



# **Violating and Validating the Laws of Nature**

**A Hobbesian Reading of Hugh Howey's *Wool***

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# Introduction

In Hugh Howey's dystopian and post-apocalyptic novel *Wool* (2013), the world has been inhospitable for several generations, and the people living in the underground silo have no recollection of the outside. Life in Silo 18 is governed by *The Pact*, a book containing strict rules on how to govern and to keep order. *The Pact*, in its turn, enforces a hierarchical structure where the powerful live in abundance on the top floors, while workers struggle in the down deep. This inequality creates feelings of jealousy and frustration and is the breeding ground for uprisings. The uprising begins when the antagonist Bernard from IT becomes acting mayor after orchestrating the 'mysterious' death of mayor Jahns. He reinforces the inequalities and frames the protagonist Jules (also known as Juliette), a mechanic and recently elected sheriff from Mechanical, for murder. He sends her out to die in the wasteland in the hopes of removing the last person standing in his way of reaching ultimate power. The (presumed) death of Jules is the breaking-point, and Mechanical starts an uprising with the end-goal of dethroning Bernard, thus turning Silo 18 into a battle ground which threatens to turn their society into a chaotic and lawless state.

The social contract theorist, Thomas Hobbes, constructed nineteen Laws of Nature which he argued would bring peace and prosperity to a society. The laws teach man how to act and how to create a civilized society, because without rules and regulations, life would be "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short" (Ch XIII: 179). He claims that man is unable to be civil and live in peace with others without the incentive of laws to guide him to the correct way of life. Man is too invested in trifles such as competitions in order to gain power, items and glory (Ch XIII: 177). According to Hobbes, violating the Laws of Nature will ultimately create an inhospitable world where morality ceases to exist, making murder and violence neither right nor wrong, what he calls a 'state of nature'. It is therefore of utmost importance to abide by his laws if mankind wants to survive and live a prosperous and peaceful life.

*Wool*, and other dystopian and post-apocalyptic novels, are well-suited for a Hobbesian reading since many novels are very much concerned with societal structures and laws. By having Hobbes' Laws of Nature in mind when reading a novel from these genres one can discern a pattern. The antagonist often acts in ways which could be interpreted as violations of Hobbes' ideas, and the outcome of the antagonists' actions is often the fall of society and the death of the violator. The protagonist's actions, on the other hand, challenges and changes the society for the better, securing a peaceful future and the survival of man. More often than not, the protagonist is adhering to Hobbes' laws when establishing that peace. Hugh Howey's

novel *Wool* can therefore be read as providing an example of what adhering and violating Hobbes' Laws of Nature can lead to. Bernard will be used to exemplify different kinds of violations during his hunt for power, which will further show that each violation leads the silo closer to a state of nature. Jules, on the other hand, is the antithesis since she, at the end of the novel, changes *The Pact* in order to save the silo and its inhabitants from the horrid state of nature.

The aim of this essay is to show how the novel *Wool* illustrates how adhering to Thomas Hobbes' Laws of Nature is central in the survival of man through the implementation of equality between men, rather than absolute power of the sovereign. Violations of the Laws, and the abuse of power, will be the end of a society, thereby validating Hobbes' claim that his laws will create peace “[f]or it can never be that Warre shall preserve life, and Peace destroy it” (Ch XV: 225).

This essay is divided into two sections, where the first chapter offers a brief summary of Hobbes' *Leviathan* as well as some criticism presented against it. Furthermore, a discussion of the dystopian and post-apocalyptic genres as well as their connection to social contracts will be discussed. Lastly, literary research with a Hobbesian outlook will be examined. The second chapter contains a contextualization of Hobbes' Laws of Nature, and the literary analysis where *Wool* will be used to illustrate different types of violations and how they lead to chaos and a state of nature.

# Chapter 1

Chapter one begins with an introduction of the social contract theorist Thomas Hobbes where his work *Leviathan* and *Laws of Nature* will be discussed, along with some criticism of his ideas. After that, a brief explanation of the choice of theory and aim follows. Thereafter, the chapter will contextualize the dystopian and post-apocalyptic genres, as well as why Hobbes' social contract is an appropriate theoretical framework for those genres. This is followed by a discussion about reviews on *Wool*, and an exploration of prior literary research on dystopian and post-apocalyptic novels with a Hobbesian outlook.

## Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*

“And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.” (Ch XIII: 179)

This is a widely quoted sentence from Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan: The Matter, Forme & Power of a Common-wealth Ecclesiastical and Civill*<sup>1</sup>. The quote sums up Hobbes' view on what will happen to man if he does not abide by the natural laws which he presents in his book. Thomas Hobbes is a political philosopher focusing on social contracts. Social contract theory is concerned with defining the “rights and duties” for both the people governed and those who govern. The theory had its peak in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and has been a major influence on political theory ever since. Philosophers such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau are also well-known social contract theorists alongside Thomas Hobbes (Britannica, “Social Contract”). Hobbes' best known work, *Leviathan*, was first published in 1651, and is divided into four parts – “Of Man”, “Of Commonwealth”, “Of a Christian Common-Wealth” and “Of the Kingdome of Darknesse”. This essay will solely focus on chapters 13-15 in part one, “Of Man”. In those chapters, Hobbes lays out his social contract in the form of ‘Laws of Nature’. Hobbes describes his laws as “a Precept, or generall Rule, found out by Reason”, and the laws concern topics such as war, equality and society (Ch XIV: 184).

In the years of *Leviathan's* publication, several critics voiced their concerns on Hobbes' “secular tone” and that he wrongfully claimed that man<sup>2</sup> could create social contracts. The critique derives from a context where a social contract was not needed since God decided for man, because “political authority derives from God” (Thomas: 187). In *The Sexual Contract*

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<sup>1</sup> I will from now on refer to this book as ‘*Leviathan*’ for simplicity's sake.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout the essay one I will use the collective noun *man* when talking about people since that is the term used by Hobbes.

(1988), Carol Pateman states that Hobbes further claimed that “there is no natural mastery in the state of nature” which means that the man did not have the power over the woman (44), thus upsetting early critics since they believed that “the father ruled over his wife and children” (Thomas: 186). Hobbes’ theoretical framework can therefore be considered revolutionary for its time.

Hobbes’ social contract theory enables us to understand what he believed to be the main purpose of a society and how it can be achieved. Hobbes summarizes his Laws of Nature with The Golden Rule in order to make his ideas available to a wider audience, which reads “Do not that to another, which thou wouldest not have done to thy selfe” (Ch XV: 224). But why would man need rules in the first place? Hobbes believes that a peaceful life does not come naturally to humans and that man is a violent and egotistical creature who would do anything to benefit himself. Hence, man needs rules and laws as guidance and the fear of consequences as an incentive for good and moral behavior (Ch XIV: 188). He does state that a sovereign is needed to uphold the laws, but he does not mean that the sovereign holds undisputable power. Instead, the sovereign has to abide by the social contract himself. However, Hobbes has been criticized for painting man in black and white colors, and over-simplifying and generalizing individuals. Bailey D. Villarreal (2020) states that sociality and morals are more complicated than what Hobbes stipulates, and that it is therefore not enough to simply state that man is materialistic and egotistical (20-24). In this essay, though, it will be shown that a greater deal of complexity emerges when applying Hobbes’ theories to the literary analysis.

Hobbes’ first law is “To Seek Peace, and follow it”, but the peaceful society he imagines is constantly jeopardized by war and animosity since “it can never be that Warre shall preserve life, and Peace destroy it” (Ch XIV: 185 & Ch XV: 225). The outcome of following Hobbes’ Laws of Nature will be a peaceful, just and prosperous society where men live together in harmony. Even though Hobbes himself sees his laws as promoting peace and community he has been interpreted as legitimizing and sanctioning dictatorial tendencies and totalitarian states, all in the name of saving a society from reverting back to a state of nature (Heit: 48, Foy: 220). S.A. Lloyd, author of *Morality in the Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes* (2009), on the other hand, argues that the “ultimate function of the Laws of Nature is to secure the common good” (Lloyd: 149) and the common good is defined by Lloyd as “the benefits that distinguish the state of men under civil government from the miserable form of life in a state of nature” (118). Lloyd argues that Hobbes’ laws promote the preservation of a community rather than the individual. Since the laws “require us to act in ways that provide for the general good of humanity, from which we are excused for no self-interested end less urgent than immediate

survival” they will ensure that the sovereign automatically implements equality upon his people (125). Lloyd’s observations explain why Hobbes considers it to lie in the sovereign’s duty to follow the rules himself, since people might feel unjustly treated if rules are forced upon them, while the powerful can do as they wish. The sovereign should therefore obey the laws as a “security against the danger that may arrive to himself in his natural person from rebellion” (135). The result of an uprising may be the end of society and force man to go back to living in a lawless nature, risking revolving back to a nasty and brutish life. Hence, treating everyone equally, including himself, is the only way for the sovereign to secure peace and safety for his people.

In chapters 13-15 in *Leviathan*, Hobbes’ lays out his social contract in the form of Laws of Nature. Here he explains and demonstrates each of the nineteen laws and how they will ensure peace and prosperity within a society. It was therefore an active choice to only focus on those chapters since the aim of this essay is to show how the novel *Wool* illustrates that adhering to Hobbes’ Laws of Nature will lead to the survival of man, while violations of the same set of rules will lead to war and a short, brutish and nasty life. A discussion and summary of Hobbes’ laws and important themes will be done in chapter two in relation to the analysis itself.

## **The Dystopian and Post-Apocalyptic Genres**

The dystopian genre is rather well-known, with classic works such as George Orwell’s *1984* and Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*, whereas the post-apocalyptic genre is lesser known, or is sometimes also mistakenly identified with the dystopian literature. However, two works that still stand out in the post-apocalyptic genre is Cormac McCarthy’s novel *The Road* and the *Mad Max* film series. With that said, both genres have had an upswing in later years (since around 2010) thanks to Young Adult (YA) novels. The YA novels have also diverted from the classic middle-aged male protagonist by having young females as the main character and protagonist. Famous examples of YA novels from the 2010s are the *Divergent* and *The Hunger Games* trilogies and the *Maze Runner* quintet. The interplay between the dystopian and post-apocalyptic genres is also becoming more common, one example being *Wool*. But before discussing that phenomenon closer, it is important to define the genres separately.

*Where* the novel takes place is one of the factors which can determine whether a novel is dystopian or post-apocalyptic. Strictly dystopian novels are normally based in an urban setting where an authoritarian (and/or totalitarian) power is in charge and is portrayed as the enemy

or hindrance in acquiring freedom. Strictly post-apocalyptic stories, on the other hand, take place in a nature destroyed by nuclear war, a plague or an environmental catastrophe. Anarchy rules since there are no cities left to be governed and everyone either lives on the plains or in smaller groups/camps. The enemies are dangerous people (cannibals, zombies), lack of food and the toxic barren nature. In dystopian novels the protagonist fights for freedom from an oppressive regime, while the post-apocalyptic protagonist fights nature in order to survive. There are of course variations of these themes, for example where war or a climate catastrophe has forced people to create a new society (above or below ground, with or without fences and guards) in order not to die, but the society is governed by an authoritarian power. Some novels which are based on this trope are: *Wool*, *The Hunger Games*, *The Passage*, *California*, *Breeder* and *Metro 2033*. The definition of how the genres relate to each other can also be backed up by Basu, Broad and Hintz in *Contemporary Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults: Brave New Teenagers* (2013). They claim that “one result of the apocalyptic event is that it can turn existing communities into dystopias marked by secrecy, fear and control” and that authority uses violence as a way to “maintain what little social structure remains” (Hintz, et al.: 3).

*Wool*, the novel analyzed in this essay, can be considered to belong to both genres. The people are forced to live in a totalitarian society without the possibility of escaping due to the toxic nature. Although men caused the natural disasters and wars, nature can still be considered the final enemy, not the social structures of their society, because authorities can be usurped while the inhabitable nature keeps the people trapped in underground silos.

Dystopian literature has the potential to warn and frighten its readers since it covers important matters such as the environment, liberty and identity. It also functions as a “rhetorical *reductio ad absurdum* of a utopian philosophy, extending a utopia to its most extreme ends in order to caution against the destructive politics and culture of the author’s present” (Hintz et al.: 2). Meanwhile the post-apocalyptic genre generates questions about the social contract and what it is “supposed to produce” and the motivation man has to reach that goal (Curtis: 3). The blank slate that the people in the post-apocalyptic novels are given, due to Earth’s destruction, can “be the instigation for utopian imaginings” according to Curtis (11). There are no more laws to follow or hierarchies to abide by, just utter freedom to do whatever one wants. This freedom might create a positive utopian world, or it might be too much freedom to handle and thereby demonstrate “the potential for human savagery” (Curtis: 7). With all this said, it can be interpreted that it is the utopian dream that unites the genres,



while the setting defines the genre and how the characters can proceed in reaching the goal of a peaceful and harmonious future.

The connection to Thomas Hobbes' social contract and his Laws of Nature is found in the societal structures. As mentioned earlier, Hobbes believes that a life without rules and government is brutish and short, which would be the case for the survivors in the post-apocalyptic genre. According to Curtis, many post-apocalyptic novels build upon Hobbes' idea of community through social contract and the Laws of Nature (8). The characters in post-apocalyptic fiction have to start over and create a new society in order to survive. They also have to create a new set of rules and laws to ensure order and to be able to hold people accountable for their actions, and according to Curtis "an active decision by human beings to come together, give up some of the natural rights" is what creates a new political authority (10). In the terms of dystopian literature the society already exists, but relies on strict rules and obedience. To analyze the leader's actions and the effect on society could be done with the help of Hobbes' laws. Are the laws violated, and if so, how does that affect the inhabitants and the survival of the society? As Hintz points out, dystopian societies might be utopias stretched to an extreme. Hobbes' social contract theory could then be used in analyzing what happened to create this shift, what exactly the turning-point was, and if it is possible to revert back to a utopia.

## **Contextualizing *Wool***

There is no prior published research on *Wool* yet, but that does not mean that the novel has never been discussed or analyzed in relation to the genre. Instead, the book was well received by both critics and readers when published in 2013. Three independent reviews will be discussed in the following section. In addition, to contextualize the novel and its genre, other dystopian and post-apocalyptic works read with a Hobbesian outlook will be discussed. The choice of articles will give a brief overview on which themes are often analyzed and discussed with the help of Hobbes.

## **Reviews on *Wool***

*The Independent's* reviewer David Barnett and Alison Flood from *The Guardian* both classified *Wool* as a dystopian novel, whereas Keith Donohue of *The Washington Post* claims *Wool* to be a post-apocalyptic novel, although not a "run-of-the-mill" kind, yet also referring to it as both dystopian and science-fiction (Donohue, 2013). David Barnett is reminded of

popular science fiction movies from the 70's when reading *Wool* and believes the novel will become as popular as *The Hunger Games* and *The Passage*. He also points out that the filming rights has been sold to Ridley Scott (Barnett, 2013). All reviewers are positive and *Wool* is praised by Donohue for its engaging plot and mood which is “rightly claustrophobic” (Donohue, 2013). Flood gives some examples of where the novel is lacking. She believes the plot seems false as the story progresses and some characters are added. Flood explains the shift of the plot as an effect of *Wool's* starting point, as it was a short story from the beginning, and Howey added more “as readers fell in love with the world” (Flood, 2013).

The three reviews of *Wool* show the difficulty in defining which genre a novel belongs to, especially since the dystopian and post-apocalyptic genres are rather similar. As mentioned earlier, the genres have merged during the last couple of years, thereby making them even more difficult to define. As Claire Curtis points out, post-apocalyptic fiction can also be connected to several sub-genres such as sci-fi, horror and dystopia (7). The melding of the two genres opens up a discussion about whether we can see a new genre develop which encompasses both genres, and if it is important to keep them separate. Claire Curtis claims that the post-apocalyptic genre is under-theorized which could be interpreted as an argument for maintaining a distinction between the terms in analyses of the characteristics of the respective genres (12). However, while it is not the purpose of this essay to discuss the topic of genres, it is interesting to ponder on what implications the blending of two genres can have on novels. Does a social contract in a strictly dystopian novel differ from a contract in a novel where the dystopian and post-apocalyptic genres are conjoined, like in *Wool*? Are the social contracts different if they are formed by an urban totalitarian government rather than a small group of survivors on the plains? If not, which factors unites a creation and maintaining of a society?

### **Literary Research with a Hobbesian outlook**

In this section, previous research into different novels and literary themes with the use of Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* will be explored, sometimes also in conjunction with other theories. The novels *Lord of the Flies*, *The Hunger Games* and *Lucifer's Hammer* belong to either the dystopian and post-apocalyptic genres or both, and have been used to analyze social structures and authoritarian figures. Hobbes is often used in literary research when trying to understand the importance of societal structures and what violations of them could lead to, which is what the authors of the selected articles do.

### ***Lord of the Flies***

The two articles, “Flies in Our Eyes: Man, the Economy and War” by Ronnie D. Lipschutz and “Warring Sovereigns and Mimetic Rivals: On Scapegoats and Political Crisis in William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*” by Eric Wilson, are both concerned with Hobbes’ social contract. Lipschutz and Wilson try to understand how and why the boys act like they do when arriving at the island and when trying to create a new society. Lipschutz and Wilson use Hobbes’ social contract and his idea of a state of nature in their analysis. The writers discuss violence and the societal structures created on the island, and they also use Hobbes’ concept of a state of nature as an illustration of how brutish and nasty life becomes on the island.

Both Lipschutz and Wilson interpret the first chapter in *Lord of the Flies* as corresponding to Hobbes’ state of nature, a state where life is nasty and brutish. The boys arrive at a deserted and uncivilized island, and by making rules they create a society with the function of keeping them safe until help arrives (Lipschutz: 246, Wilson: 149). Lipschutz also takes a closer look on class based hierarchies and how violence maintains those hierarchies and states that “*Lord of the Flies* might offer the greatest insights into both social theory and world politics, even if that was not William Golding’s intent” (Lipschutz: 243, 266). Eric Wilson sees *Lord of the Flies* “as a satire of Thomas Hobbes’s theory of the state of nature and the Social Contract as the foundation of legal and political order” (Wilson: 148). He further claims that Golding’s novel is an “almost point-for-point poetical embellishment” of Hobbes’ political “treatise” (149). Wilson later concludes his article with calling *Lord of the Flies* a “Hobbesian thought experiment” (172).

### ***The Hunger Games***

When analyzing *The Hunger Games*, Jamey Heit and Joseph J. Foy both focus on the authoritarian leader President Snow and how he can legitimize his actions with the help of Hobbes’ ideas.

According to Heit, Hobbes believed that the “basis for government is in the intrinsic instability that comes from desire” (Heit: 48), since man will always seek to attain more and will live in fear of others who want to take it away from him, enforcing a zero-sum mentality (Heit: 48). The government is needed since “[c]itizens are the problem because they cannot be trusted” (50). An authoritative government is therefore not the problem in keeping peace, but the people themselves. It is this idea which Heit believes would appeal to President Snow in

*The Hunger Games*: “[i]n his eyes, responsibility for government action rests on the shoulders of the governed” and security is therefore essential and “[c]itizens must accept the limitations that enable security” (49-50). Along the same vein as Heit, Foy concludes that “Hobbes argued that the sovereign is justified in using any tactics whatsoever, no matter how ruthless or oppressive, to maintain peace and order” (Foy: 220). With this logic it is not problematic that the Capitol, ruled by President Snow, uses fear and death to secure the obedience of its inhabitants (217). Another justification of the harsh treatment of its inhabitants lies in Hobbes’ state of nature, according to Foy. Hobbes’ ideas gives the Capitol “virtually unlimited power to prevent any possibility of a rebellion that would throw society back into the state of nature”, because a life in “nature” would be chaotic and brutal (209).

Both articles discuss how Hobbes’ theories could be used to authorize a strong totalitarian regime on the basis that it would protect its citizens from a harmful nature. This concept will also become apparent in *Wool* where, head of IT and acting mayor, Bernard is trying to legitimize killing “viruses”. Viruses are people who can spread ideas which could potentially create uprisings or riots, thereby risking the society to revert back to a state of nature. It is then apparent that Hobbes’ ideas can be used and interpreted in different ways, both by writers and by critics. “Power-hungry” leaders can see it as a justification for authoritarian actions, such as President Snow or Bernard, while to Hobbes himself, the overriding purpose of his ideas and laws would be to promote and create peace among men (Ch: XIV: 185).

### ***Lucifer’s Hammer***

The main source of inspiration for this essay comes from Claire Curtis’ analysis of the novel *Lucifer’s Hammer* in her book *Postapocalyptic Fiction and the Social Contract: We’ll Not Go Home Again* (2010). Curtis uses Hobbes’ social contract theory to analyze the plot and the characters’ actions. She concludes that the novel “argues for a Hobbesian social contract” and that “[t]he novel promotes an authoritarian style of government chosen by the people in order to protect their lives and the possibility for those lives flourishing” (65). It is due to the difficult times ahead in *Lucifer’s Hammer* that the people are willing to enter a social contract and “lay down their rights” (52). A ranch up in the hills becomes a sanctuary with a chosen leader, illustrating Hobbes idea that there has to be a leader in order to secure a civil society. The people might not agree on everything, but they have laid down their rights and have agreed to be governed by the system (59).

The literary research presented in this part uses Hobbes' theories as a way to understand society and social contracts within the selected novels. All studies conclude that the novels analyzed present social contracts as the foundation for a society and that life without it would be considered a 'state of nature'. To have no rules and letting anyone do whatever he wishes would be a recipe for disaster. That was why the boys in *Lord of the Flies* very soon after their arrival made up rules, and why the people on the ranch in *Lucifer's Hammer* agreed to choose a leader to secure their societal structures. President Snow in *The Hunger Games* can be seen as an illustration of Hobbes' ideas when he strengthens his hold over Panem and enforces stricter laws to prevent chaos and reverting back to a state of nature. Hobbes' social contract is therefore an important aspect within these dystopian and post-apocalyptic novels, both in creating control and safety after losing society, or to maintain what has already been established. As for *Wool*, we will see examples of both aspects, where Bernard will represent the strict authority who tries to maintain control with all means possible, and Jules, who will change the strict rules and regulations in the silo to create a more open and free society.

## Chapter 2

Chapter two contains the literary analysis of *Wool*. It is divided into three parts based on the most central ideas within Hobbes' Laws of Nature, which are 'War and the State of Nature', 'Equality' and 'Society and Social Contracts'. Each part begins with a summary of Hobbes' ideas in regard to the theme in order to contextualize Hobbes for the analysis. It will be illustrated how violations of Hobbes' Laws of Nature in *Wool* lead to chaos and a state of nature that threatens the survival of mankind. To avoid a state of nature man must adhere to Hobbes' social contract, the Laws of Nature. The fundamental aspect of Hobbes' laws is equality, and by adhering to the very same laws, life in society will become prosperous and peaceful.

### War and the State of Nature

In the following sections, Hobbes' idea of a 'state of nature' will be discussed together with three "principall causes of quarrel" (Ch XIII: 177). Furthermore, all ideas will be exemplified with the help of *Wool*.

#### The state of nature and the three causes for war

According to Hobbes, man will always seek violence since it is in his nature, and in order to be able to suppress those urges it is important to know which they are. Hobbes fears that man will run himself into a lawless state of nature through wars or quarrels. He further believes that the state of nature will mean the stagnation of mankind. The argument is that man cannot function on his own and is in need of guidance, hence the need of more laws to subdue man's inability to behave properly. Hobbes' aversion to war does not only stem from the unnecessary killing, but also that it will stop the development of a society: "In such condition [war], there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no Culture of the Earth [...] no Knowledge of the face of the Earth [...] no Arts; no Letters; no Society" (Ch XIII: 179). When a society has stopped functioning it will turn into a state of nature where life is "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short" (Ch XIII: 179). To live in a state of nature does not mean living in the forest, foraging berries for nutrition. It is a place where no one is held accountable for their actions, and man lives in constant fear for his safety due to the lawlessness. According to Hobbes, life would become stagnant, and when reading about Hobbes' state of nature, one can discern an 'end of the world' prophesy. Man will stop

working, preparing for the future or starting a family because there is nothing to look forward to, life in a state of nature is too short. The state of nature would mean the end of man because he would only focus on the day to day survival, which is why Hobbes is very adamant on helping man to steer away from the state of nature into a regulated society.

According to Hobbes' *Leviathan*, there are three "principall causes of quarrel"; firstly to master others or items through competition, secondly from diffidence in order to defend one's safety and lastly to gain glory (Ch XIII: 177). Thus, 'warre' begins when two people no longer see eye to eye. It is important to know the three causes to be able to avoid 'warre' from happening. The next section will look at each 'principall' cause separately and will be contextualized with the help of *Wool* and Silo 18. Lastly, Silo 17 will be used to illustrate Hobbes' feared state of nature.

### ***Competition***

Man always strives to accommodate himself and always wants more. If two men want the same thing they become enemies and are now in a state of war. The only solution to gain possession over an item (or person) is to "destroy, or subdue one an other" according to Hobbes (Ch XIII: 176). Feelings such as jealousy can also make man use violence in order to get what he lusts for. One example from *Wool* which illustrates Hobbes' idea of 'competition' is the antagonist Bernard's murder of mayor Jahns. Both are authorities, but Jahns has the last say in most matters since she is mayor in Silo 18, while Bernard is head of IT. Bernard wants more power, and his only way to become mayor is by 'destroying' Jahns. When a mayor dies, *The Pact* (Silo 18's book of laws) states that the head of IT will become acting mayor until a new mayor is elected. As head of IT, Bernard is aware of this rule and can therefore be certain the he will become mayor when Jahns dies.

### ***Diffidence***

Diffidence, for Hobbes, refers to the feelings of fear and anxiety that all people have about their property and security. Man is egotistical and does not shy away from killing another person in order to attain what he lusts for, which is why men also live in fear of others (Ch XIII: 176). Forcefully taking something from another man is a provocation to war and it is therefore not surprising if the victim will attack the perpetrator as an act of self-defense. It also means that men will defend what they have acquired through conquest. Hobbes sees life as sacred and therefore endorses self-defense in order to protect one's life, but only as an act of self-defense, not as a way to attain desired items (Ch XIV: 184, 188).

In order to protect one's life, is it acceptable to kill someone as a preventive measure? While Hobbes never explicitly discusses the phenomenon, he is adamant that there has to be an immediate threat to one's life in order for killing another man to be condoned. But what if the killing of one single man could save thousands of others? Hobbes does not actively discuss if the end justifies the means, but his postulates do raise this ethical dilemma which is also explored in *Wool*. Several years before he became mayor, Bernard killed a man named George Wilkins to save Silo 18. George was, according to Bernard, a "virus" who would spread dangerous ideas which could lead to uprisings, and by that, threaten the life of the silo dwellers (216, 498-499). The killing can then be seen as a preventative measure to save many people. What can be questioned is whether the killing was an act of self-defense. George never posed an immediate violent threat to Bernard's life, and Bernard would never be able to know if George's ideas would actually instigate an uprising. Assuming Bernard saved thousands of lives by murdering George, would Hobbes see it as an acceptable reason to use self-defense?

Jamey Heit and Joseph J. Foy both interpret Hobbes' ideas as a justification of using whatever means necessary to avoid a state of nature, even if those actions would lead to a totalitarian society. Even though they discuss President Snow in *The Hunger Games*, their argumentation can also be applied to Bernard since he is in a similar position as Snow because of his role as mayor. They believe that due to Hobbes' fear of the state of nature he allows an authority to use all means possible in order to "prevent any possibility of a rebellion that would throw society back into the state of nature", "no matter how ruthless or oppressive" the authority is (Foy: 209, 220). This mindset would thereby allow Bernard to kill George Wilkins to prevent him from jeopardizing the peace within Silo 18, and indirectly forcing it back into a state of nature. According to Heit and Foy, Hobbes sees the citizens as the problem because "they cannot be trusted" since they are the ones creating uprisings and not following the rules (Heit: 50). Their conclusion is therefore that Hobbes does see the end as justifying the means, whether it is killing the perpetrators or enforcing stricter rules in the society to subdue any tendencies does not matter, the importance is to avoid the brutish state of nature.

This interpretation is, on the other hand, not plausible if one solely focuses on Hobbes' Laws of Nature. Hobbes' social contract does not justify any violent behavior since "it can never be that Warre shall preserve life, and Peace destroy it" (Ch XV: 225). Killing another person is an act of war, especially if it is not in the form of active self-defense, and any type of war will lead to a state of nature. It is thereby not possible for an authority to use whatever means possible, because he himself is at risk of starting a war which will lead to a state of nature in the form of



a brutish reality. Hobbes also states that the role of a sovereign is to promote morally correct behavior and uses The Golden Rule to summarize his ideas. By following The Golden Rule a sovereign would not be able to do as he wish, and what he does do will reflect on his society (Ch XIV: 188). It is therefore not beneficial if the sovereign himself uses violence to solve his problems, since that would send signals to his people that violence is an acceptable behavior. The result would be war on many fronts, and life would quickly reverse back to a state of nature.

### ***Glory***

According to Hobbes, the strive for glory is about reputation, which could be attained by “trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other signe of undervalue, either direct in their Persons, or by reflexion in their Kindred, their Friends, their Nation, their Profession, or their Name” (Ch XIII: 177-178).

Bernard's strive for the mayoral position is an example of this. He has several deaths on his conscience but was able to gain the position as mayor of Silo 18. Bernard's hunt for glory leads to a chaotic uprising which would have forced Silo 18 into a state of nature. However, Bernard dies before it happens and the glory is shifted to Jules who returns from the outside. Jules does not attain glory by actively seeking it herself. She instead receives the admiration of Silo 18 when she returns from her life in Silo 17 (which has been her 'safe house' after being sent outside), and brings both knowledge and the true history of their Silo to its inhabitants. She is even elected mayor while being in a coma, an election which is organized by the inhabitants.

### ***The outcome of war – life in state of nature***

The outcome of all wars, whether they are instigated by competition, diffidence or glory, is a chaotic state of nature where neither laws nor the concept of right or wrong exists, making every action acceptable since there is nothing to prove it wrong (Ch XIII: 181). Life will thereby become short and brutish since the risk of getting killed is high. A second silo in *Wool*, which has reverted back to a state of nature due to conflicts, is Silo 17. Its fate exemplifies Hobbes' imagined horrid life that awaits in the state of nature.

Something (or someone) overthrew the governing power and the concept of right and wrong ceased to exist. Several inhabitants of Silo 17 forcefully opened the only exit into the toxic wasteland, which instantly killed everyone who ran outside. The silo dwellers who stayed put turned on each other instead. Since all industry stopped due to the war, food

became scarce, and the silo dwellers started killing their neighbors and friends for food. Laws ceased to exist or hold any meaning because there was no one left to hold anyone accountable, thereby letting rape and incest continue without reprisal. Fear of death or violence forced people into hiding, either making them starve to death or committing suicide in order to escape the chaos and horror. The war only ended when there was no one left to fight, leaving Silo 17 empty but for four orphans and an older man who believed he was still sixteen. The significance of Silo 17 to the plot is then to emphasize that a similar fate awaits if Silo 18 if their society breaks down and the inhabitants go to war.

## **Equality**

Equality is a prerequisite for peace according to Hobbes, and it is therefore incorporated into several of his laws designed to avoid war and a state of nature. This section will explain Hobbes' view on equality and what a society must incorporate into their laws in order to maintain it. The consequences of failing to maintain equality will also be discussed and exemplified with the help of *Wool*.

### **Hobbes' idea of equality**

That equality is an important matter is quickly established by Hobbes in *Leviathan*, as the first line of chapter thirteen reads "Nature hath made men so equall, in the faculties of body, and mind [that] the difference between man, and man, is not so considerable, as that one man can thereupon claim to himselfe any benefit, to which another may not pretend, as well as he" (Ch XIII: 174). Throughout the Laws of Nature the reader will notice several rules, directly or indirectly, connecting to Hobbes' idea of equality. According to the Laws of Nature, equality lies in man's ability to compensate for what he is lacking in regards to others (wit or strength), since what he needs is time and experience to reach those goals. Hobbes therefore acknowledges that there are differences among men, but also believes that these differences unite them. Hobbes never mentions in his Laws of Nature if a woman can or cannot be a sovereign. It is possible that he did not see it as appropriate since he created the laws during a time when women were not considered capable of much more than being a housewife at best. However, considering that he deems everyone equal and capable one can assume that it would be acceptable to have a female authority. Since the purpose of his Laws of Nature is to dictate peace for the "conservation of men in multitudes" (Ch XV: 223), it should not matter *who*

creates peace, just that it is reached and upheld with the help of his social contract, the Laws of Nature.

Even if Hobbes considers men to be equal by nature, he still believes man unable of acting in a way to promote equality since man always sees himself better as than everyone else. Man is therefore in need of guidance to act morally correct. Because of man's equality in mind and body, Hobbes voices a concern regarding the consequences of man's actions, "[f]rom this equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our Ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which neverthelesse they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies" (Ch XIII: 175-176). This flaw, where men always believe that they can get what they want, will lead to animosity, because man will always try to 'win', and has to "destroy, or subdue one an other" in order to succeed. Hobbes argues that when men do not treat others as equals, the result is war and violence (Ch XIII: 176). Equality is therefore a must in order to attain a peaceful life to ensure the survival of mankind.

To remind man of how to act Hobbes constructed several laws to guide man in overcoming his natural lusts. Law nine explicitly tells of equality and forces man to see and treat each other as equals, "The question who is the better man, has no place in the condition of meer Nature; where, all men are equall. [...] If Nature therefore have made men equall, that equalitie is to be acknowledged" (Ch XV: 218). The tenth law gives more insight and exemplifies the ninth, "That at the entrance into conditions of Peace, no man require to reserve to himselfe any Right, which he is not content should be reserved to every one of the rest" (Ch XV: 219). It can be interpreted to mean that one should treat others as he himself wants to be treated, something he later also states when summarizing his laws with The Golden Rule (Ch XV: 224), and to employ equal distribution of goods. It can also be interpreted as endorsing equal distribution of power, thus not letting one man become too powerful and use that power to his advantage. Finally, Hobbes also believes in the importance of a judicial system based on equality. In order to have fair trials man is not allowed to be arbitrator for his own cause, bribe judges, and all witnesses must be heard (Ch XV: 222-223), ensuring everyone being treated equally in court, whether being a commoner or a powerful sovereign.

When summarizing Hobbes ideas of equality, the one uniting factor is equal distribution. Whether it is the distribution of goods, knowledge or power, it should always be divided equally to ensure that man has everything necessary for a "commodious living", which in turn removes the need or want for more (Ch XIII: 182). Equal distribution will result in a peaceful life without cause for violent behavior and war, hence avoiding the lawless state of nature.

## **Equal distribution**

At a first glance, life in Silo 18 seems to be rather equal since equal distribution is used for some areas. All inhabitants have access to free food and accommodation, there are democratic elections for the mayoral post, free education which will guarantee a job, and both men and women can have powerful positions such as sheriff or mayor. Silo 18 is governed by *The Pact*, their book of laws, and everyone must abide by the laws, both sovereigns and ‘commoners’ alike. Even if *The Pact* endorses the distribution of free meals and housing, it promotes an unequal society based on hierarchal structures where a few powerful people have access to more than what is necessary.

Hobbes states that animosity will arise among men who want the same things. It does not necessarily have to be a war for power or territories, it can be about water, food or other things necessary for survival. “For equall distribution, is of the Law of Nature” (Ch XV: 221), and therefore key in securing peace. Equal distribution can also be a way of suppressing violent behavior by granting access to necessities and ensuring that no one owns more than is needed or justifiable. But what happens when the society you live in has rules and regulations which promote inequality by granting a select few access to exclusive opportunities, giving leeway to certain sections and people, or physically dividing the inhabitants?

## ***Jealousy and frustration***

Feelings of jealousy can emerge when realizing that one’s next-door neighbor acquired more food, or in the case in Silo 18, won the lottery to have a chance to try for a child. Unsolicited births are forbidden by *The Pact*, but all registered couples can apply to a lottery to win a twelve months’ window to conceive a child. To have a child is an exclusivity and the thought of not having one invokes feelings of a life without meaning for many inhabitants, and some people even resent themselves for either not winning the lottery or failing to become pregnant during those twelve months. The lottery does not automatically create an uprising of child-free rebels wanting to usurp the sovereign and the system, but it could make jealous and disappointed people more susceptible to accepting a possible uprising since that could mean a change in the laws, allowing everyone (or at least more people) to try for a child. It could also ignite resentment and hatred among the silo dwellers, creating animosity, which according to Hobbes will lead to war. So, by forcing people not to have children *The Pact* undermines the feeling of community within Silo 18, which thereby threatens a peaceful future.

Lack of knowledge can also invoke feelings of jealousy. The whole premise of Silo 18's existence lies in that only a select few know the truth about the outside and the silo's history, and the inhabitants are controlled through the lies spread to keep the truth from surfacing. As head of IT, Bernard is the only one with access to this knowledge, and his role is to keep it that way. Bernard follows a second book of rules (*The Order*), which states that people who get too close to the truth or spread information which threatens the ignorance of the people, must be disposed of. It means that the lives of the inhabitants in Silo 18 is based on lies since they do not know the full story. This explains why both George and Jules become Bernard's victims. When knowledge does spread, it invokes feelings of hatred and jealousy. Why should only one person know the truth while the rest lives in ignorance? Workers from Mechanical become upset since they realize that IT knows how to create items to keep people alive on the outside, which means that all former deaths on the outside could have been stopped. This becomes one of the reasons for their future uprising.

Unequal distribution and lack of knowledge then lead to feelings such as frustration, anger, hatred and contempt. According to Hobbes, such feelings provoke conflict and violence and to avoid war they must be avoided by both parties (Ch XV: 217-218). One example from *Wool* which illustrates how hatred can lead to war is Jules' conflict with IT in the beginning of the novel. Jules, a mechanic and soon-to-be sheriff, from Mechanical in Silo 18, expresses frustration when discovering that her sections receive inferior material from the powerful IT section. *The Pact* endorses this unequal distribution of goods and gives IT leeway to have control over, and access to, all materials they deem necessary for their work. Jules considers IT's superiority to be wrong and unjust since Mechanical is in dire need of supplies to keep the machines running. She strongly believes that life in Silo 18 would be nonexistent without Mechanical and their work.

They [the machines] keep this whole goddamned place running! Juliette declared. The oxygen you breathe? We recycle it down here. The toxins you exhale? We pump them back into the earth. You want me to write up a list of everything oil makes? Every piece of plastic, every ounce of rubber, all the solvents and cleaners, and I'm not talking about the power it generates, but everything else! (102)

These feelings are what ignites the frustration and hatred between Mechanical and IT. Jules is supported by all mechanics, and they form a joined alliance to fight for her when the head of IT and acting mayor, Bernard, frames her for the death of an IT personnel and sentences her

to death. The hatred between Mechanical and IT has grown during the years, and Jules' death becomes the final spark that ignites Mechanical's protest and uprising. To treat inhabitants equally is important since Hobbes states that "Nature hath made men so equall, in the faculties of body, and mind [that] the difference between man, and man, is not so considerable" (Ch XIII: 174). To humiliate and undervalue the important work Mechanical does for the silo does not improve the relationship between the two sections. Instead of uniting the silo inhabitants with equal distribution, *The Pact* divides the inhabitants even further by forcing them to dress in color-coded jumpsuits, showing which profession (or 'guild') they belong to and physically dividing them in the huge underground silo.

### ***Hierarchies***

The colored clothing matches the different professions within Silo 18, so by having a quick look one can easily see who works with what. This creates instant prejudices about what each person is capable of based on the colors and could prevent intermingling and exchange of knowledge between people of different professions. People in blue jumpsuits are avoided and seen as inferior because they belong to Mechanical, a section on the bottom floors in the down deep. Bernard, for example calls them "grease monkeys" and "uncivilised tinkerers" (216). The vertical layout of the silo further increases the separation of the people since it is physically challenging to walk up and down the stairs connecting the 144 floors, leaving certain parts, such as Mechanical in the down deep, sparsely visited. Due to their location, mechanics are also viewed as strange reclusive creatures since they are seldom seen.

The hierarchical structure becomes even more obvious when learning that the governing powers reside on the top levels with mayor, sheriff and IT. This means that 'workers' live down below while the 'minds' and sovereigns live up top. Many inhabitants in Silo 18 wish or strive for the possibility to live on the upper levels since they are seen as more exclusive. One reason for this is that the only view of the outside is projected at the top level, another is that the powerful people reside there. The vertical Silo 18, with the help of *The Pact*, enforces the stereotypical view of social class.

Hobbes never mentions hierarchies and what he thinks of them in his *Laws of Nature*. However, he does express a negative attitude towards Aristoteles' view that some men are more worthy than others, especially those considered to be intellectuals (Ch XV: 218). Hobbes also dislikes Aristoteles' idea that the wise should rule while 'commoners' should serve, which is similar to how Silo 18 is built. Building a society based on dividing men into sections and dressing them in colors corresponding to their profession goes against the way to

peace proposed in the Laws of Nature. Hobbes instead promotes a communal feeling within a society where everyone has the same potential and everyone should have the resources to reach as far as possible without sacrificing others along the way. As S.A Lloyd claims, the “ultimate function of the Laws of Nature is to secure the common good” (Lloyd: 149), and promoting the individual and his or her prowess can be seen as detrimental to that goal. Hobbes further believes that even a sovereign should abide by the Laws of Nature and should not be able to use their power for their own benefit.

### **Sovereigns and Equality**

From reading Hobbes’ collected views on equality in his Laws of Nature, one can discern a view against a divided society on the basis of knowledge, because with time and experience anyone can become ‘wise’. With that said, Hobbes does maintain that there must be a sovereign to lead a society, but that this leader is also under the rule of the Laws of Nature, forcing him (or her) to conform to the same laws. The sovereign is thereby not allowed to gain access to more than what is needed, and if so, it should be equally distributed among others. If the sovereign breaks the covenant (agreeing to follow the Laws of Nature) made when becoming an authority, man is in a “condition of Warre” according to Hobbes. Breaking covenants is unjust, and injustice is a breeding ground for conflict (Ch XV: 204). It is therefore important to follow the laws to uphold peace.

In *Wool*, examples of just and unjust leadership are posited against each other. As the novel begins, mayor Jahns (who was mayor before Bernard acquired the role) is a good example of a sovereign who does not live above her means or aspires to more control over the silo. She has never been in a scandal or purposefully granted more power to herself or others. Jahns never abuses her powerful position, nor does she like being treated differently due to her position. Her actions have had a positive impact on the silo dwellers, and Jahns has been elected mayor several times in a row, indicating that the inhabitants approve of her as a leader. Head of IT, Bernard, on the other hand, is an example of a sovereign who actively seeks more power, and in the process triggers an uprising in the silo since his actions create animosity and hatred due to the inequality he upholds. When gaining the role as acting mayor after Jahns’ mysterious death, Bernard tries to change *The Pact* in order to grant himself more power (186). He also appoints his ally, Peter Billings, as sheriff, thereby keeping control over the police force.

He could keep this under control, he thought to himself. He was head of IT. He was mayor. Peter Billings was his man. People liked stasis, and he could maintain the illusion of it. They were afraid of change, and he could conceal it. With him in both offices, who would oppose him?  
(117)

As Hobbes states, breaking covenants and using power to benefit oneself will lead to feelings of inequality among the people. Those feelings, in turn, create a breeding ground for hatred which can lead to war. Bernard's actions can be interpreted as breaking those same covenants that Hobbes warns about, and it is therefore not surprising that his actions lead to an uprising among 'his' people. Jahns, on the other hand, never had to fear for growing resentment and hatred since she promoted equality and saw herself as one of the inhabitants, not as an exclusive leader. With that said, Jahns could not have invoked full equality since she had to govern by *The Pact*, and as we have seen, *The Pact* does promote inequalities. In order to lead Silo 18 on the basis of equality and promoting community *The Pact* has to change. Jules will, at the end of the novel, return to Silo 18 and is reluctantly elected mayor. She will only accept the role as mayor if she is allowed to make fundamental changes to *The Pact*, thereby giving Silo 18 an opportunity to avoid war and a state of nature:

“Silo eighteen will be different. Full of knowledge, of *purpose*. Think about it. Instead of manipulating people, why not *empower* them? Let them know what we're up against. And have *that* drive our collective will.” (534) [Author's emphasis]

The idea of empowerment through knowledge stems from the fact that the silo has been controlled through both ignorance and lies in the past. Jules believes in uniting the people with the truth, rather than feeding them lies.

## **Judicial systems**

Equality should also be integrated into the judicial system by treating 'commoners' and sovereigns alike, since Hobbes believes everyone to be equal. Hobbes therefore added rules to his Laws of Nature to promote a system where judges should be impartial, hearing witnesses is necessary, and where no one can be arbitrator for his own cause (Ch XV: 222-223). Hobbes feared that some men would have a negative impact on verdicts by using their power or money to 'change the mind' of either judges, witnesses or plaintiffs. Hence the importance of having laws which will protect citizens from unfair trials. By setting an example where everyone is equal in the eyes of the law, citizens will be less likely to feel unfairly treated



since everyone is held accountable for their actions. According to Hobbes' ideas, equal treatment invoke feelings of equality and community which will lead to peace. To be able to hold sovereigns or authorities accountable for their actions would further promote the communal mindset. The governing powers must also follow the laws in order not to be arrested or put on trial, and thereby risk losing their power by being sentenced for committing a crime. This would ensure that Hobbes' Laws of Nature are upheld.

Criminal actions should be punished, but pardoning those who repent is also important according to Hobbes, because "PARDON, is nothing but granting of Peace" (Ch XV: 216), and peace is the ultimate goal for Hobbes. Pardoning a man who is willing to change and regret his crimes, could be a security measure for the future. According to Hobbes, treating someone justly and trusting the regretful person by pardoning him, would make man less likely to commit future crimes, and he would gain trust towards the society and its laws. But Hobbes also states that not all men should be pardoned. Those who do not feel regret over their actions show "an aversion to Peace", and can therefore not be trusted to act in accordance with the law in the future (Ch XV: 216-217). Another option to secure future peace is to sentence non-regretful criminals to death. Criminals who are not seen as trustworthy pose a threat to peace when they are released in the future. With that said, capital punishment is never an option for Hobbes. In his seventh law of nature he insists that punishment should only be a "correction of the offender" to later on promote peace. "[G]lorious in the hurt of another" is wrong and cruel, since that could incite war (Ch XV: 217). Capital punishment should therefore be seen as cruel and not be used to make peace. Hobbes only deems killing acceptable if it is done in self-defense. Killing someone for revenge or as punishment is therefore seen as a way to incite war. One example which illustrates what violations of Hobbes' judicial system can lead to is Bernard's choice of framing Jules for murder. Instead of pardoning her for her (alleged) crime, he sentences her to death without a trial. Jules' death sentence is one of the factors leading to an uprising on Mechanical's part. The people of Mechanical believe Jules was treated unfairly and that Bernard abused his power as mayor.

'You understand what they've [Bernard and IT] been doing, right?' Marck turned to Courtnee.  
'They've been sending people out to die. On purpose. Not because it *had* to happen, but because they wanted it to!' (272) [Author's emphasis]

Pardoning someone for one's own benefit, such as a sovereign pardoning a powerful official in the hopes of him repaying the favor in the future, is not discussed by Hobbes, but it violates his idea that no one should sit judgement over their own cause. Nor would it be a sign of equality if people could use their power to gain whatever they asked for. A society based on such injustice would not invoke a sense of peace, but rather predispose people to do what benefits them the most. If the sovereigns do not care about their actions, why should 'commoners' care or follow the rules themselves? Feelings of frustration and injustice would arise among the citizens if the sovereign does not follow the Laws of Nature. S.A. Lloyd, therefore, states the importance of adhering to Hobbes' laws since that could act as a "security against the danger that may arrive to himself in his natural person from rebellion" (Lloyd: 135).

Bernard's actions illustrate Hobbes' theory that violating his Laws of Nature will lead to war. Bernard initiates a "forgiveness moratorium" when becoming mayor so that all unsolved crimes are forgiven, creating a blank slate and a new beginning for the silo. His choice of pardoning himself does not create war per se, but will later give him a reason to frame Jules in order for her not to expose his actions, and her (presumed) death provokes an uprising against himself. This also means that the murder of late mayor Jahns will remain unsolved, which is beneficial for Bernard since he is the man behind the killing. In pardoning himself, he ensures he will not be put to justice and can continue as mayor (166).

## **Society and Social Contracts**

Enforcing equality and avoiding war are two aspects of a good society, but if there is no society to begin with, these building blocks will make no difference, and life is still in a state of nature. Having a functioning society with some kind of sovereign or leader is therefore key to securing peace. To lay down one's right and to avoid 'successful wickedness' are also of utmost importance when maintaining Hobbes' utopian imaginings, and will therefore be discussed in the upcoming section. Equality will also be touched upon since it is an integral part of society, because without equality man will relapse into violent behaviors which will threaten the peaceful way of life in Hobbes' society.

## **The importance of adhering to the Laws of Nature**

The main goal with Hobbes' society is to steer man away from the brutish, lawless nature in order to live in peace with the help of equality. Due to man's aptitude for violence, a world

without restrictions would mean death for many people, and could potentially threaten mankind with extinction if chaos and violence would continue. In order not to live in a state of nature a community needs a sovereign, or authority, to enforce laws upon the people. The laws will create and clarify the differences between right and wrong, justice and injustice and teach the inhabitants morals and ethics. Hobbes promotes his nineteen Laws of Nature as the way to peace to function as a guidance for the sovereign in his or her rule with the purpose of a “conservation of men in multitudes” (Ch XV: 223). Hobbes’ first law “to seek Peace and follow it” is the basis for the concept of laying down one’s right in order to be governed and has to be followed by everyone, even sovereigns (Ch XIV: 185). A sovereign is not exempt from Hobbes’ laws and he has to abide by them in order to secure peace. For a sovereign is but a man like the rest of his people, he is no divinity, and therefore he is supposed to be treated like everyone else. It is also of utmost importance that the inhabitants have voluntarily laid down their rights to the authority for the society to function seamlessly.

### **Successful Wickedness**

“Succesfull wickednesse” is a term used by Hobbes to describe those who succeed in obtaining a ‘kingdom’ even if they violate the Laws of Nature (Ch XV: 207). What Hobbes acknowledges is that not everyone will follow the laws, but being successful in that way cannot be the basis for a just rule. S.A. Lloyd notes that “powerful persons may quite rationally aim to extract greater than equal benefits from others” and while doing so they “contribute to the destabilization of social order” (122). How, then, can the Laws of Nature promote peace if people are able to prosper by violating them? Are the laws even useful in that case? Hobbes explains that when taking a kingdom without having civil, mutual promises on both sides (such as laying down one’s right to be governed) there will be no assurance of the kingdom’s survival. The sovereign will be in a condition of war where everyone is an enemy to him since he forcefully took control over their lives (Ch XV: 208). Hobbes does not have an explicit answer to whether his laws are useful, and he rather believes that the laws themselves will deter man from breaking them since the outcome is a brutal reality, a reality man does not want to live in, according to him. Lloyd also states that it lies in “humanity’s interest to abide by the norms that best secure the stability of commonwealths, or civil life” (120), thereby articulating what Hobbes never outright states in his Laws of Nature. Bernard’s rise to power and dominion over Silo 18 is a good example to showcase Hobbes’ explanations and the consequences of using successful wickedness to gain power.

Bernard has done several things which violate Hobbes' Laws of Nature in order to benefit himself. In other words, he has successfully used wickedness to prosper. He has killed mayor Jahns to get her position, framed Jules for murder and sentenced her to death, refused to secure equal distribution within the silo and tried to change The Pact to make himself more powerful. Bernard's actions trigger an uprising based on these actions since he has failed to promote equality, and as stated earlier, lack of equality will lead to animosity and violence, which in turn will lead to war. He has also failed to attain peace with his actions. Bernard meets his end when Sheriff Peter Billings, his trusted ally, realizes Bernard's flaws and the suffering he has caused the silo dwellers. Billings thus aids the rebels in their cause of dethroning Bernard (529). Bernard's reign ends with him being sent out to clean and the uprising halts. His fate shows how "succesfull wickednesse" cannot ensure peace for the kingdom attained since Bernard's reign ended quickly from the uprising his actions provoked.

### **To lay down one's rights**

In order to secure peace within a society and the survival of mankind, the Laws of Nature must be adhered to, according to Hobbes. One way is for the inhabitants to voluntarily lay down their rights to the governing power in their society. To lay down one's right means to "be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himselfe" and "to Devest himselfe of the Liberty, of hindering another of the benefit of his own Right to the same" (Ch XIV: 185-186). The people within a society thus let the governing authority decide over their lives, meaning that inhabitants follow the laws and understand that breaking them will lead to consequences. The outcome of everyone laying down their rights is that the mutual trust and vulnerability among men will unite them, hence avoiding conflicts and war. According to S.A. Lloyd, Hobbes also implies that it is in the sovereign's duty to ensure the safety of his subordinates from a potential enemy on the outside. It also lies in his interest to treat and secure the lives of his people to avoid rebellion (Lloyd: 135). Important to note though, is that man cannot remove his right to live, life is sacred and man should do everything in his power to protect and preserve it according to Hobbes: "a man is forbidden to do, that, which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same" (Ch XIV: 184). This means that man is still allowed to use self-defense if necessary, even if he has laid down his rights to use violence.

Democratic elections is an example of how to lay down one's rights voluntarily. In a democratic election everyone has the chance to vote, and the voters lay down their rights in

order to be governed by the winner. Even though the votes decide the person elected to govern society, the winner does not have too much leeway to do whatever he or she wants. The chosen authority must still abide by the laws which the society is based upon. It means that voters, in reality, lay down their rights for the prescribed laws rather than an authority. The authority should instead be seen as a spokesperson for the laws. An example of democratic tendencies from *Wool* are the elections for the mayoral position which happen on a regular basis in Silo 18. That means the silo dwellers lay down the rights to be governed by the winner. Mayor Jahns has won several elections in a row and is therefore the person the inhabitants must follow. Technically though, it is *The Pact* which the inhabitants follow since Jahns is only a spokesperson and does not have any say in how to lead the silo, and she herself is also governed by *The Pact*, just as the rest of Silo 18's inhabitants. What singles out Silo 18 as a totalitarian regime is the fact that the laws are unchangeable. In a democracy the laws can and will change, and the people will have a say in the matter. *The Pact*, on the other hand, is written by the unknown makers of the silos and cannot be questioned by neither mayor nor commoner. *The Pact* can therefore be interpreted or likened to God's word and cannot be disputed, hence the totalitarian tendencies. The idea with Hobbes social contract is to steer man away from a god-like authority and focus on community. It is exactly this that Hobbes was criticized for in the early days of *Leviathan*'s publication.

Silo 18's choice of organizing their own election in order to elect Jules as mayor showcases true voluntarily spirit. Jules never asked for the role nor created the election herself, instead the inhabitants voted for her when she was still unconscious after a final struggle (532-533). It was the people who wanted to be governed by her and saw that the only way to legitimize her power was through an election. Furthermore, Jules will take another step in making Silo 18 more democratic by changing *The Pact* from the core, making community and equality the new goal of Silo 18 (534).

### ***Does the end justify the means?***

The problem with Hobbes' concept of laying down one's right begins when a single person denounces the laws and refuses to abide by them. Hobbes believes that all men are in a state of war if "every man holdeth this Right, of doing any thing he liketh", and everyone is still in a state of war even if some people continue to lay down their rights while others do not (Ch XIV: 186). Living in a state of nature means lawlessness without right or wrong, and the people who refuse to lay down their rights can take advantage of those who abide by the laws in their society. The situation technically means that some people are allowed to do whatever

they wish since they refuse to be a part of the society they currently live in, while others try to follow the rules, thus creating a downward spiral where lawlessness is the final outcome. A just society cannot coexist with a lawless one if certain members refuse to follow the rules, creating a brutish and nasty reality for all present. Hobbes' Laws of Nature do not explicitly state if a society turns into a state of nature right as a conflict begins, for example when a person refuses to lay down their rights. Because if that is the case, there are no laws or regulations, making violence neither wrong nor right. That would allow anyone to rebel without consequences since they are a part of a lawless nature. What Hobbes implicitly states in his Laws, is that a society can only be called a society if it has a leader and rules, all other variations is a state of nature. That would mean that even if a group of people denounce the laws and leader, they are not in a state of nature since an authority still holds the power, thus making rebellion wrong even if the rebels do not adhere to the laws. The state of nature can therefore only exist when there is no leader, just like in the case of Silo 17.

The way to uphold peace within a society tainted by rebels could be to either imprison the perpetrators, sentencing them to death, or to exclude them from society. Rebels will most likely not conform to society unless the laws change, since the laws are the very reason why they have not laid down their rights. In Hobbes' Laws, men who do not repent or acknowledge mistakes are a threat for the future and need to be imprisoned (Ch XV: 216-217). Hobbes does not discuss if people who refuse to lay down their rights can be considered rebels, but since they do not agree to society's standards and laws, they are a potential threat to peace.

According to both Foy and Heit, President Snow in *The Hunger Games* illustrates that Hobbes' theories may allow man to use whatever means deemed necessary to avoid a state of nature, because a life in a lawless brutish reality is worse than 'removing' certain people. From their perspective, Hobbes can be seen to justify any means during certain circumstances. This, though, creates a contradiction. How can Hobbes both be against capital punishment while simultaneously justifying all means? Hobbes does acknowledge that an authority should hinder uprisings to avoid chaos and a state of nature, but nowhere in his Laws of Nature can one find a section where he allows the killing of others except in self-defense. However, it is possible to interpret rioters as an active threat, which would allow man to kill to save himself. Meanwhile, the authority's use of violence could also trigger violent behavior among more inhabitants since violence itself is an act of war.

This is certainly a complex matter filled with nuances, and Hobbes did not cover them all in his Laws of Nature, which is also something he has been criticized for by Bailey D.

Villarreal. Villarreal states that sociality and morality are complex matters, and not as black and white as Hobbes makes it out to be (20-24). This would explain why Hobbes can be interpreted both as allowing totalitarian tendencies, while at the same time promoting peace and equality, depending on the context and purpose of the interpretation.

As argued above, Hobbes' ideas can result in two different outcomes depending on the interpretation. He can be used to allow an authority to do whatever deemed necessary to protect the society from reverting back to a state of nature, such as forcefully removing threats from society. Another interpretation is that Hobbes condones all use of violent behavior, except self-defense, since it will lead to war which will lead to a state of nature. In the case of Silo 18, people are sentenced to death for mentioning the outside since it is a provocation and an instigation for uprisings according to *The Pact*. Based on the interpretation of Hobbes' Laws of Nature, the reasoning behind the *The Pact* can be seen as acceptable since it will protect the silo, or it can be viewed a provocation to war since the violence it condones is not an act of self-defense.

### ***Consequences of not laying down one's rights***

Another example from *Wool* which illustrates what can happen when people refuse to lay down their rights is Mechanical's aversion to Bernard.

Bernard becomes acting mayor after Jahns' mysterious death, and has therefore not been chosen by the silo dwellers. Neither have they voluntarily laid down their rights for him to govern them. But the inhabitants have agreed to follow *The Pact*, which states that the head of IT is acting mayor until someone else has been chosen in a new election (136). The inhabitants in Silo 18 have therefore indirectly laid down their rights for him and he is thus their rightful leader. Mechanical does not like Bernard since he actively refuses to give them necessary materials, sees them as inferior and sentences Jules to death without a trial or evidence. He has, in other words, not treated Mechanical as equals nor tried to help them get a better status in the silo. It is therefore not surprising that it is Mechanical which starts an uprising with the goal of dethroning him and to bring "order" (277). Since Mechanical is denouncing him as their mayor and leader (277), they are technically allowed not to follow his orders, but since they have not actively taken a stand against *The Pact* (and Bernard's authority is legitimized by it) their actions are to be seen as an act of war since Bernard is *The Pact's* spokesperson. Mechanicals' actions are the opposite of Hobbes' idea of how to maintain peace and could force the silo to revert back into a state of nature with the death of

mankind as an outcome. Mechanical can now be seen as a threat to the silo and its inhabitants, which allows Bernard to strike back and suppress their actions in order to protect lives.

However, there is yet another layer to this discussion. Bernard has failed to follow his promises (the covenants made when agreeing to live by *The Pact*) and is in the act of changing *The Pact* to accommodate himself and his needs (186). Is it then okay to usurp him? No, not according to Hobbes. Rebellion is never deemed acceptable since the risk of turning into a state of nature is high. A rebellion will also put the rebels' lives at risk when inciting war, hence breaking a covenant to themselves which states that man should do whatever it takes to secure his own life. It can also inspire others to join or start a new rebellion in the future, hence also putting their lives at risk (Ch XV: 209-210).

What about if Bernard's actions threaten the life of the silo dwellers? It is still not acceptable to rebel against Bernard based on the same premise that one is putting his or her life at risk or that society comes to an end, according to Hobbes. But it poses an interesting question of whether a sovereign can act in a way which promotes war. Hobbes does not clarify this in his Laws of Nature, but he does state that a sovereign is not exempt from following his laws. It also lies in a sovereign's best interest to abide by Hobbes' laws to maintain order and peace, and it should therefore be enough to ensure that the sovereign makes the right decisions according to Lloyd (135).

### **Authority at any cost?**

Which laws take precedence according to Hobbes? The preservation of authority at any cost, or the necessity that the sovereign abides by the Laws of Nature? Hobbes, once again, does not clarify this, but he implicitly shows what he considers to be more important, namely, for all sovereigns to abide by his laws.

To obey the laws as a sovereign is a "security against the danger that may arrive to himself in his natural person from rebellion" according to S.A Lloyd (Lloyd: 135). It is therefore important that the sovereign leads by example, because if he does not suppress his natural desires and lusts, why should the 'commoners' do it? Hobbes also sees all men as equals, and it would thereby be morally wrong to let an authority have the power to do as he wish. The inequalities in a society where the sovereign abuses his power would ignite feelings of jealousy and frustration among the inhabitants towards the sovereign, which could increase the possibility of an uprisings, just like with Mechanical in Silo 18.



Silo 18 is a good example of a society where the powerful have lived in abundance for centuries and do not treat the inhabitants as equals. It is therefore not surprising that uprisings are a common occurrence. There are recordings of uprisings each century, and every uprising is a risk to the silo's future, because a state of nature is not far away if a war starts. All silos in the *Wool* universe abide by *The Pact* and the exact same set of rules, and the fact that Silo 17 and several other silos have gone into a state of nature shows how fragile the silo systems are. What suppressed and stopped the previous uprisings in Silo 18 were the rioters' death sentences. However, *The Pact* will continue to promote inequalities that feed into the feelings of injustice and frustration, and give leeway to certain people like Bernard. The uprisings would therefore not stop, they will just halt until new generations without memories of the chaotic past grow old enough to repeat history. The only way to permanently stop uprisings is to change *The Pact* from the core. Jules sets out to do this at the very end of the novel, giving Silo 18 a chance to heal and to stop future uprisings (534).

To secure a peaceful society and the survival of man, a sovereign must abide by the Laws of Nature himself. It is possible to remedy one misstep, but to actively abuse the laws to gain power and items is a provocation for war. The outcome of war is a state of nature, a lawless world where nothing can prosper. It is therefore important to keep Hobbes' words in mind when governing a society: "For it can never be that Warre shall preserve life, and Peace destroy it" (Ch XIV: 225).

## Conclusion

The theoretical framework chosen for this essay is Thomas Hobbes' social contract, *The Laws of Nature*, which was published in his book *Leviathan* in 1651. The function of a social contract is to define and guide on how to govern a society (Britannica, "Social Contract"). Both dystopian and post-apocalyptic novels can be used to illuminate social contracts and their importance in upholding and maintaining a society. Claire Curtis, for example, states that some post-apocalyptic novels "fictionalize the theoretical arguments given by Hobbes", and therefore build upon Hobbes' idea of community through social contract and the Laws of Nature (8-9). The aim with this essay has therefore been to illustrate how Thomas Hobbes' social contract, the Laws of Nature, ensures the survival of mankind in Hugh Howey's dystopia and post-apocalyptic novel *Wool*.

The main goal with Hobbes' laws is to ensure peace and to prevent society from reverting back to his feared state of nature. The state of nature is a lawless place where man has to fight for his survival. The concept of right and wrong has ceased to exist and violence is therefore common. Neither culture nor knowledge will flourish since there is no reason to plan for a future, hence making "the life of man, solitary poore, nasty, brutish and short" (Ch XIII: 179). In other words, Hobbes believes mankind's survival is at stake if there are no rules to guide him to a life without violence, which is why he wrote *Leviathan*.

Hobbes argued that all men are equals, and it is therefore not surprising that the underlying implication in his Laws of Nature is that the key to acquiring peace is equality. By having an authority who upholds equal distribution of goods and power, and an unbiased judicial system, man will have everything necessary for a "commodious living", or at least the possibility to acquire it (Ch XIII: 182). Thus, feelings such as jealousy and frustration are reduced which further subdues man's fondness for violence by ensuring he has everything needed. When a sovereign fails to follow the laws, war and, consequently, life in a state of nature ensues.

*The Pact* and the antagonist Bernard from *Wool* have been used throughout the analysis in chapter two to illustrate what violations of Hobbes' law can look like, and what the consequences are. *The Pact* has created a breeding ground for resentment and jealousy by promoting unequal distribution of goods, enforcing hierarchies, and giving leeway to the IT section and Bernard. Bernard, in his turn, upholds the inequalities after murdering previous mayor Jahns in order to gain ultimate power over the silo. He further frames the protagonist and mechanic, Jules, and sentences her to death to hinder her from speaking the truth about

his motives and actions. *The Pact* and Bernard's actions combined trigger an uprising on Mechanical's part, with the goal of dethroning Bernard. Several people die in the uprisings, including Bernard himself. The violations have thus forced Silo 18 closer to Hobbes' feared state of nature which would threaten the lives of all inhabitants. A silo which illustrates this state of nature is Silo 17. It went from fully functioning to chaos after an uprising. They lived by the exact same set of rules as other silos, but they were not able to save it from disaster. This would have been the fate of Silo 18 unless Jules had not brought order to the chaos. She can be seen as the antithesis to Bernard since she sets out to change *The Pact* from the core, promising to foster community in the silo by being truthful and sharing her knowledge about the true history of Silo 18. If Jules has only taken over the role as mayor without changing the laws, Silo 18 would soon have another uprising, because it is impossible to promote equality with the current Pact.

Though Hobbes tries to guide man to a peaceful life he has been interpreted by many critics, such as Foy and Heit, as allowing sovereigns to use any means to avoid a state of nature. That mindset would have allowed Bernard to kill Jules since her ideas and knowledge could jeopardize the status quo. It would also let Bernard to change *The Pact* to grant himself more power if it was done as an act of saving the silo inhabitants. However, in Hobbes' *Laws* it is more important for a sovereign to abide by the rules, rather than maintaining authority at any cost. The reason is that it is the *actions* of the authority which promotes a peaceful society, not *who* the authority is. Having Bernard do as he pleases would only incite more hatred and frustration among the inhabitants towards him, and provoke further uprisings. It could also inspire other people in trying to take control over the Silo in the hopes of becoming more powerful, which in turn would also lead to war.

This essay has shown that in Hugh Howey's *Wool*, violating the Laws of Nature creates chaos and war that leaves man in a state of nature. The implementation of equality is therefore fundamental in avoiding the state of nature, and more important than the absolute authority of the sovereign. This, in turn, shows that the novel *Wool* validates Hobbes' claim that adhering to his laws creates peace and prosperity, ensuring the survival of mankind.

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