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### **The Unruly Passions of ‘Princes’ in Lucy Hutchinson’s *Order and Disorder***

Until recently, Lucy Hutchinson (1620–1681) was primarily known as the author of the classic political biography of her husband, a Puritan revolutionary and regicide, Colonel John Hutchinson. Their life, so well documented in the celebrated *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson* (1664–68?), testifies to the vigorous and feisty spirit of its author whose imaginative powers were often bent on political and religious objectives. Despite the popularity of the *Memoirs*, Hutchinson’s lifelong interests were more bound up with poetry rather than with prose – she composed elegies, epitaphs, a country house poem, an aubade, collected and transcribed works of other poets, and translated a classical epic (Lucretius’ *De rerum natura*). Arguably, her greatest poetic achievement is her Christian epic *Order and Disorder*. Available in its entirety since 2001, the poem consists of 20 cantos (ca. 8,000 lines), five of which were published anonymously in 1679. Ironically, even though the poem is now often “marketed as a woman’s epic”, it was first ascribed to Hutchinson’s brother, the royalist Allen Apsley. As a highly politicized scriptural narrative, imbued with the spirit of republicanism and Calvinist theology, *Order and Disorder* is an adaptation of Genesis chapters 1-31, interspersed with a personal commentary on political, theological and social matters. Often juxtaposed with *Paradise Lost*, it has also been regarded as “an imitation” and a “veiled rebuke” of John Milton.

Hutchinson’s anti-courtly sentiment has been widely acknowledged by all scholars who deal with her works. Much less has been said about its specific manifestations in *Order and Disorder*; in which she advances a socio-political critique of Restoration England. To fill this critical lacuna, this thesis sets out to explore how the unruly passions of men in authority, subsumed under the umbrella term “princes”, throw into turmoil their private and social “domains” (bodies, souls, kingdoms and households) and to highlight the various manifestations of passion-related disorders and their religious and socio-political implications. As such, this study develops and particularises David Norbrook’s claim that in the world of Hutchinson’s epic, representatives of the political establishment often act as forces of disorder. However, in my analysis, the word “prince” covers not only the political elite but extends to all individuals with a share of power in their respective spheres of influence – kings, fathers, magistrates, firstborn sons and the nobility.

The allusive nature of Hutchinson’s scriptural meditations demonstrates that they cannot be divorced from their historical and ideological contexts. Therefore, the second aim of this thesis was to determine whether her treatment of the passions reflects the early modern theories, found in the prose works dedicated to this topic. To do so, I have oriented her work within an appropriate conceptual framework which brings out the poem’s discursive interdependence. Hence, a close scrutiny of the epic is supplemented by references to a range of literary and expository texts which represent a vast array of intellectual traditions and ways of thinking about passions. Throughout this thesis, Hutchinson’s epic is analysed in the context of the early modern discourse of the passions, represented, among others, by such authors as Thomas Wright’s *The*

*Passions of the Mind in General* (1604), Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Edward Reynolds's *Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soule of Man* (1640), Jean Francois Senault's *The Use of Passions* (1641, transl. in 1649) and Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651). Located thus in the context of the early modern discourse of passions, Hutchinson's poem reveals itself to have been influenced by a variety of theories and intellectual traditions.

Chapter I establishes the linguistic framework of the discussion, clarifying the key concepts and the subsequent use of terms such as "passion" and "affection" both by Hutchinson and those authors whose works are my main point of reference (Wright, Reynolds, Burton, Senault and Hobbes). Not surprisingly, in *Order and Disorder* the word "passion" and its derivatives occur more frequently than the word "affection" because most events described therein take place after the Fall (cantos 5-20). Being a watershed event, man's disobedience marked a turning point in the emotional lives of humans whose mindsets become carnal and subject to a range of extreme states and occurrences. Hence, a greater emphasis on passions, which were more often linked to disorder.

Chapter II is concerned with the origin of disordered passions, traceable to man's Fall in Paradise. Presented as an act of treason, Adam and Eve's original sin causes a general upheaval which gives rise to the disobedience of animals and the rest of creation. Hutchinson's highly politicised treatment of this episode corresponds with the language and metaphors of the Renaissance discourse of the passions, in which their troubled relationship with reason is often depicted in terms of civil war and rebellion. Her portrayal of Adam as king and the Garden of Eden as his political domain opens a discussion about the responsibility for the social, affective and moral disorders, often ascribed to the governing classes in the world of her epic.

Chapter III identifies Cain as a Hobbesian "glory-seeker", whose quest for power and pre-eminence leads to the establishment of a new state. The overwhelming force of his passions (fear, grief and anger), akin to natural disasters, is presented by Hutchinson as a form of divine judgement, administered by God to punish his wickedness. Moreover, Cain's despair – a form of religious melancholy frequently compared to hell on earth – confirms his reprobate status and foreshadows his final damnation. His turbulent experience is also symptomatic of the large-scale problem of all corrupt rulers, whose tyrannical passions plague not only them but also their subjects.

Chapter IV centres on Hutchinson's "politics" of wine drinking. Using Noah as a vehicle for her critique of the ruling classes, she shows how inordinate love of pleasure can easily transform into idolatry. When juxtaposed with Christianity, the cult of wine emerges as a dangerous alternative, which may negatively affect people's social, political and spiritual lives. Ostensibly concerned with Noah's drunkenness, canto 9 shows in fact that Hutchinson is not so much intent on condemning her otherwise virtuous character but rather, certain groups and individuals known from her day. Her diction and imagery evoke the 16th and 17th-century drinking songs written by the poets who followed the Greek and Roman poetic models by Anacreon and Horace. By importing the vocabulary and values of symposiastic poetry and appropriating the terms of the libertine rhetoric, Hutchinson reveals the main targets of her diatribe – King Charles II, the Cavalier poets and the Restoration court wits. Showing that lack of moderation is a vice

common among the nobility, she also extends her critique to all representatives of the ruling classes, including careless governors and indulgent magistrates.

Chapter V redraws the connection between passions, excess and the courtly milieu to include other forms of inordinate love. Presenting Abimelech's "heroic love" as melancholy, described by Robert Burton in his *Anatomy*, Hutchinson acknowledges the causal link between passions, sin and disease. Alluding to the widely popular metaphor of body politic, she also demonstrates how the king's disordered body and soul could threaten the stability of his political realm.

Chapter VI focuses on fear and self-preservation in the story of Isaac and Abimelech. Read within the framework of Hobbes's *Leviathan*, the patriarch's relocation to Gerar may be seen as a symbolic transition from a state of mere nature to an organised polity – a central feature of Hobbes's contract theory. However, contrary to the philosopher's optimistic view that fear ensures social stability, Hutchinson presents it as a passion more akin to disorder when "abused" by the fallen human beings in the providential world of her epic. Therefore, King Abimelech's treatment of the Hebrew patriarch is a classic example of how the irregular passions of people in authority infringe on the laws of nature. By revealing Abimelech's true motives, Hutchinson shows that the corrupt passions of the political elite are the main cause of discord in society, authorising unlawful acts on the part of their subjects.

Chapter VII centres on the double identity of Isaac's and Rebecca's firstborn son Esau. Portrayed both as a beast and a courtier in pursuit of his appetites, he is revealed as a person whose unrestrained passions lead to the loss of his birthright and expose his descendants to the fate of a subjugated race. Moreover, Esau's aristocratic "cult of extreme passion" aligns him with the protagonists of Caroline prose romances and the Restoration heroic drama. His polygamous matches are contrary to his relatives' wishes, undermining authority at several different levels. By marrying the princesses from the land of Canaan, he proves how little he values his family heritage and religion. In consequence, he introduces not only idolatry but also tension, grief and disquiet into his household. The socio-political implications of Esau's unfortunate choices are clear to everyone who believes that emotional self-governance is necessary for the obtaining of political power. Its opposite (lack of self-restraint) must be therefore seen as a factor that disqualifies an individual from wielding authority. For Hutchinson, people who are primarily driven by their "animal" instincts are not fit to rule others. If they enjoy some culturally-encoded rights, they should be deprived of them and ousted from their positions of privilege. By contrast, people who have mastered their passions and know how to manage those of others have the potential to become promising leaders.

Hutchinson's portrayal of the various passion-related disorders confirms the initial hypothesis that unruly passions are common among persons who occupy positions of power and influence ("princes"). Hence, her comments about the nature of displaced or inordinate passions turn into a critique of the ruling classes – their vicious habits, propensities and actions.