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THE TRIUMPHS OF AFFECTIONS: CRÉBILLON FILS, TRANSLATION AND THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH NARRATIVES OF MOTION AND EMOTION

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ABSTRACT. ***The Triumphs of Affections: Crébillon Fils, Translation and the Eighteenth-Century English Narratives of Motion and Emotion.*** The French influence on eighteenth-century English sentimental writing has been a rich topic for criticism ever since translations of French novels were imported into England as early as the first decades of the eighteenth century. In the "long" eighteenth-century history of English literature, there was a great deal of translation from French sources, which clearly indicates a market for fiction and the need to satisfy it (*sources françaises* were often mentioned as tokens of legitimacy). French sources took a stance on English realist fiction by infusing it with emotional narratives of men of feeling that hinged on acts of translation, whereby translation is understood not only as adaptation, but also as resistance against long-standing literary practices that advocated institutionalised moral codes in realistic fiction. Hence, the concerns of this study are threefold: to discuss the ambivalent nature that early modern philosophers granted to emotions, which triggered conflicting motions in an individual or in a specific social context, resulting in a taxonomy of passions; to consider Crébillon *fils*'s novel in English translation in order to epitomize the new type of discourse that intended to popularize virtue through eroticism, satire and decadence; and to re-ground human experience as it was discussed in eighteenth-century

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literary texts from the perspective of natural philosophy. This article aims to rethink eighteenth-century affective theory in relation to translation studies, while reading Thomas Hobbes' concept of motion as a metaphor for the historical and mindset transformations that were fundamental to the writing of the history of literature.

Keywords: *translation, sources françaises, sentimental writing, Crébillon fils, motion, emotion, eighteenth-century affective theory.*

REZUMAT*. Triumful emoțiilor: Romanul lui Crébillon Fils în contextul traducerilor și al narațiunilor care pun sentimentele în mișcare.* Influența narațiunilor franceze asupra romanului sentimental englez din secolul al XVIII-lea a reprezentat un subiect stufos pentru critica literară din momentul în care traducerile din limba franceză au fost adoptate în Anglia în primele decenii ale secolului al XVIII-lea. În istoria literaturii engleze, traducerile din franceză erau ceva obișnuit, dat fiind că modelul cultural francez era dominant, așadar, legitim. Sursele franceze au influențat romanul realist englez prin traducerea prozei sentimentale, actul de traducere reprezentând nu doar adaptarea unui text într-o altă limbă, ci și împotrivirea față de practicile literare ieșite din uz, care propagau principiile codului etico-moral în romanul realist. Astfel, studiul de față își propune trei obiective: să discute caracterul ambivalent pe care filozofii modernității timpurii îl acordau emoțiilor, ceea ce a declanșat o dinamică interioară și socială și a dus la crearea unei taxonomii a pasiunilor; să analizeze traducerea în limba engleză a textului lui Claude Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon pentru a surprinde noul tip de discurs, care viza afirmarea virtuților prin intermediul expozeurilor erotice, satirice și decadente; și, nu în ultimul rând, să redefinească din perspectiva filosofiei naturale experiența umană descrisă în textele literare. Articolul regândește teoria afectelor în relație cu traducerile din secolul al XVIII-lea englez, expunând conceptul dinamic al mișcării al lui Thomas Hobbes ca pe o metaforă a transformărilor istorice și mentalitare, fundamentale pentru evoluția istoriei literaturii engleze.

Cuvinte-cheie: *traducere, surse franceze, roman sentimentalist, Crébillon fils, dinamică și mișcare, teoria afectelor în secolul al XVIII-lea.*

Translation as Acculturation. Preliminary Remarks

Forms of cultural transfer between France and Great Britain had existed before the eighteenth century. During the Middle Ages and the early modern period, almost every aspect of quotidian life was dramatically influenced by the interaction between Britain and France. The "Dover boat," along with tools, weapons, and artefacts found in the mouth of the river Dour, testifies to the

French presence in Britain during the Middle Bronze Age.[2] During the Hundred Years War, the French and the English exchanged manuscripts, chronicles, treatises, manuals, correspondences, artistic and architectural ideas. According to Gesa Stedman (2016), unlike cultural influence, which is the mere trade of products and ideas between self-supporting countries (2), cultural transfer adds a dynamic quality to the exchange, turning it into a long-lasting process that involves social and cultural transformations. Cultural transfer involves, apart from artefacts and material objects, reflections on the specificity of a culture as well as a critical approach to that culture by the other society it is compared to. Whereas cultural influence does not necessarily generate cultural change and resists shifting the static values and principles that define one culture into ones that are more flexible and adaptable, cultural transfer is far from frozen and rigid: "Transfer always entails transformation" (Stockhorst 2010, 7). *Mutatis mutandis*, one shaping force that changed not only perceptions of the English literary canon, but also readers' mentality regarding the reverence paid to the ancient classics was translation, which served as a constant point of reference and a "reassessment of the native canon" (Gillespie 2005, 10). Translation enabled authors from different cultural backgrounds to connect and asserted their kinship with the authors they translated from, a practice which enhanced their authority by asking readers to compare the new product to the original. The dynamics of translation occurred only in response to the reception of specific mechanisms in the mother culture the primary sources stemmed from. During the first half of the eighteenth century, literary translation was translator-oriented. Around mid-eighteenth century, when notions such as originality, authorship and literary ownership became issues of crucial importance to authors, the role of source authors prevailed and by the end of the century it was considered a duty to respect them:

> The norm of literary translation was moving from paraphrase to metaphrase. The original became the 'source' on which the style of a translation was centred, and translators sought to capture their author's tone with the minimum of linguistic and rhetorical intervention. 'Imitation' increasingly dropped out of discussion because it was no longer considered to be a kind of translation. (Kelly 2005, 67)

French was the dominant source language for translation in eighteenth-century Britain. In the "long"[3] eighteenth-century history of English literature, there

[2] For other references to the interactions between Britain and France or Britain and other countries of continental Europe, see Steinforth, Coombs, and Rozier (2021): 1-14.

[3] Frank O'Gorman identifies this as the period between the Glorious Revolution (1688) and the Great Reform Act (1832). See O'Gorman (1997).

was an ever-growing flood of translations from French into English which comprehensibly explain the explosive consumption of fiction that invaded the literary market and the necessity for printers and commercial booksellers to get involved in it so as to meet its requirements. The relationship of acculturation that developed between England and France at the end of the seventeenth century resulted in a cultural profit that turned all enriching exchanges into a decisive change for the evolution of literature in both countries:

> What had begun as cultural contact in the early seventeenth century with the arrival of Henrietta Maria developed into a solid cultural relationship with the return of the English king and his many followers in 1660. By 1700, French culture had become firmly entrenched in England. (Stedman 2016, 255)

Some essential features deserve special mention in relation to the question of translation, with a special focus on the ways in which translators of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries incorporate notions and loanwords from other languages into their own national literature. Firstly, *sources françaises* were sometimes mentioned in order to legitimize a publication in English, even if the text was a fabrication of the author, and not a translation. Secondly, despite censorship and the strict control of print, "translation" paved the way for the circulation of texts of unreliable authorship and textual accuracy. Within the seventeenth and eighteenth-century context of literature as *aemulatio* of classical antiquity, which encouraged writers and translators alike to blend original with spurious texts in an attempt to bolster the increased use of vernacular languages and serve the enlightened paradigm of disseminating general knowledge among the populace, paraphrasing a source text and labelling it a "translation" was not considered a crime of writing, but rather a tribute paid to classical European literature. As John W. Draper remarked in his pioneering essay of 1921, "In the Seventeenth Century, the object of translation was to enrich the vernacular rather than to give an accurate idea of the original. Two types contended for supremacy: imitation and paraphrase" (243).

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were dominated by a campaign initiated by writers to translate classical texts into English. In this particular context, a translation involved inclusion of some paragraphs into the text or adjusting the text according to ideological requirements. As part of the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, commonly referred to as "the Battle of the Books" in England, a debate caused by a crisis of authority and one of representation, imitation was viewed differently by two historical periods of time, divided by the introduction of the first copyright law in 1709, The Statute

of Anne. The Statute of Anne was not extended to Ireland, which allowed Irish booksellers to reprint any London bestseller without permission. Before the enactment of this first official document which implemented the copyright law,[4] imitation of the ancient writers was not only accepted and encouraged by writers of rhetoric, but it became the literary norm.

In 1751, Samuel Johnson ambiguously declared in *The Rambler* that "as not every instance of similitude can be considered as a proof of imitation, so not every imitation ought to be stigmatized as plagiarism" (401). Some years later, in 1759, Edward Young encouraged writers to imitate the ancients, specifying that the individual, and not the composition should have been imitated, a paradox that he paraphrased as: "The less we copy the renowned ancients, we shall resemble them the more" (277). Latterly, Nick Groom exemplifies his theory of forgery and plagiarism with Longinus's opinion on imitation: *mimesis,* or the imitation of other writers is one of the characteristsics of *noesis*, "or the instinctive intellectual conception of the artist, which is a way of approaching the sublime" (107). Apparently, even after the adoption of the copyright law, when the new theory of originality instituted new regulations on the literary market, the persistence of pseudotranslations[5] – based on an absent source text and on the skilfulness of the *belles infidèles* – and their ambivalent nature – half translations, half originals – still address the question of authorship and translatorship. Translations into English were from French prose writings, mainly prose fiction, which engaged with different fictional paradigms: the tradition of the surveillance chronicle, the sentimental novel, and courtly and popular romance, a fusion of genres which, according to McMurran, proved that "cross-Channel translating was the most active and fervent arena and, few would argue, the site of the novel's emergence" (2010, 2). Eighteenth-century narratives of emotion – sentimental fiction, *le roman galant* and *le roman libertin* – were narrative forms inherited from French literature with the purpose of providing the middle class with the necessary education to live a life of virtue and financial success. For instance, Claude-Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon, known as Crébillon *fils* to distinguish him from his father, Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon - also called Crébillon *père*, a master of sentimental tragedies - hugely influenced the early novel of sensibility and the libertine novel. His first work translated into English in 1735 was *L'Écumoire* (*The Skimmer*), "a fluent translation of an oriental romance that blended the

[4] The Statute of Anne, the first ever copyright act was enacted in 1709, and entered into force in 1710, under the name of *An Act of the Encouragement of Learning, by Vesting the Copies of Printed Books in the Authors or Purchasers of such Copies, during the Times therein mentioned*.

[5] A term coined by Gideon Toury in *Translation, Literary Translation, and Pseudotranslation* in 1984. Toury uses the term "pseudotranslation" or "fictitious translation" for texts which claim to be translations, but do not refer to any source text in any language.

comic, the erotic and the satirical" (Ahern 2005, 334). Crébillon's narrative is dominated by erotic vocabulary and ornamental language that characterize the process of seduction and the decadence of the age. In a true nationalistic spirit, the English approach to translation predicated augmenting and decorating the vocabulary, paraphrasing the original to "improve" it, and imitating the classics. The theories of translation that go back to John Dryden are of particular interest in outlining the semiotic journey of translation from being considered an art or a craft to becoming susceptible to contamination by transforming it into a skill to deceive readers.

Dryden set an example by stating his three major principles of translation: metaphrase, paraphrase, and imitation.[6] The main principle of translation that the eighteenth century borrowed was, according to Draper, "to improve the vernacular language and to enrich its literature" (244). A translator borrowed a foreign source text, cleansed it from flaws, anglicized its spirit and presented it to the reader with the purpose of cultivating his or her mind and language. The eighteenth century added a didactic aim to that: "Man must be civilized and society cultivated; propriety and decorum must be upheld" (244). With the emergence of sentimental fiction in the mid-eighteenth century, emotions became a form of embellishment for the characters' communication in the vernacular. This perspective, which shifted the narrative form from the high literary culture of Pope and Swift to the culture of sentimentality, is wonderfully described by Stephen Ahern (2007):

> From midcentury on, writers of literary works, periodical essays, conduct manuals, and philosophical treatises had become increasingly concerned with defining – and their readers with demonstrating – the ethical, aesthetic, and physiological qualities that distinguish a person of sensibility. (11)

The most radical and significant change in the seventeenth-century intellectual paradigm was related to the understanding of how things moved. The implications of such paradigm shift in the structure of the scientific revolution were profound and it opened the way for further reconfigurations and reinterpretations. Geoffrey Sill (2016) considers that "the development of nerve theory brought a new conception of the body, in which feeling was elevated to an epistemological

[6] For a succinct but lucid exposition of the theory of translation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from George Chapman's translation of Homer to John Dryden's translation of Virgil, see Draper, 243-44. Dryden adapted the source text to the chronotope of his contemporary society. He intended "to make Virgil speak such English as he would himself have spoken, if he had been born in England and in this present age" (Dryden, in Draper 1921, 244). His practices of translation were closely followed by Pope, Dunster, Garth, and Tytler.

status not inferior to reason" (428). Thomas Hobbes viewed motion as the single cause by which matter is transformed (McMurran 2016, 8) and since "passions are motions internal to the body" (Hobbes, in McMurran 2016, 8) and "the heat and motion of the limbs proceed from the body" (Descartes 2015, 196), the connection between mind and matter might be mediated by the motion of sensation and feeling. Writing along the same line, David Hume, in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739)**,** viewed passion as transformation, defining it as "modification of existence" while observing that

> we speak not strictly and philosophically when we talk of the combat of passion and of reason. Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them. […] A passion is an original existence, or, if you will, modification of existence, and contains not any representative quality, which renders it a copy of any other existence or modification. (266)

Hume's statement came in as a counter-argument to the seventeenth-century thinkers and eighteenth-century writers who, in choosing debating on passions as one of their hobby-horses, considered that man's worst enemies are bodily passions and desires that prevail over rationality. Henry Home, Lord Kames, a central figure of the Scottish Enlightenment, wrote what was believed to be universally accepted and reiterated throughout the century, namely that reason dominates passions: "There is no truth more universally known than that tranquillity and sedateness are the proper state of mind for accurate perception and cool deliberation. […] Passion […] hath such influence over us, as to give a false light to all its objects (Home, in Joy 2020, 1).

Passions are emotions that are directed toward an object, a fact that reflects Aristotle's teleological view on motion as being finite and as having a purposeful destination, which turns change into an idea that has, in Spragens' words, "a definite beginning and an equally definite end" (1973, 56). In the seventeenth century, Galileo Galilei completely changed the Aristotelian view of motion, demonstrating that "bodies continued to move in a straight line unless deflected by an outside source" (61). Descartes' dualism deconstructed Aristotle's theory of motion, while Thomas Hobbes "was a resolute monist who saw motion as comprising the whole of reality" (61). Hobbes grounded his work in Galileo's findings and constructed a theory of motion which he embedded in natural philosophy: motion holds the key to nature and can be universally applied. He applies it to passions and cognition. The mechanics of life lies in the circulatory system and vitality becomes an automaton while cognition is also motion mediated by sensation. Hobbes's cosmological configuration defines knowledge and passions as forms of motion.

Unlike Lord Kames, who makes "true" statements, Addison and Steele (1850) make recommendations and then admit to their equivocation: "Reason should govern passion, but instead of that, you see, it is often subservient to it" (10). This controversy/ambiguity may lead to the main research queries: How did affect theory impact literary writing and interpretations of literary works in the light of new theories on pneumatology, materiality and motion, and natural philosophy? What do translations from French into English tell us about the eighteenth-century transmission of knowledge via narratives of emotion, such as those of Crébillon *fils*? An analysis of the most important cross-Channel historical and cultural changes during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in connection with the expansion of translations demonstrates that these narratives were strongly supported by the intellectual elite and the cultural institutions of the age, such as the Royal Society or the French Academy, in their attempt to formulate a new type of discourse that encouraged the popularisation of knowledge among non-professional readers.

Paradigm Shifts in Motion and Emotions

Emotions are not corporeal, but they are hosted by a body which is chronotopically embedded and determined. There were earlier instances of preoccupations with sensibility before the Age of Sensibility, mainly in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century drama, but these were haphazard and did not congeal into what might be termed a systematic theory of sentiments. The mid-century affective turn in narratives resulted from the seventeenth and eighteenth century-revision of the core concepts of natural philosophy: matter, motion and human nature. This reassessment of cognitive and scientific practices involved a shift away from what McMurran (2016) defined as "the study of knowledge-making" (3), that is, from the Enlightenment paradigm of rationality; it was – in accordance with the various medical and physiological underpinnings of the discourse of sensibility – a shift towards emphasizing the biological and physiological responses to subjective experiences. Since defining concepts might sometimes be a defective and debatable practice, especially when these are considered outside the discipline that usually accommodates them – in this particular case, "emotion" and "affect" are adapted to the literary framework discussed here – I shall endeavour to explain my terms by attempting a context-based definition.

Along with the emergence of the leading science of physiology in the eighteenth century and the replacement of the early modern conception of the human body as "a receptacle filled with fluids: the well-known humours" (Koschorke 2008, 469) with the newly-discovered life of the nerves and psyche

that generated a rich culture of feeling, a rapid change in lexical development was observed: eighteenth-century philosophers dropped the seventeenth-century term "passion" to give preference to "sentiment," "feeling," and "affect." It was not the mind, but "conceptions of the mind" (Rorty 1982, 159) that changed. In her pioneering essay, Amélie Rorty explains the changes that occur in the taxonomy of emotions, which is predicated on the assumption that conceptions of the passions change. Even the lexical field of emotion has evolved in a dynamic way, acquiring different context-based and discipline-related meanings. This taxonomy is evident in "sermons, scientific treatises, political rhetoric, poetry and trashy fiction, obituaries that praise and editorials that blame [...]" (172). Passions as motivating factors became the major kinaesthetic force behind the process of civilization. They produced "the very activities of the mind, its own motions" (159).

Early in the eighteenth century, passions and affections were not disconnected. In the words of Louise Joy (2020), "passions and affections are usually conjoined whenever they are referenced in seventeenth- and eighteenth-theological treatises on the emotions" (18). From the perspective of theology and moral philosophy, affections are spiritual and immaterial, being defined in contrast with passions, which are material and corporeal. In 1650, William Fenner's *The Treatise of the Affections; or, the Souls Pulse* suggested affections were superior to passions and should be given a separate place in the study of human behaviour, associating them with "piety, moral rectitude, social utility and psychological orderliness" (Fenner, in Joy 2020, 19). Ordering one's emotions necessitates ordering different systems of thought and practice that they – as the more abstract intellectual relative of reason – influenced. And according to Hobbes's theory, it is motion which moves matter and "actions are the motions of willing" (McMurran 2016, 8). This theory represents affections as movements of the soul. One emotional factor can trigger conflicting motions inside the body and the soul of an individual or even within a society. Based on Thomas Aquinas' theological approach, passions are impulses that overwhelm an individual unconsciously and unwillingly, attributing to the human being the bodily dimension of suffering which, in relation to other beings, points to the superiority of human being and its capacity to endure, whereas in relation to divinity, it emphasizes human imperfection and frailty:

> Although, in fact, the root words for both passions (the Latin term "passiones") and affections ("affectus") derive originally from the Greek word "pathe", denoting "suffering", the bodily dimension to this suffering falls out of the notion of the affections in Aquinas's scheme. Consequently, in British theories of the seventeenth and eighteenth

> centuries that draw on the taxonomy he devised, the affections are conceived as positive, aspirational emotions [...]. In contrast, passions retain their original sense of subjugation to the body, and references to the passions continue to be used to emphasize, and even to emblematize, man's distance from the divine. (Joy 2020, 21)

Whereas passions[7] are motions that stimulate physical senses, causing disarray in both the body and the soul, while predicating a certain dynamism that puts the body in action and emotions in motion, affections are immaterial, involve the will and are closer to spirituality. An opinion that is different from, but does not discredit the Christian overtones of previous metaphysical doctrines, comes from Lord Shaftesbury. Bringing the affections down to earth, Shaftesbury believes in man's innate balance and identifies three types of affection: natural affections, self-affections and unnatural affections (Joy 2020, 34). As long as man is dominated by his natural affections, he is in constant harmony with himself and his social environment. Such secular conception of emotions simplified the category of affections and shifted the concern from the religious lexis to the scientific one: "Concepts such as 'passion' and 'affection of the soul' were biblical and theological, whereas the category 'emotion' came from a scientific lexical field involving conceptions of organisms and nature" (Plamper 2012, 173). In discussing human experience in the context of the libertine novel of Crébillon *fils*, I will use the term "emotion" from the perspectives of natural philosophy and medical science, since emotion was regarded as both physical and spatial change, a term for which "motion was a load-bearing concept" (Landreth 2012, 286). For Enlightenment authors, the term "emotion" was closer in meaning to the scientific Newtonian model of gravitational motion, reflecting fleshy and corporeal associations, than to its metaphysical usage in the field of *belles lettres*. It conveyed "both tectonic disturbance and passionate unrest" (287), connections which mirror the controversy over the body-soul dualism crystallized in the dichotomy between mind and matter.

Crébillon *fils* and the Metaphysics of the Sofa

Following the new discoveries in science, a new discourse of sentimental writing, perceived both as a form of literary representation and as a critique to the realist novel, charted changes in the literary arena by setting in motion a

[7] Descartes (1649) identifies six primary passions, "principal passions" (219), as he calls them, which he classifies according to the ways objects of sense-perception have a beneficial or a harmful effect on human behaviour: wonderment, hate, love, desire, joy, and sadness. Descartes also establishes the main derivatives of the passions, the physical processes that they trigger, their manifestations in facial expressions and the relationship humas have with them.

taxonomy of passions and sentimental tropes that derived from the newly adopted scientific lexis:

> Motion can teach us about theories of reading and writing because for much of the eighteenth century, authors understood *all* change as motion. This included the changes that a reader might undergo when perusing a poem or a novel: improvement or dissolution, entertainment or sentimental transport. For this reason, motion was a foundational concept not only for physics, but also for the arenas of moral philosophy, theology, and rhetoric". (Landreth 2012, 281)

The birth of sentimental fiction as a "transnational genre" (Cohen, in Dow 2019, 93) and the emergence of its complementary part – the libertine novel - represented a necessity and a natural consequence of the new trends in science, which aimed to synchronize philosophical and scientific theories with the interest of the reading public and the new decorative style in literature. As Draper (1921) notes, "decorum is the Orthodoxy of the Eighteenth Century" (241). And it was, indeed.[8] There was a tendency to associate the Rococo style in furniture with the flamboyant orientalism and exoticism of some literary productions of the Enlightenment, such as those of Crébillon *fils* and Marivaux:

> Instead of Montesquieu and Voltaire, Sgard suggests Marivaux and Crébillon fils as exemplars of the Rococo style in literature, and these last two names have been retained in the study of the literary Rococo ever since. (Bloom 2010, 87)

Diderot can join these two writers with his Oriental tale, *Les Bijoux indiscrets* (*The Indiscreet Jewels,* 1748); another French writer who contributed to the libertine novel was Charles-Pinot Duclos (*L'Histoire de Madame de Luz*, 1741); Baron Dominique Vivant Denon penned a voluptuous erotic tale set in rococo interiors, *Point de lendemain* (1777); Jean-François Marmontel caused a scandal in the world of letters when he published his 1767 novel, *Bélisaire* and the list can continue with other less known French writers who had their fictions translated into English and were embraced by the anglophone reading public.

A protean figure, Claude Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon (1707-1777) was an agent of change, marking – at the start of the eighteenth century – the advent of a new aesthetic caused by the fervency for the novel. This new aesthetic

[8] In 1963, Roger Laufer echoed Draper's association of the literary style with the eighteenth-century decorative arts: he announced the "style rococo" was the "style des lumières" (Bloom 2010, 88), a statement which was doubted by later criticism. For further details on this matter, see Bloom, 2010, *passim*.

stemmed from "the liberal era inaugurated by the Regent and Louis XV" (Bloom 2010, 89).

Being part of the eighteenth-century *Frenchmania* movement, Crébillon *fils* best represents the adornments of the Rococo style by his novel *Le Sopha, couleur de roze*, one of the most popular eighteenth-century erotic books, which was published in French in 1742 and then translated into English as *The Sopha. A Moral Tale*, by Eliza Haywood and William Hatchett (a Grubstreet hack of dubious morality), in an edition put in print by John Nourse and Thomas Cooper (Spedding 2001, 237). The translation was eagerly awaited and enthusiastically received not only by the anglophone reading public, but also by some intellectual figures. Laurence Sterne read it. Horace Walpole was enchanted by its atmosphere. In February 1742,[9] he was exclaiming: "We have at last got Crébillon's *Sofa* [...] and it is admirable!" (Spedding 2001, 241). It was Walpole who observed that Lord Chesterfield stockpiled some 300 copies to sell at his club, "effectively republishing the book in London" (241). In this erotic novel, which Stephen Ahern (2005) describes as "a major influence on the early novel of sensibility" (334), which became "a symbol of immorality and decadence" (Spedding 2001, 241), and which echoed *The Arabian Nights*, the spirit of a beau is punished by Brahma to live in a sofa till two virgin *amoureux* consummate their passion on the sofa he occupies. With the proviso that Crébillon's story is narrated by a piece of feminine furniture, a pink sopha, it would not be indecorous to recognise in the rococo aesthetics a narrative chronotope that reflected the author's sensible connection with his social environment, the true milieu behind the events and the episodes depicted in the novel: "Calling Crébillon a Rococo writer, a practitioner of a period style, suggests the author's particular sensitivity to his surroundings, his keen awareness of belonging to a specific place and time (Bloom 2010, 88).

In moving from the *Ancien Régime* to the dawn of the French Revolution, from the collective dream of absolutism to Louis XV's forbearance and indifference, from the specter of Racine on the Parisian stage to the sensual aesthetic of the libertine novel – as Leo Braudy (1973) states, feelings are represented differently on stage and in narrative form (5) – from Defoe's straightforward style to licentious hedonism, Crébillon *fils* opened the door of the alternative novel by deviating from the norm of rationality, historical realism and materialism, which he replaced with *petites choses*, libertine liasons and textual promiscuities. It is stated in the Introduction to the novel that "where there is no frankness there can be no art" (4).

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[9] There is an abundance of suggested dates for the publication of *Le Sopha*, due to the fact that the original edition of this Oriental tale "which was printed clandestinely, bore on its title-page only a fanciful Mohammedan date, 'L'an de l'hégire MCXX'" (Day 1961, 392). For further details regarding the dating of *Le Sopha*, see D. A. Day (1961): 391-92.

The materiality of a piece of furniture is – in a very corporeal, but also metaphysical way – embodied in the soul of an individual. The former body-soul duality is transformed into a cognitive contact between matter and spirit: the external stimuli caused by the softness of the sofa determine the internal workings of both the soul and the mind of the characters involved in the story told by the *conteur*, which "aim at the perilous balance of sympathy and understanding accompanying physical pleasure, for, while they deal largely with the body, they never forget the soul" (Dobreé 2000, 4).

By 1801, the tale underwent 18 editions and in 1927, Bonamy Dobrée's translation was considered the standard English version (Hale 2000, 418). The novel is a mixture of Oriental prose, satire, scandalous behaviour, "sophisticated psychological realism" (Ahern 2005, 334), erotic passages, and amorous intrigues.

Both the title and the scope of the novel reflect the interplay of libertine and sentimental discourse, epitomizing the paradox of French preference for Oriental erotica and the English appetite for didactic tales. Crébillon *fils* embodies the marriage between excess and aesthetic conventions. The excess of sensorial power comes from an affective response to the stimuli caused by the material world of opulent objects that surrounds the story, such as the Middle East sofas, or *canapés*, embroidered with silver, which were new and fashionable pieces of furniture in France, China vases, diamonds, beds, chairs, chamber-gowns, etc.:

> The array of precious pomatum pots which met her eye, a casket choke-full of diamonds, well-dressed slaves obsequious to serve her, the merchants and artificers who awaited her commands, all these heightened her amazement, and intoxicated her with grandeur. (Crébillon 2000, 39)

The decorative taste of mid-century Europe fully represents what I would call "the Age of Motion" characterized by exploration, European colonial expansion, global trade, and a proliferation of travel writing. The world in motion puts in motion flights of imagination which, in turn, triggers emotions that respond to an eccentric and libertine network of objects and attitudes. In Crébillon's narrative, the human being turns into a domestic object: a couch.

This is an uncommon example of anthropomorphism, which exemplifies an essential philosophical debate in the eighteenth century: the physical dualism matter/spirit and the anthropological dualism body/soul. This duality is rendered by the two-faced story: an amoral story with an apparent moral lesson attached to it. Despite the incredulity regarding the subtle subtitle to morality, the tale includes a moral lesson in its plot. Due to his misconduct, the Indian Amanzei was punished by Brahma to have his soul separated from his body in a true Platonic/Cartesian manner. His body becomes a sofa, which gives Amanzei the possibility to spy on the intimate lives of women as per the eighteenth-century voyeuristic fashion. He undergoes a series of metamorphoses and is condemned

to journey from one sofa to the next until he encounters true love between a man and a woman. However, as I see it, the moral lesson is just a pretext the writer uses to reflect – consciously or not – the overarching Enlightenment questions regarding nature's laws and mechanisms.

While Aristotle viewed the law of motion in qualitative and teleological terms, Newton designed it as a "spatial change" (Landreth 2012, 283). Crébillon's novel mixes up the two theories: in a true Aristotelian logic, Amanzei feels a strong internal desire to break the enchantment and free himself from the spell, but he is also influenced by the Newtonian physics in that he is dominated by the external force of the spell exerted on him by Brahma's punishment. The sofa is an inanimate object that has no internal impetus towards movement, but Amanzei's soul, which inhabits the body of the sofa, is an animate principle that agitates its materiality, setting it in motion and thus causing moral changes. There are 33 moments in the novel where the word "emotion" has strong connotations of movement and agitation: "Emotions took possessions of her against her will" (Crébillon 2000, 52); "the tumult of emotion" (58); "lively, transient emotion" (62); "disordered by his emotions" (139), "emotions aroused by his raptures" (196), etc. The sentimental effect of the rhetorical performance is caused by the attitudes and the gestures of the characters as well as the sentiments set into motion by these motrical signals: "The agony she saw in his face" (58); "the deep sighs he fetched" (58); "the tears she saw ready to fall" (58); "the fleeting pulse of desire" (59); "the fear of stirring your passions" (70); "the inner confusion which still dominated" (73), etc.

The Enlightenment debate on the nature of motion is seemingly launched by Amanzei's statement concerning his metamorphosis: "It would be more humiliating for me to be a sofa than to be a reptile" (Crébillon 2000, 19). Was the soul material? Apparently not, since it was immortal. Amanzei's affirmation against the background of the Republic of Letters actually shows the century's preference for vitalism and figuration: natural philosophy played an integral part in eighteenth-century public and intellectual culture and the Linnaean system of classification of plants and living creatures developed consistent and applicable principles of taxonomy, which extended the language of vitality employed in the scientific discourse to more figurative instances. Crébillon measures the literary effects of science: the laws of motion govern the characters' emotional responses.

Conclusion

To conclude, throughout the eighteenth century, historical and mindset transformations determined the act of literary writing: it led to a shift in public preference from realist fiction to amorous intrigues and fed the public need for various genres and attitudes imported from French translations. The changes

triggered by the new scientific theories on nerves, motion and emotion resulted in refashioning human experience from the perspective of natural philosophy and physiology. Refuting David Hume's 1738 axiom, according to which "reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions" (Hume 2007, 266), and Shaftesbury's advice (1710) to regulate "our governing Fancys, Passions, and Humours as to make us comprehensible to our selves" (125), the discourse of affections that flooded the Republic of Letters reconfigured the canonical theories of the philosophers of rationality. We noticed how the presence of affects in eighteenth-century literature impacted writing and interpretations of literary works in the light of new theories on pneumatology, materiality and motion, and natural philosophy. Crébillon's translations from French into English epitomized the new type of discourse that intended to popularise virtue through eroticism, satire and decadence. Emotions became prisms through which readers perceived human phenomena. Translations from French into English made this possible by mirroring Thomas Hobbes's theory of motion: "Motion is nothing but change of place," which makes the first entry of the definition of *motion* in Johnson's Dictionary as "the act of changing place" (Johnson 1755). Moving the text from French to English language and culture meant repositioning the eighteenth-century French Rococo novel in the context of English didacticism. Affections triumphed and their presence in eighteenth-century literature "provided not only a space for experiment and a platform for social change, but also a way to articulate and understand the early modern individual" (Hultquist 2017, 275). In other words, the act of motion was an act of cultural and social translation from French to English and from reason to sentiment, which resulted in a mindset revolution that was to impact the dominant paradigm of modernity.

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