's work and the censorship that he faced during this period see P. Milton, 'Hobbes, Heresy and Lord Arlington', *History of Political Thought* 144 (1993), 501–46.
  62. See for example R. Cumberland, *De Legibus Naturae* (London, 1672), 45, 421; J. Templer, *Idea theologiae Leviathanis* (London, 1673).
  63. Malcolm, 'Hobbes and the European Republic of Letters', 477.
  64. Malcolm, 'The Printing of the Bear', 380–1; Petry, 'Hobbes and the early Dutch Spinozists', 160; Schoneveld, *Intertraffic*, 58–9.

65. Pufendorf, *Elementorum Jurisprudentiae Universalis*, trans. W. A. Oldfather (Oxford, 1931), vol. ii, Pref. xxx.
66. Hobbes's influence on Pufendorf is abundantly illustrated in Fiammeta Palladini's *Samuel Pufendorf: Discepolo di Hobbes* (Bologna, 1990).
67. For an overview of this controversy see F. Palladini, *Discussioni seicentesche su Samuel Pufendorf* (Bologna, 1987), 99–122; K. Haakonssen, *Natural law and moral philosophy* (Cambridge, 1997), 43–6.
68. For Pufendorf's use of Cumberland see Palladini, *Samuel Pufendorf*, 189–244, and Parkin, *Science, Religion and Politics*, 205–12.
69. Anon., *True Effigies of the Monster of Malmesbury, or Thomas Hobbes in his proper colours* (London, 1680).
70. Abraham Cowley, 'Pindarique Odes', in *Poems* (London, 1656), 26–9.
71. Anon., *True Effigies*, 4.
72. See John Marshall, 'The Ecclesiology of the Latitude-Men 1660–89: Stillingtonfleet, Tillotson and "Hobbism"', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 26 (1985), 407–27.
73. For the best discussion of the Judgement and Decree of the University of Oxford in 1683, see R. A. Beddard, 'Tory Oxford' in *The History of University of Oxford*, ed. N. Tyacke (Oxford, 1997), 892–905; for examples of the use of Hobbes's ideas at around the same time, see T. Pomfret, *Passive obedience, stated and asserted* (London, 1683), 11–13; T. Gipps, *Three sermons preached in Lent and summer assizes* (London, 1683), 22–3, 33, 49, 56, 68, 69, 72, 75.
74. Anon., *An Elegie upon Mr. Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury lately deceased* (London, 1679), brs.
75. S. Butler, *Satires and Miscellanies*, ed. R. Lamar (Cambridge, 1928), 241.
76. Aubrey attributes the broadside to the radical freethinking deist Charles Blount, *Brief Lives*, I, 356, but see also Malcolm, *Correspondence*, vol. ii, 793–4.
77. *Leviathan*, vi, 36, 42/26. Note the alteration to the Latin, recorded in Curley's edition of *Leviathan*, 31, n. 3.
78. Malcolm, 'Hobbes and the European Republic of Letters', 484–97.
79. Malcolm, 'Hobbes, Ezra and the Bible: The History of a Subversive Idea', in *Aspects of Hobbes*, 383–481.
80. Anon., *An Elegie upon Mr. Thomas Hobbes*.

Hobbes's masterpiece, *Leviathan* (1651), does not significantly depart from the view of *De Cive* concerning the relation between protection and obedience, but it devotes much more attention to the civil obligations of Christian believers and the proper and improper roles of a church within a state. Hobbes's [Read More](#). existence of God. In *Christianity: Arguments from religious experience and miracles*. "God spake to him" (*Leviathan*, Pt. III, ch. *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil*, commonly referred to as *Leviathan*, is a book written by Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and published in 1651 (revised Latin edition 1668). Its name derives from the biblical Leviathan. The work concerns the structure of society and legitimate government, and is regarded as one of the earliest and most influential examples of social contract theory. Written during the English Civil War (1642–1651), it argues for a social